

Before the Lesson

Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.

Scripture passage: James 5:1-6

What defines a person's wealth? In the world's economy, wealth is determined by the amount of money, possessions, gold and silver, stocks and bonds, commodities, and financial portfolios one possesses. But what determines wealth in the eyes of God? What factors into the equation? Is it how much you gain for yourself, or how much you give to others? Is being rich toward God manifested by the way you live your daily life, or is that of no consequence? Perhaps an attitude of submission toward God factors into the formula. What about the gospel – does money have anything to do with the gospel?

The truth is that whether we want to believe it or not, the way we handle our money has everything to do with how we view God. It reflects a heart attitude. In fact, for believers, material wealth is the most serious complication to God in our lives. Knowing Christ means living for more than myself. Knowing Christ means allowing the gospel to affect the way I think, talk, plan, and spend. Knowing Christ means that my success comes from God, not something I did or didn't do. Matthew 6:21 says: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What do you treasure? Where is the focus of your heart?

Focus question:
Are you rich toward God?

Group Discussion

- What motivates your heart to give to God? (Compulsion, obedience, wanting acceptance from God, love for God)
- How does the gospel apply to the way we handle money?
- Read James 5:2-3. Hoarding is the opposite of distributing. As believers we are to be in the business of giving away, not storing and striving. What does Matthew 6:19-21 & 24 say about this? It does not speak against saving, but rather an attitude of the heart from which a person gathers out of fear or greed – an attitude formed because of a lack of trust and a heart of lust. What are you laying up?
- What does the James passage say will happen to these "treasures"?
- In what do you find your security – your savings, or your Savior?
- Read James 5:4-6. Here we shift from hoarding for one's self to spending on self. Self-indulgence is contrary to the gospel. Discuss instances in Jesus' ministry that reflect His desire to give of Himself rather than spend for Himself. How should the gospel impact us with regard to our spending habits?

- Discuss this truth: Living for Christ means living for more than myself.
- Read Luke 12:13-21. What does it mean to be rich toward God?
 - What matters in God's economy – your earthly bank account, or a zero balance with God?
 - Are you living for yourself, or for what is to come?
 - Who rules over your life, and from where does your success come?
 - Are you allowing gratitude to impact the way you live?
 - Do you choose to invest more in your market returns or on eternity?
 - When you give, do you look at it as returning to the Lord what He gave to you or giving to the Lord what you made for yourself?
- Christ's finished work ushered in grace for us. How does recognizing His grace at work in our lives loosen the grip we have on our possessions and attitudes toward money? (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and discuss the implications and applications of the truths in those verses.
- Talk through these statements:

The way I handle my money reflects:

- My level of spiritual maturity
- My level of trust and belief in God
- My knowledge and understanding of who God is

Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)

Read Romans 12:1-2 in The Message version below, and begin applying it to your life this week.

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

- Are you so “well-adjusted” to the culture that you fit into it without even trying?
- Where is your attention?
- What does God want from you?
- What is money doing to your level of spiritual maturity?
- Will you allow God to develop a well-formed maturity in you?

For additional resources, visit warrenlifenotes.com.