

# **You Are Not Your Stuff**

*By Bobby Schuller*

Today we're continuing a series on my book, "You Are Beloved," and I know it may seem self-serving to do a sermon series on my book, but the book, in fact, was written for the purposes of talking about that creed, which is really the value of this ministry. And we would love for you to get a copy of the book. If you go to our website and order it, all the proceeds go to the church to support our ministry, and it would mean the world to me, too, if you bought three copies and shared them with your friends. It's terrible. It's terrible.

But no. But it really is such hard work. When you write a book, you pour so much of your heart into it that you wish you could afford to just hand them out because you really want people to know your ideas and to hear what you're talking about.

But anyway, today we're talking about this core part of the message that we say every single week, and that is that friends, you are not your stuff. You are not what you have. And you might say well Bobby for sure I know that. I know I'm not my stuff, but think about all the ways that all of us affix so much of our identities on what we have. Whether it's our address, or our degrees, or our friendships, or our connections, or especially our money. When we got a lot of it, we feel good, and we don't have a lot of it, we feel bad and that is the human

condition. That's normal. That for most of us, we find value in the stuff we have, in the clothes we wear, in the cars we drive. We want to look nice, we want to feel nice, we want to feel treasured. And very often, feeling treasured comes from having treasure. And if you hear anything I say today, is that wealth is not a bad thing, it's a good thing. If you're a good person, I want you to be wealthy. If you're a bad person, I want you to be poor. I want you to be dirt poor if you're bad. But if you're good, money becomes good or evil in the hands of those who hold it.

So this is not about not having wealth. In fact it's the exact opposite. The idea of living in the kingdom of God is that you have this source of sufficiency that is financial, it is material, but more than that, its joy, its hope, its meaning, its fulfillment, its knowing God, it's living without an ounce of fear. You want that kind of life? It's available in Jesus' name in the kingdom of God.

Have you ever felt, though, that your identity is wrapped up in what you have? Have you ever felt like you're in because of something you have, because of your address, or because of the clothes you wear, the car you drive? We learn this when we're children, when we get cool stuff.

I remember when I was living in the valley, in Shadow Hills, and we had these hills behind our house for dirt bikes and stuff, and all my buddies and I, there were like all these kids my age. I was about maybe 12 years old. And there were probably five to ten of us, and it was all

about the bike. And the best bike was this thing called a BMX Elite. It is a bike everybody wanted. And I was, even at 12, a possibility thinker, and decided I was going to save up my money and buy this bike, and the way I did it was when my mom would drop me off and give me \$3 for lunch at school, I would just not eat. And she didn't know that till just today, by looking at the look on her face. She had no idea that for nearly a year, I would take that \$3 and put it in a shoebox and it was box full of ones.

And so I saved up these ones, and I bought this bike. It arrived in a box. I had to build it, which was disappointing, and I don't think I did a good job, but when I got that bike, my step dad always reminds me I was telling everybody, I got major air. Major air. Meaning I went off jumps and I got air. That meant like two inches. And anyway, all my friends thought I was the coolest guy in town. I had achieved it. I got this thing. And then three or four weeks later, Mighty Ducks, the movie came out, and all of us became roller hockey people, and now my bike didn't matter anymore and now I needed a Wayne Gretzky Easton aluminum hockey stick.

So when we're kids, we learn these things, right? We find that we get this stuff that makes us cooler, or at least makes us feel cool, or we think it'll make us cool, and maybe it does, but then something happens and now we need something else to make us look cool. And as we're teenagers, this is usually clothes or cars, depending. And so we find that our value and our belonging in high school is well established that you

are what you have! If you have good looks, if you have nice clothes, if you have a sweet car, you're probably going to get a girl! It's just that simple.

And so this gets built into our mind and it goes into our adulthood, until it becomes embedded deeply in our soul and in our psyche, that if I have a lot of stuff, I am a lot, and if I don't have a lot, I'm nothing.

There's this unconscious thing where we're mostly unaware of it, but it's there all the time, our identity attached to our money, our stuff, our house, our cars, our clothing.

And again, I think it's nice to have nice clothes and nice cars and nice houses, but never, ever let it be your true treasure. Your greatest treasure is above, and He's the one who gives us all these things in abundance, right? In abundance. When we live in the kingdom of God, we never live in lack. The lack is only in our minds.

So friends, I want to tell you more than anything, you hear anything I say today, you are the beloved. You are beloved sons and daughters, and nothing can take that value away. If you take a diamond and you stomp on it, and you throw it away, you're a fool! It's still a diamond. If you cover a diamond in mud, and if you paint it black, and if you call it silly names, it's still a diamond. If you take a hundred dollar bill and you stomp on it, or make it dirty, or crumple, it's still a hundred dollar bill. If I cover a hundred dollar bill in mud, do you still want it? Who wants a hundred dollar bill covered in mud? Everybody raised their hands because they think I have a hundred dollar bill. I don't. But it

proves the point that things of value stay valuable, and you are worth far more than any diamond, or any bit of money. You are God's treasure, and never, never forget that. You don't need to live in lack.

So Bobby, what happens when I'm lacking in health, or lacking in money, or lacking in time. When I don't have enough, is that a sign that God's against me or that I've sinned or that something bad is coming my way, or whatever? Friends, I want you to know that when we feel a sense of material lack, that has nothing to do with God's love or anything like that. God loves you, He wants to bless you. He doesn't reciprocate our sin and stuff by cursing us and hurting us. That's what grace and the cross is for.

So what then is a time of material loss? Well a time of material loss is a temporary opportunity for a permanent gift. And I want you to hear this because yes, we all have times of temporary material loss, but if you live in the kingdom of God, it is always temporary. And it is a brief window in time for you to gain something much more valuable than the thing you think you need. You might think you need health, you might think you need money or some of those things and you'll have them, but for this brief window when you don't have them, God has something else in store for you that's even greater; as treasures in heaven. And those are not treasures that we get just when we die. Treasures in heaven are treasures we get today.

I'm going to talk a little bit more about that in the end, but don't forget, if you're going through a loss of a job, loss of a house, you've lost something big in your life, it's temporary. It's not going to last forever. Don't waste it. It's a great opportunity to see that sometimes, as the saying goes, the obstacle is the way. That in the loss itself is something greater, a gift, just for you. But you have to have eyes to see it, and you have to have a will to achieve it. So don't lose it. Sometimes when you lose a job, it's God's purpose to get you to a better job. Sometimes when you lose a friend, you find that there are other friends that are going to bring you greater life. There are always reasons in the kingdom of God, good reasons for you why we're in these temporary periods of loss. Don't fall into despair. Good things are always coming, so don't miss out on the temporary opportunity to achieve a permanent gift.

This way of thinking is something that Jesus taught His disciples. He taught them to think this way; to think as eternal beings. And to rely solely on the giver of all good things, who is the Lord. And one of the best places we see this is in Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is probably the most popular Bible verse, but it's such amazing words when you think about what David is saying to us. And so David says it first about God, and then it's like something just springs into his heart, and he just starts to worship God, so he goes from third person to second person. Listen:

"The Lord is my Shepherd." Look, David was a shepherd. He knows what shepherds do. Shepherds lay down their lives for their sheep.

Shepherds care for their sheep. Shepherds never abandon their sheep. If one sheep is lost, out of a hundred, out of a thousand, the shepherd goes after her. He's your shepherd. You matter to Him.

"I lack nothing." Wow, isn't that the dream of every person? To be able to just say aloud, I lack nothing. I don't need anything in my life. I have everything I need. Every need is met. I've got all the time in the world. I've got all the money in the world. I've got all the food in the world. I've got all the joy and happiness. I don't need anything. Wow. What an amazing thing it would be to say that. So David says that, that he lacks nothing. Why? Because he's being shepherded by the owner of a cattle on a thousand hills.

"He makes me lie down in green pastures." You know what pasture is, right? Its food! A sheep that's lying down in green pasture is a sheep that's done eating. He's full or she's full! It's like saying I'm lying down in a field of pizzas. Uneaten and I don't even want them. I'm full. That was funnier in the 8:30 service. For whatever reason I didn't get the same..

"He leads me beside quiet waters." Same idea, the water is always going to be there. If I ever get thirsty, I can drink from it. I'm never going to be thirsty. A river of LaCroix, Diet Coke, Gatorade; insert your favorite thirst quenching beverage. I'm never going to be thirsty; I'm never going to be hungry because He's my shepherd.

"He guides me along the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." That's the natural overflow of being nurtured and lacking nothing.

You don't need to bend the rules, you don't need to break the rules, you don't need to lie, you don't need to cheat. You do what's right because all you have is extra to just share with others.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me.” I'm not afraid of anything. Total tranquility. Total peace of mind. Serenity. Not worried, not angry, not embittered, just trusting the goodness of the shepherd. Not a drop of fear in your life. Isn't that good?

And then it's like he says it to the Lord, I almost want you to say out loud. He says it to God: “For your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” God is strong. Though the enemy wants to bring you down, Satan works in the power of the air to affect and harm your life. He won't win. God is stronger. He's always won and He always will win and He already has won, amen?

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” All those who cursed me and all those who lied about me and all those who betrayed me – they'll see the feast that I'm having and even then, I will invite them with a good and honest heart to join me and eat with me because why? In the kingdom of heaven, we love our enemies. We pray for those who persecute us.

“You anoint my head with oil.” When King David was anointed, that was the burden removing yoke destroying power of God to lead

Israel. That same power has been given to you to break and destroy spiritual burdens. God's given you power! Believe it.

“And my cup is full.” No! “My cup overflows!” It's not full, it's spilling over. It's like you've got this glass out and Diet Coke is being poured in and it's just spilling everywhere, right? You've got so much it's going everywhere that all you can do is share because it's more than enough. It's lavish.

And then the final line, and this is what we're talking about today: “Surely, surely your goodness and your everlasting love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Friends, you need to know that you don't lack anything. You don't need to worry about where your next meal's going to come from, or where your next dollar's going to come from, God will provide for you because you're His treasure. Amen? Don't be afraid. Don't worry. If you're in a time of material lack, it's a temporary opportunity for a permanent gift. God gives you everything that you need. He's never let you down and He never will. And someday, even when we come to die, we'll see just how overflowing His gifts of mercy, of love and goodness are to us. We see it in this life, and the next. Nothing can harm you. You are God's treasure and nothing can destroy that. Can I get an amen from the saints in the house?

There is no shortage of anything in the kingdom of God. There's no lack in God's kingdom. When we live in the kingdom of God, we lack

nothing, nothing, nothing. If you need something from the Lord, just ask Him. If you don't have faith to ask, look faith is not something we will or try or get better at or train at, faith is a gift. If you're here today, you have a little bit of faith, and faith just means trust. You have faith in your pew or else you wouldn't be sitting in it. If you've had a couple pews break, you might not have faith in your pew anymore. But we have faith in stoplights that when we go through a green light, that somebody's not going to blast through it. When we get on an airplane or get in a car, we have faith and trust that things are going to be okay or else we wouldn't go, and when you have faith in God, you're trusting that even though it doesn't seem safe, that you'll be just fine. And if you don't have faith, just ask for it. It's a gift. He'll give it to you. God always does.

So there's no shortage of anything in God's kingdom. Wealth and all of those things, it's not discovered in economics. We say it's not discovered, it's created. So there's not a pie that we all need to share, that there's just a limitless amount of wealth and time and everything made available to us. One little seed goes into the ground and it becomes a tree that bears a thousand seeds. So now you've got a thousand or ten thousand seeds from one seed, and you got a tree that becomes a cart or a house or a chair or a pew or a church. And just from one seed, an incredible amount of wealth and goodness is created.

So where does the wealth come from? Is it discovered? No it's created. And God can take your five loaves and two fishes and He can

make it into whatever He wants it to be. Just have faith and trust Him. Trust in the one who turns one seed into a thousand seeds, a church, a cart, and a chair. That He can take the little bit of work that you're doing and provide everything you need in this life and the next, amen?

You're always going to have your daily bread, I promise you. You'll be okay. We can just live without anxiety and know that the reason we don't have to worry about our treasure and about our need is because we are God's treasure and He loves us. He loves you. He loves you. He loves you so, so much. Not because of what you've done, or what you do, or because what you haven't done, He just loves you just as you are. Isn't that great news? God is so good!

And His abundance is so.. you look at the universe and it's just filled with resources and life and joy. God is the most joyful person in the universe. And everything that you see in the universe is a reflection of His soul, of His joy and His life. He takes joy in His creation. I've heard it said that there are more stars in the sky than there are grains of sand on every beach on earth. I looked that up, it's actually true. It's actually much more than that. And you think about that, every star is a solar system with planets and water and life and land, and it's amazing. And beauty and what God does, He just loves His creation, and of all His creation, He loves you the most. That's good news.

So don't trust in creation, and don't trust in the stuff, trust in the maker of the stuff. That it doesn't matter how old you are, how sick you

are or how poor you are, God can give you everything you need that you can look and say God's my shepherd. I literally lack nothing. Isn't that good news, guys?

When Jesus talks at length, not just about the esoteric stuff, but He does care about your material needs. He really does. Jesus talks about money and possessions a lot, and He recognizes that you need it. In fact, at the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, He talks about the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air, and how God cares for them, and how you don't need to worry about any of these things. He's going to care for you. And then He says, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." He says don't run after these things because the pagans do. And He knows you need them. He says plainly, the Father knows you need this stuff. He knows you need your clothing, and He knows you need your things.

You think God doesn't care about money? There's some interesting statistics about this. In the Bible, there are 2,200 references that discuss money and possessions. That's three times as many references to money as to love, seven times as many references to money as to prayer, eight times as many references to money as to belief. Money comprises 15% of the Bible. Not literally, of course. That'd be crazy. Those would be expensive Bibles. One fifth of Jesus' teachings were on money and possessions. Seventeen of the 38 parables deal with money and possessions.

Jesus talked more about money than any single topic, besides the kingdom of God. Why? Because it's the number one thing that causes anxiety, fear and worry in our lives. The sense of lack. Money is a symbol of food, it's a symbol of shelter, it's a symbol of fun, it's a symbol of freedom, it's a symbol of all the things that we think we need in life, and God will provide what you need. But the irony about the kingdom of God is this like I might imagine that Jesus in the way He says things, would say something like those who try to keep their money will lose it, but those who lose their money for my sake will gain it. I truly believe that God loves it when good people who love the Lord succeed in life. He truly loves that. But He hates it when they put their trust in the creation instead of the creator.

You can live today and say, God you are the source of all that's good in my life. Give me faith to truly believe I lack nothing, and watch as you walk by faith, as the windows of heaven open up, pour out so much blessing on your life, there won't be enough room to contain it. Isn't God so good? He is just so good to us. So faithful. So caring. He cares even about the little things in your life, He really does. And He's going to bless you. You don't have to worry about it. Don't worry. He's going to bless you because He loves you. You are His treasure.

We oftentimes get hung up on money, don't we? The invention of the Monopoly game is funny. In 1903, it was Elizabeth Magie who created this thing called the Landlord's game to show Americans that

they are being taken advantage of. And this game eventually became Monopoly and the exact opposite happened. Everybody was like I want to be a landlord. I want to make money. And whenever we play Monopoly, you've got a 50/50 chance that the game's going to end up like this. Probably every single game does. Table flipped over, people screaming at each other. There is something that happens when you get all this money, and you got your hotels, and you're doing good, and the other person's losing, and they're like I'm poor in Monopoly AND in real life. There's always something he won't trade with me. I always got that one a lot. You don't have to trade. Anyway.

So people get upset about each other, and it touches on sort of this deep need that many of us have. It's a revelation for us as Americans, to see how deeply we want, desire and trust in money, and that's an irony because money is great, it's wonderful, but it's not the most important thing.

John Ortberg tells this story about when he was playing Monopoly with his grandma, and he says the first time I played Monopoly, I went to my grandma's house, and she just destroyed me. She took all my money. She wiped me out. And he goes that summer I started playing Monopoly with my friend over the summer. We'd play hours every single day. And I learned the game. And I learned the game. I learned the game was about total acquisition. The game was about buying and building and getting everything, and obliterating your enemy.

And he said one day I went back to play my grandma after the summer, and I was ready, I was ready to beat her and take her down in Monopoly. He says we started playing and by the end, I took it all, I took every house, every hotel, every title, every utility, every railroad and that last dollar, and said thank you very much, grandma. I've learned the game. And his grandma said, it's true. You've learned the game, but now I have one more lesson to teach you – it all goes back in the box. She says all that stuff, every house, every hotel, every utility, every railroad and all that glorious money it all goes back in the box. And she said John, this game's been around a long time, and it's going to be around a long time after you're gone. Players come, players go, there are winners and there are losers, but in every case, all of it goes back in the box.

And the natural question is in our own lives, Monopoly is a reflection of our own American soul. Do we realize and do we think about, especially for us here in Irvine, in Orange County, that all that effort that we give for those titles and those cars and the money and everything, that in the end, it's just going back in the box, guys. Everything. Even our bodies. And when all of that is gone, what will you have left? And the answer is, you will have a lot. The best stuff will be left over; the stuff that truly matters.

So focus on those things: your family, your relationship with God, knowledge, wisdom, compassion, care, generosity, putting God first. You do these things right, money's not going to be a problem for you. You'll

have plenty of money. None of those things will matter. If you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, you'll have everything you need.

Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. You know what treasures in heaven mean? This teaching has been so messed up in the history of the church. I used to think when I was a kid, treasures in heaven meant that there was going to be like a big stack of gold for me based on my good works. So if I was like Mother Teresa or something, I'm going to be like Scrouge McDuck, jumping off a diving board in his pool full of gold coins, swimming around. Right?

That's not what treasures in heaven mean. Paul teaches us that there are three levels of heaven. That there's the highest heaven where God is, but the lowest heaven is the physical air around us. A Biblical view of heaven is that the treasures are in the air around us. That they're literally accessible now. It's like making a deposit in your bank account and having an ATM card. That even though you don't carry your cash around with you, you can use your credit card or your debit card to make purchases. In that same way, you have this thing, treasures in heaven, that is slightly esoteric, but its accessible today and that will cause you to have everything you need. Isn't that good news?

A good example of something that looks like treasures in heaven would be something like.. this isn't treasure in heaven, but a theoretical question: what would you rather have, if you're not a.. who here is not a mil.. no, don't raise your hand. We're going to have too few hands go up.

If you could have a choice between having a million dollars, or having the knowledge to make a million dollars, which is better? Anyone with any wisdom would say well, would they actually say it? I don't know. They would say theoretically wisdom, the knowledge of how to make a million dollars is better, right? If you knew how to do it, you can do it a hundred times. Hey that's cool.

In the same way, don't trust in the material things of life, trust in the giver of those things and store up for yourself knowledge, wisdom, joy, rest, and most importantly a relationship with God because when you come to the end of your life, that's going to be the only thing that matters. How you were with your family, and how you were with the Lord, amen?

So God's going to do good things in your life, but don't worry about lack. He's going to bring everything that you need in your life. Sometimes we go through these valleys of the shadow of the death, but God is faithful. He is so good, He will provide everything you need, and if you don't believe me, just ask the Lord for faith, and watch as He fills your heart and your mind with the right kind of thinking that leads to victory and to joy, amen?

Lord, we love you. And we pray that we can be as generous as you are generous to us. Lord that our cup truly would overflow. Help us to see, Lord, that there is no pie. There is no pie of wealth, there is no pie of love, there is no pie of joy that there's more than enough to go around.

Lord, teach us to know what it means to live without lack. To trust everyday that we are in green pastures, and we're beside quiet waters, and that everywhere we go is with you, and everywhere we go is blessed. That you open doors no man can shut. Shut doors no man can open.

And Lord, I even pray for people under the sound of my voice who are listening, by faith and with the authority you've given me through Jesus Christ, that chains would be broken, Lord. Lord, remove fear. Remove doubt. Help us all, Lord, to think the right way, to see the right way, to learn the right things. Lord, thank you that you provide everything we need. That there is no lack of anything in the kingdom of God. We trust in you and we love you, in Jesus' name, amen.