



WARM UP

Why is it so hard to talk about money matters? Is it a pride issue? Is the subject *that* intensely private? Are we embarrassed? Afraid of being compared or judged?

Respond to the following questions:

1. Do you find it difficult to talk personally about money?
2. How much pressure do you feel to “keep up with the Joneses”?
3. How much stress do financial issues cause you and your family?
4. How much more would it take to cure your financial woes or worries?
5. Is money something you and your spouse see eye-to-eye on? Argue about?
6. If you could talk freely

and openly about the subject of money, what is the one thing you’d most like to discuss?



GROUP THINK

Read the article on the first page of this handout aloud. Then read Matthew 6:25-34. Respond to the following questions:

1. The command “not to worry” is worrisome, isn’t it? What role does worry – particularly about material things – play in your life? How obedient are you to this commandment?
2. Notice how *elemental* Jesus’ comments on worry really are: food, clothes, time. What are your thoughts on *that*.
3. What does Jesus tell us to put in the place of worry? What does he recommend as a “worry antidote”?

4. In light of the article you just read together, do you think we are guilty of depending on money to “do for us, to make us feel, things God reserves to himself”?



APPLY IT

Spend some time this week thinking, talking, and praying about your attitude towards money. Examine carefully the role money plays in your life, priorities, and emotions. Ask yourself the difficult question: “Are my attitudes about and use of money consistent with God’s will for my life?” And then pull \$20 from the ATM and do something entirely generous, selfless, merciful with it. Devote that \$20 to God, praying that the rest of your heart will follow.

GOD’S ECONOMICS

God doesn’t think like we do. His values are different. What is important to him isn’t always important to us. What we emphasize, he often greets with a shrug and a yawn. Just look at the way we view money.

For us (if we’re honest), money represents very important things: opportunity, freedom, security, provision, control, even power. It allows us a standard of living, transportation, internet access, retirement savings, and the occasional Starbucks. It lets us put our kids through college, feed and clothe our families. Those who have money (and have it abundantly) enjoy all manner of prospects and privileges. It’s not money, per se, we love. But we dearly love the things money permits us. We love how money makes us *feel*: safe, full, empowered, secure. And, as a consequence, much of our time is spent making money, accumulating and amassing it, saving it up, storing it away, spending it on the things we want or need, making sure no one steals it from us. Money – and the things it permits – is a consuming priority for us.

God sees money differently. It is a resource – no more. Like health, time, and IQ, money is a *means* by which we pursue the “important.” Used in godly ways – in acts of mercy, for ministry, in support of kingdom matters, generously – money is a blessing. But used in ungodly ways – selfishly, flippantly, greedily, ungratefully – money can be a curse. The greatest danger with money, though, is when we depend on it to do for us, to make us feel, things that God reserves to himself. Our security, provision, empowerment, freedom, and worth is found in HIM ... not in IT.

MATTHEW 6:19-21

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

LUKE 16:15

What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.

QUOTATION

We live in a world of distorted values and priorities. We tend to highly value things that God considers secondary (or even prohibited). Sometimes we value them so much, that even "good" things become a form of idolatry.... We need God's Word to show us what our priorities must be. Acceptance of God's values will result in conflict. If we pay serious attention to what God says, and live by *his* values, we will soon find ourselves going contrary to the ways of the world. Unfortunately, we will also find ourselves going contrary to the ways of many who call themselves "Christian." Sometimes our greatest opponents will be people who claim to be "Christian."

*Dennis Hinks
www.journal33.org*

PERSONAL STUDY

Jesus told over forty parables. Almost half of them had to do with money and the need to use worldly wealth in Kingdom ways. Pick out three or four of the following parables and think about what they say to disciples of Jesus on the subject of material possessions:

The Hidden Treasure	Mt 13:44
The Pearl of Great Price	Mt 13:45-46
Unmerciful Servant	Mt 18:23-34
Workers in the Kingdom	Mt 20:1-16
Tenants	Mt 21:33-44
Faithful Servants	Mt 24:45-51
Talents	Mt 25:14-30
Moneylender	Lk 7:41-43
Good Samaritan	Lk 10:30-37
Rich Fool	Lk 12:16-21
Cost of Discipleship	Lk 14:28-33
Lost Coin	Lk 15:8-10
Shrewd Manager	Lk 16:1-13
Rich Man/Lazarus	Lk 16:19-31

As you browse these parables, notice how – consistently – Jesus insists there are certain things more important than money. Can you list them? (e.g., the Kingdom, forgiveness, mercy)

Go through the gospel of Matthew and notice Jesus' teachings on money – and how paradoxical, contrary, and upside-down they are to the world's thinking: (e.g., Give in secret – Mt 6:2-4; Don't worry – your Father knows what you need – Mt 6:25-34)

List the Matthew passages and what they teach about money below:

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. What does this passage teach about where money fits into Paul's priorities? Does this passage condemn wealth? What does it teach about using wealth to "lay up treasures" in the coming age?

Now read James 5:1-6. The tone is very different. Here, it is not just the abuse of money, but "hoarding wealth" that is condemned. What does James mean by this? How are we guilty of doing this very thing? What does this say about our "trust" in money rather than God?

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Money, Sex, and Power, Richard Foster (convicting reading about money and Kingdom priorities)

Tyranny of the Urgent, Charles Hummel (a small booklet with a big message about priorities)

More than Enough, Dave Ramsey (10 practical and provoking keys to using money wisely)

WEBSITES

www.biblegateway.com (a great, general purpose, Bible translation and version site)

www.net.bible.org (for cross-references, translation notes, deeper text study)

www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/priorities.html (an article on priorities)
www.franklincovey.com/missionbuilder/flash/missionIntro.html?c=MissionStmntC (an exercise in identifying your values and building a life mission statement)