Stewardship Trauma

Financial Trauma and Its Impact on Stewardship





Financial Trauma a definition

The experience or threat of significant financial injury

Make it Personal a question

How have you experienced financial trauma in the church?





Our Experiences

Financial trauma in the church

- 1. Severe poverty
- 2. Financial abuse
- 3. Coercion
- 4. Shaming
- 5. Anxious decisions
- 6. Theft

Others?

My Stories

Five experiences of financial trauma

- » Churches closing
- » Deacons' reports weekly
- » Month to month
- » Disorganization
- » Embezzlement





Why?

Contributing factors behind financial abuse and trauma

- » Desire for power
- » Generational patterns
- » Ignorance

Impact of Financial Trauma on Congregations



Decision Anxiety

Hoarding

- » We are afraid to make mistakes with our money, which leads to making last minute decisions, making poor decisions, or failing to act altogether.
- » We feel compelled to hang on to every penny that we possibly can, becoming self-involved misers.

Cycle of Hurt

» "Hurt people hurt people." We often tend to inflict trauma on others in response to the trauma we've experienced ourselves.



Lack of Hope

"A group is not a community unless it shares *hope*."

--- Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez

in Churches, Cultures & Leadership

Our New Evangelism Strategy???



"And the dim fluorescent lighting is meant to emphasize the general absence of hope."

How do we talk about stewardship in the face of financial trauma?

Two Things to Consider

- » A Biblical Theology of Financial Stewardship that Emphasizes Justice
 - » A Plan for Churches to Implement this Theology



Luke 21:1-4

The Widow's Mite

[Jesus] looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."



What messages do preachers most often draw from this text?

- The faith of the widow
- The generosity of the widow
- The sacrifice of the widow



What if we focused on the rich people instead?

- The rich gave out of their excess
- The rich took advantage of the poor
- The rich gave for show

Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. At once the one who had received the five talents went off and traded with them and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.'



Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'



Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.



Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'



Who do the characters represent?

The Master = GOD

Servants 1 & 2 = Good and Generous Christians

Servant 3 = Bad and Stingy Christian



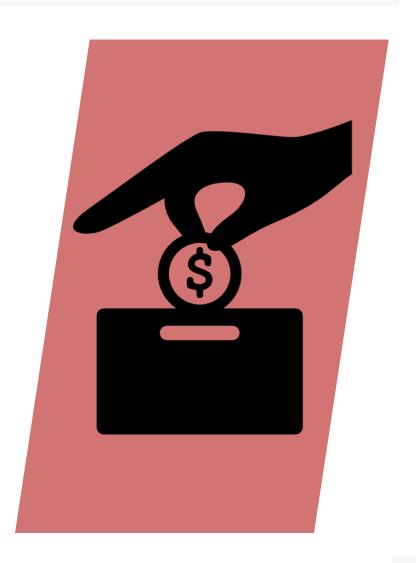
What messages do preachers most often draw from this text?

- Invest your gifts in the church
- Don't bury your talents
- More is better



What if the master does not represent God?

- The master = worldly rulers
- Servants 1 & 2 = those who are seeking power
- Servant 3 = a victim of injustice



Context guides us

- Who do we know God to be?
- Sheep and goats Matthew 25:31-46

What then is our response to systems of injustice?





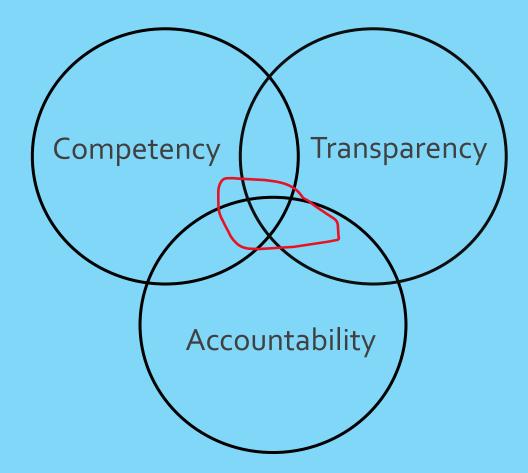
What would just financial stewardship look like?

- Lifts up the poor
- Focuses on the heart, not the gift
- Speaks out against abuse and exploitation



Implementation

Step 1 - Creating an Environment of Trust and Safety





Implementation

Step 2 – Creating space for healing

- Telling of stories
- Real conversations around financial abuse and misuse of money
- Time for mourning
- Resources for help



Implementation

Step 3 – Reconnection to Life and Hope

- Work for justice in your church's financial practices
- Promote just financial practices in your denomination
- Speak out for justice for those financially abused and oppressed
- Be a beacon of hope

What now?

Think about the financial trauma you've experienced, either directly or indirectly.

How did the church help you deal with that trauma?

How did the church fail?

How could your church do better?



Thank you for coming to my workshop!

- Rev. Jeffrey Fiet First Presbyterian Church, Scottsbluff, Nebraska
- [] (308) 632-2131
- □ fpcpastorjeff@gmail.com

