

Stewardship

Kingdom, Mission & Money(part 2)

Session 2 | Stewardship

Introduction

This study builds on the information presented and discussed in Week 1. The passage and questions below have been prepared to assist the group in preparing for a more in depth discussion on the relationship between our citizenship in the Kingdom of God and how we view money.

Worship Preparation (10-15 Minutes)

Psalm 86 (1-13)

¹ A prayer of David. Hear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. ² Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God; save your servant who trusts in you. ³ Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. ⁴ Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. ⁵ You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. ⁶ Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. ⁷ In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me. ⁸ Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. ⁹ All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. ¹⁰ For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. ¹² I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. ¹³ For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave. (NIV)

1. **Read the passage out loud.**
2. **What does this Psalm teach us about the character of God?** (vs. 5, 8, 9, 10, 13) **Note the themes of God who alone is worthy of praise; a God who is worthy of worship from all nations (the true King); a God who hears us and rescues us.**
3. **Take time as a group to praise God and thank him and glorify his name** (vs. 12). **Specifically, remember and identify with the fact that we are all "poor and needy" (vs. 1) and that everything we have is from God.**

Bible Study/Discussion (60 minutes)

Review

Last week the study focused on how the ministry of Jesus marked the fulfillment of the longing for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Lord's Prayer reminds us that we are to enter into Christ's mission of making the Kingdom visible in our workplace, relationships, and neighborhoods. Understanding God's Kingdom means realizing:

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (NIV) Matthew 6:9,10

- Everything belongs to God - Psalm 24:1-2
- God as King rules over the heavens and the earth - Psalm 47:8-9
- We are to live lives that reflect Kingdom values - Romans 12:1-2

The image of what the Kingdom of God 'looks like' was examined in light of Isaiah 11:1-9. One author summarized the image this way when he wrote that the Kingdom of God is "the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation, fulfillment, and delight". This is what the Hebrew prophets called shalom, a "universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight -...in other words, ..the way things ought to be". (C. Plantinga).

1. Read and discuss the quotes below. Do we seek/need a sense of purpose and mission in our lives? How does the city in which we live influence our sense of mission? How might money influence our sense of mission?

Man is eminently a storyteller. His search for a purpose, a cause, an ideal, a mission and the like is largely a search for a plot and a pattern in the development of his life story-a story that is basically without meaning or pattern.

Eric Hoffer from "The Passionate State of Mind"

"New York - You have money on your minds. So my words won't make a dime's worth of difference - So here's to you New York"

Art Garfunkel, "A Heart in New York"

"I'd asked around 10 or 15 people for suggestions.... Finally one lady friend asked the right question, "Well, what do you love most?" That's how I started painting money."

Andy Warhol, "Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Businessman"

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".

Jesus, Matthew 6:21

Most people would agree that we need and want a sense of purpose and mission in our lives. The discussion last week grounds our sense of mission and significance in our citizenship in the Kingdom of God. We are part of a great 'plot and pattern' (Hoffer quote above) - the narrative (story) of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His ministry was and is the ministry of bringing God's shalom to the world. This mission is lived out through our involvement in the Church. How does this sense of mission

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interface with the culture of NYC? The quotes above should elicit a discussion about the influence money has on our mission as citizens of God's Kingdom.

New York is the financial capital on the world. It is expensive and rewards those who 'make it' through the attainment of status and wealth. Therefore, it is particularly challenging to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God, whose King is constantly calling us to put the needs of others ahead of our own (Philippians 2:3-5); to give away our time and money in generous proportions (Proverbs 22:9, 1 Timothy 6:18), especially to those who are poor and marginalized (Deut 15:7-8, Proverbs 14:31, Luke 12:33). Yet, that is the task of the Kingdom, and therefore of the Church. This study specifically deals with the Kingdom principles concerning our material wealth. Note how Andy Warhol's comment perfectly echoes the wisdom of Jesus. Warhol was an artist who expressed his 'heart' by painting money. Most of us aren't that honest, but are influenced/driven by our love of material possessions and comfort.

Note of warning to leaders - Discussing money is always potentially volatile. It is important to communicate the principles without judgment. There might be a temptation by some in the group to 'come down hard' on those who are 'selfish and greedy', to bash the 'rich' (especially with the all the scandals on Wall Street and so many out of work), and to make broad commentary on how everyone should give 10% to the church. It will be your role to prevent this from happening. Allow the Scripture passages and the principles embodied in them to work on the hearts of each individual. Encourage everyone in the group to take the attached "Worksheet" seriously. If that happens, God will use this discussion to help individuals and his Church.

2. Read the passages below. What are some dangers that accompany material wealth? (1 Tim 6:7-10) What is it about money that is so potentially destructive? How are we supposed to view our money?

1 Timothy 6:7-11, 17-19

⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹ People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. **(NIV)**

At least of 25% of Jesus' parables directly deal with our use of wealth.

Most of us aren't that honest, but are influenced/driven by our love of material possessions and comfort.

Luke 12:32-34

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **(NIV)**

Paul writes that accumulating wealth for its own sake is a 'trap', and he provides insight into how it traps us:

a. You can't take it with you (vs. 7) - It is foolish to invest all of your time and energy accumulating material wealth when in the end you can take nothing with you. Of course there is wisdom in appropriate savings, putting aside some money for family, etc. But what Paul is referring to here is a hoarding of wealth; accumulation for its own sake. The implication is that there is so much more to our existence than attaining material wealth and that we are settling for much less if that is our primary mission.

b. Won't provide contentment (vs. 8) - Certainly, money does buy comfort, but Paul is saying that it is a lie, a 'trap' to believe that riches will be a source of contentment, or peace in your life. You can live a more simplified life ('food and clothing') and be content. He is warning against using material wealth as a narcotic to provide peace and contentment.

c. It is destructive (vs. 10) - Paul argues that the 'love of money' can result in the piercing of your life. There is a great temptation to make the pursuit of money the source of your identity; what Jesus refers to as your 'treasure' (Luke 12:34, Matt 6:21). This is the "trap" Paul warns about. Money has an allure that is so strong that Paul urges us to 'flee' (vs. 11). We will explore below why this happens.

3. Read Matthew 6:1-4,19-27 and discuss how money gains power over us; how it can become an idol in our lives. Remember, identifying something as an idol means asking "Does this thing/person control me by providing me with my sense of worth and identity?" Discuss the following potential 'traps' of making money an idol.

- Understanding idolatry - (vs. 21)
- Status - (vs. 2)
- Self-approval - (vs. 3)

1) Money is one of the best ways to identify the idols of your heart (vs. 21). You can always find out what your heart most loves, worships and rests in by identifying how you most easily and effortlessly spend your money. One example is someone who spends a disproportionate amount of money on his or her

appearance (health clubs, clothing, etc). It is important to ask whether that is an indication that one finds 'looking good' a source of self-worth. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we are to have our hearts controlled by the beauty of our King. When that begins to happen (through worship, prayer, community) we will find our wealth flowing towards Christ's mission.

2) Money can be a way of gaining power and influence (vs. 2-3). One way that this 'status' idol operates is through the spending of inordinate amounts of money to get into certain neighborhoods, clubs, or circles of people. It is also manifest in pursuing careers that are personally unfulfilling but financially highly rewarding. Scripture reminds us that there is no eternal status in the riches invested primarily for our own earthly status. That is why Jesus is constantly teaching about an investment in something eternal, which as we have discussed, is the mission of the Kingdom of God.

3) Money can be a way to feel good about yourself (vs. 3). We may look at how well we earned and saved our money and tell ourselves how much better we are than most; that we are more savvy, industrious, thrifty than those individuals who are always living on the edge. This is a subtle form of idolatry as it can manifest itself in pride in ones generosity. Instead, if we understand that as citizens of the Kingdom of God that everything comes from God, we realize that all we are doing is giving God back the money he has loaned us. This is echoed in I Chronicles 29 - 14 "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

Remember, idolatry is a function of the value we place in something, and is not an indictment in and of itself on those 'things'. There is nothing inherently wrong with career success, material wealth, or concern for our appearance - it is the 'love' of those things that Paul is warning against.

4. How then should we give?

a. We are to give a tithe (10%) of our 'firstfruits' (defined in 21st Century as 'gross income') is recognized as the minimum biblical standard. In the Old Testament the tithe was given to support the temple (equivalent to the NT church) and the poor (Leviticus 27:30-33, Deut 14:22-29). Again, remembering that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God; that God owns all things, and that we are just stewards of his resources, makes this an 'incredible deal' by any standard. Imagine working for an owner of a business that gave you 90% of the gross profits! This is effectively what God has done. Some argue that this is an OT law and doesn't apply to our situation today. Yet, when Jesus had an opportunity to distance himself from this law, he instead criticized the leaders of the church NOT for giving the tithe, but for giving it without a sense of inner worship/compassion. Read Luke 11:42. Arguments against the tithe based on legalism ("We are under grace, not the law, so why should I be enslaved to a standard like the tithe?") must be understood

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"Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."

Luke 11:42

in light of the purpose of the law. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the full ramifications of that kind of statement, but suffice it to say that when Jesus begins his teaching on the Kingdom of God he is quick to identify himself positively with the law. **Matthew 5:16-17** ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. ¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." The Law of God is a reflection of his character. God is righteous, holy, compassionate, merciful, generous, and just. Therefore he expects those of us who are citizens of his Kingdom to 'let our light shine' through the doing of 'good deeds', and thereby bringing glory and praise to our 'Father in heaven'. Do we understand that as the Church we are to be seen as a reflection of the character of God? Jesus is saying that our good deeds will be a sign that points to the King!! He isn't saying that our good deeds save us, but that the 'law' is a sign of the Kingdom, which includes the use of our money.

b. Giving must be sacrificial - Paul says about the Macedonians, "they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability" (II Cor. 8:3). That means that for some of us we can give more than 10%. Remember, we are tying our giving to our role as ambassadors of God's kingdom. That means that we are always aware of those in our community who are marginalized. We have the responsibility and the privilege as God's ambassadors to participate in his mission by giving of our time and money to make sure that everyone experiences the shalom of the Kingdom. (Lev. 23:22, Deut 10:18-19, James 1:27).

c. Giving must be Systematic and Thoughtful - Paul directed the Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he could come and take it to famine victims (I Cor. 8:10-11). Spontaneous unplanned giving, while often joyful, is usually not in biblical proportions. Some have argued that this kind of systematic approach is counter to the Biblical notion of being a 'cheerful' giver. In other words, I shouldn't give if I don't 'feel' cheerful. While it is important to guard against giving in a non-worshipful way, it is equally important to not use this as an excuse for not giving. There are many times when we don't 'feel like' praying, or reading the Bible, or loving our spouse - does that mean we shouldn't? Participation in the community of the Kingdom of God is the best way to guard against spiritual stagnation in all areas of our lives, including the stewardship of our material wealth.

d. Plan your giving wisely - If you aren't able to give 10%, think about how you can give more than you are giving now, and work your way towards the tithe. Practically, this means you shouldn't give if you are going to substantially:

- **Compromise your health and safety (I Tim 6:6,8)**
- **Become a burden to others - it is wise to budget/save so that we can provide for our health and safety.**
- **Reneg on your obligations - some have student loans, etc that must be paid back. It is important though to guard against excess debt that becomes an obstacle to Kingdom investment.**

5. Gospel Meditation - My motivation for giving.

Because it is the tendency of the human heart to make our 'good deeds' (1 Timothy 6:8) a source of self-righteousness, we must always ground those deeds in what Christ has done for us. Because of money's powerful influence in our culture and lives, training ourselves to give it away in generous amounts requires ongoing application of the Gospel. Take time to mediate as a group on 2 Corinthians 8:9 and discuss how it helps you wrestle with giving away your money.

- a. **Although I 'know the grace', how have I forgotten it?**
- b. **Have I reflected seriously on what it meant for Christ to become 'poor' for my sake?**
- c. **Have I reflected recently on what it means that I am 'rich' as a result of Christ's 'poverty'?**
- d. **Take some time as a group to pray through this verse, giving thanks for Christ's great sacrifice for us. Then take some time to pray for the ministry of Christ's Kingdom at Redeemer, specifically remembering the financial needs of the ministry.**

APPLICATION

Having spent some time in reflection and prayer, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does my money control me?

In other words, do I have good resources and use them to maintain and pursue a lifestyle that is at the upper limits of what I can afford. Do I let a fear of losing my lifestyle keep me from being generous? Do I compare myself primarily with those who have either the same or greater standard of living than me? Do I ever consider how I can simplify my lifestyle in order to free up resources to invest in God's Kingdom? How you answer these questions will determine to what extent money controls you.

2. Am I giving proportionately and intentionally?

In other words, do I invest at least 10% of my gross income to support the work of God's Kingdom? If not, do I resist this guideline because I am still unsure that it is Biblical (if so, there are many resources available to assist you in this way), or do I resist because I have never taken reflected seriously on the principles in the passage above?

Am I impulsive in my donations, or do I plan how much I am going to give and then

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

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2 Corinthians 8:9

give it regularly? For example, you may decide you want to start giving 10% of your income to ministry, but aren't in a position to do that yet. This might require a plan to simplify your lifestyle so that you can attain your goal over a reasonable period of time.

3. Investing in Redeemer

If you consider Redeemer Presbyterian Church (RPC) your primary Church community, the place where you feel invested in, this worksheet is for you. Redeemer's annual operating budget for 2002 is approximately \$5.7M. Redeemer has no endowment set aside for its general budget, therefore the church relies on the weekly giving of its members and friends. The information below is designed to assist you in planning your potential giving to Redeemer's mission.

Annual Budget = \$5.7M

Average Attendance = 3500

If you assume the average salary at RPC is \$40,000, then if 2500 people gave only 6% of their income to the church would provide \$6M.

Exercise:

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-2, 6-18

Take time to reflect on how God is portrayed

- a. One who provides (vs. 11, 12, 16, 17)
- b. One who rules (vs. 12)
- c. One who tests us for generosity (vs. 17)

Take some time to:

- a. Praise God for his goodness, power, & generosity
- b. Confess ways you have not responded with gratitude and generosity of time and money.
- c. Rejoice that Jesus has passed every test we have or will fail.
- d. Ask God to help you become one who invests in His Kingdom.

Personal Worksheet - for group members to do with exercise

Example Annual Gross Income = \$50,000

% to RPC	Annual Contribution	Weekly Contribution
3%	\$1,500	\$29
5%	\$2,500	\$48
7%	\$3,500	\$67
10%	\$5,000	\$96
12%	\$6,000	\$115

Use the chart below to calculate your current percentage of giving, as well as help you estimate a potential higher level of giving.

Annual Gross Income =

% to RPC	Annual Contribution	Weekly Contribution
3%	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5%	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7%	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
10%	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
12%	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>