



Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Stewardship Learning Community
Living in God's Economy
What does the Bible say about money?

Opening Prayer

Scripture Read **Matthew 6:19-24** and discuss how to lay up treasures in heaven.

Introduction

"I was disgusted the other day to see an RV with a Christian fish symbol on it, and next to it was a bumper sticker that read 'I'm spending my grandchildren's inheritance'—as if this were humorous or something to celebrate," writes Ben Witherington III in *Jesus and Money*.

He goes on to say, "In a culture where the new is the true, and the latest is said to be greatest, Christians get caught up in the fads, trends, and trajectories of frivolous fashion, foolish financial deals, and, in general, indulgence beyond anything healthy, helpful, or holy...I could go on with one illustration after another, but this should suffice to make the point that what determines how most Christians view money, lending, giving, one's economic lifestyle, and a host of related matters is not the bible, but rather cultural factors and influences" (page 9).

- What is your reaction to the bumper sticker, "I am spending my grandchildren's inheritance?"
- Is Witherington overreacting?
- Tell why you agree or disagree with Witherington's point that most Christians are influenced more in their view of money by cultural factors than by the bible.

Craig Blomberg writes in *Neither Poverty nor Riches*, "I have discovered that many Christians today are not willfully choosing to be disobedient to the Scriptures in the area of financial stewardship. They are merely unaware of the Bible's teaching on the topic" (page 9).

- How can Christians be unaware of the Bible's teachings on money?
- How does your congregation help members to not only manage money, but also to develop a godly attitude toward money?



A STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Most Gracious Lord, money is a powerful force in our culture and in our lives. Sometimes I listen more to the world's attitude about money than to Your Holy Word. Forgive me and guide me in my attitudes and beliefs about money so they are consistent with what the Bible says.

Empower me to put my hope in You and not in the uncertainty of riches. For you provide me with everything to enjoy. Give me the strength to do good and to be rich in good works and to be generous and ready to share.

I ask it in Jesus Name,

Amen.

What does the Bible teach about money?

“People, perhaps especially Christian people, are looking for answers, including spiritual answers about real life issues involving money. They would like to know what God and the Bible have to say about such matters, and to their credit they are looking to the church...for answers to those questions,” writes Ben Witherington in *Jesus and Money*.

- What kind of answer is the church providing?
- Why do many churches and church leaders avoid talking about money? What is the result of the churches silence on things financial?

In *Jesus and Money*, Ben Witherington III references Sondra Wheeler’s summary of what the Old Testament says about wealth and abundance. Read and discuss the passages below.

1. **Wealth as an occasion for idolatry** (Deut. 32:10-18; Is. 2:6-8; 3:16-24; Jer. 5:7; Ezek. 7:19-20; 16:15-22; Hos. 2:5-9; Amos 6:4-7).
2. **Wealth as the fruit of injustice** (Is. 3:14-15; 10:1-3; Micah 6:10-12; Jer. 5:27-28; Amos 2:6; 4:1-2).
3. **Wealth as a sign of faithfulness** (Lev. 26:3-10; Deut. 11:13-15; Is. 54:11-12; 60:9-16; Jer. 33:6-9).
4. **Wealth as the reward for hard labor** (Prov. 10-21).

Wheeler also summarizes the basic themes on wealth in the New Testament. Read and discuss each passage.

1. **Wealth as a stumbling block** (Luke 18:18-30).
2. **Wealth as a completing object of devotion** (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:31; Luke 12:15; Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:5-6).
3. **Wealth as a resource for human needs** (Rom. 15:25-27; Gal. 6:6; James 2:15-16; Acts 2; Acts 4; Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:30; Rom. 12:20).
4. **Wealth as a symptom of economic injustice** (Luke 1:51-53; 4:18-19; 6:21; 16:19-26; Rev. 17:3-4; 18:9-19; James 2:5; 4:1-2; 5:1-6).

As God’s steward what are some ways I can grow in a biblical understanding of money?

(Note: Most American Christians are already wealthy by global and historic standards. If you make \$5000 a year you are in the top 14.39% of the richest people in the world. Check out your standing in the global economy at <http://globalrichlist.com>.)

Closing Prayer

Provide time at the end of each session for questions, comments and group prayer. The prayer can take one of the following forms or be done in a way the group decides.

Adoration...
Confession...
Thanksgiving...
Supplication...

Praise...
Remember...
Ask...
Yield...



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