Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

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

Opening Prayer

Scripture Read **John 17:13-19** and discuss what it means to be in the world but not of the world.

Introduction

"I believe there is one key to maintaining a spiritual equilibrium when facing the financial hurdles and traps of this world—we must remember that God is the owner of all things and we are temporarily handling his resources. The Bible says, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2), writes Bob Russell in *Money: A User's Manual*.

- Tell why you agree or disagree with Russell's statement that the one key for the Christian facing financial issues is to remember that God is the owner of all things.
- What does it mean to be a faithful steward in matters of finances?

God's stewards desire to be faithful with everything God has entrusted to them, so it is important to evaluate our attitude of and the value we give money. Are we seeing things as God sees them, or have we fallen into listening to the culture around us? Marty Duran suggests in *The Generous Soul*, "We have cleverly developed ways of justifying our lack of stewardship while presuming to live as obedient Christians, failing to realize that giving is probably the most authentic expression of our genuine devotion to Christ and His kingdom. We do not want to admit that the materialistic priorities to which most modern-day Christians have succumbed is nothing less than idolatry" (page5).

- Tell why you agree or disagree with Duran's statement that giving is probably the most authentic expression of our genuine devotion to Christ and His kingdom.
- Should the Pastor know what people give to the church? Why or why not?

A Stewardship Prayer

O Lord, be with us on our journey through life as Your stewards. Draw us ever closer to You and Your Word so that we might discern what is good, and right, and proper.

Remind us daily of our Baptism so that we do not forget whose we are and who we are.

Forgive us when we have been too concerned with worldly pursuits. Turn our eyes to You where there is forgiveness and power to live as Your children.

Make us generous and cheerful givers in every area of our lives.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

What does the world teach about money?

"Around about the mid-twentieth century…conditions began to change. For many people, material possessions went from fulfilling needs to enhancing comfort to facilitating luxury—and even beyond to excess…Over time our relationship with money—earning it, spending it, investing it, owning it, protecting it, worrying about it—has taken over the major part of our lives," write Robin and Dominquez in the introduction to their book, *Your Money or Your Life*.

- What does Jesus have to say about money and possessions in **Matthew 6:25-33**?
- How difficult is it to distinguish between wants and needs?

Os Hillman wrote a book entitled, **Five Fallacies of the Purposes of Money**. The five fallacies he describes are:

- **Fallacy One: My Money Can Be Used To Buy Anything I Want**
- **Fallacy Two: My Money Measures My Success**
- **Fallacy Three: Money Is My Security**
- **Fallacy Four: I Can Gain Independence By Having A Lot Of Money**
- **Fallacy Five: Money Defines My Self-Worth**

The following fallacies could be added to Hillman's list:

- **Fallacy Six: My Money Brings Me Happiness**
- **Fallacy Seven: Money Defines Who I Am**
- **Fallacy Eight: Money Is The Most Important Thing**
- **Fallacy Nine: More Money Is Better**
- **Fallacy Ten: More Money Means More Friends**

Discuss the above fallacies by asking the following questions about each one:

1. How does the world encourage this attitude?
2. What are some examples of how people buy into this fallacy?
3. What Scriptural truth counters this fallacy?

Comment on the following quote from *A Steward's Journey* by Don Coley, "Finally, it goes without saying that the choices we make in life have consequences, but too often we don't make the connection…if we don't sort these things out correctly in our lives, we can be like the person who spent all his life climbing the ladder of success, only to discover at the top that the ladder was leaning against the wrong building" (page 8).

As God's steward what can I do to keep the world's view of money from influencing my attitude?

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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