




THE COMMUNITY

God's View on Wealth

What Do I Need to Know?

Luke 12:13-21 and Romans 12:1-2

Jesus had spent most of Luke 11 teaching his disciples and the crowds and confronting the Pharisees on various teachings. This passage in Luke 12:13-21 records Jesus responding to someone in the crowd who was seeking advice from Him as a rabbi with authority. Jesus uses this event to teach this individual as well as His disciples about greed and possessions.

In Romans 12:1-2 the Apostle Paul challenges us to present everything we are to God, to let Him change us so we can live in His plans. Consider these ideas as they relate to our commitment to Christ and this topic of God's view on wealth:

- According to the Bible, God has called each of us to be faithful managers of all He entrusts to us.
- Many in our society have their lives and options severely limited and disrupted, because they are not following God's financial principles for their lives.
- Relationships are enhanced or degraded based on how we handle money. This is particularly true of marriage relationships.
- The advance of God's Kingdom is hindered through the misappropriation of His resources.
- Frequently, biblical financial management is not taught at home, school or church. Our society is reaping the results of this ignorance.

What's the Big Idea?

God has called us to live lives built on an eternal perspective. When we apply this to our income and possessions, then we can truly be free from the pull of the culture and materialism. He has called us to be transformed in our hearts, minds, and lives. Scripture provides principles we need for wise and faithful money management.

What's the Problem?

Most people have not learned Scriptural truths about money at home, church, or in school. Others have, but have yet to apply them. As a result, many of us live by the world's perspective on finances instead of God's. We often do this without even realizing it. The temptation to covet what others have and desire what the world has to offer has a powerful pull on our lives.

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What Are the Questions?

Launch

1. Consider the pull of the culture in the list below. Put a check next to the worldly perspective (cultural myth) you think influences you the most or can tempt you the most:

- Possessions bring happiness.
- What we own defines who we are.
- The more money we have, the more we should spend.
- Spending is a competition.

Discuss which myth you checked and why you checked it.

Explore

Read out loud: Luke 12:13-21

2. Look at verses 13-15. What may have been the motive behind the person in the crowd telling Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him? What warning does Jesus give to the crowd in verse 15?

3. What was Jesus trying to communicate in verses 16-21 by using this parable?

4. How would you briefly summarize verses 13-21?

Read out loud: Romans 12:1-2

5. In Romans 12:1, what step does Paul urge us to take?

6. What does it mean to be conformed to this world? What does it mean for us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds? How can this show us and others that God's will is good?

Apply

7. What passage from the Bible can you print or write out and tape to your bathroom mirror to remind you to live for eternal things and not the things of this world?

8. A Spending Plan is the fundamental tool we will use to allocate and control financial resources; it provides us a way to live out our values and priorities.

- It allows us to know how we're doing financially and face reality.
- It provides a guideline for making spending decisions.
- Empowers us to avoid wasteful uses of money.
- It leads to freedom and keeps future options open.

What's Our Response?

We need to consciously choose to live by God's principles and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we make financial decisions regarding possessions, stewardship, anxiety, seeking His kingdom first, etc. As we study the Bible, we can ask God to reveal to us areas where we could become materialistic and need to be on our guard, as well as what we can do in those areas to please Him. As He draws us closer to Himself we will grow in effectiveness as His disciples. This will free us up to serve Him with fewer hindrances from the world and our circumstances in life.

NOTES:

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What Are the Answers?

1. This question will help to bring further engagement with the subject as you give everyone a chance to respond.

2. Perhaps the man was struggling with greed, since Jesus turns and addresses the crowd to be careful to guard against covetousness and greed. These things are wrong, because they elevate material things above their true importance in life. Our quality of life is not measured by what we own; possessions do not bring true fulfillment. Instead, we can seek to work toward eternal treasure, the things that will last. Read Colossians 3:1-4 as a good cross-reference to this topic. The key here is to be aware of our hearts and minds if we are starting to covet anything.

3. Accumulating things for purely personal gain is not God's plan for what He has given us. Our hearts need to be clearly focused on His kingdom and His glory, not our own. Jesus is directing us to think about being rich toward God -- that is, He wants us to ask ourselves how our money and possessions can not only meet our own needs, but also expand His kingdom in the lives of others.

4. Guard against all forms of greed and coveting; instead focus on the things that are eternal, because then you will find true peace and blessing.

5. Paul urges us to present our whole selves to God. God has called us to live sacrificially, because He has given us so much mercy -- He delivers us from sin and the condemnation that we deserve. Our whole lives need to be given over to God. Romans 12:1 deals with making our commitment to honor God, while verse two stresses maintaining it.

6. Conforming to this world means that we live our lives "in conformity with" the systems in place around us. We think, say and do what people around us think, say and do. Being transformed in our minds means that we let God's Word shape what we think, say and do through the power of the Holy Spirit. This kind of living shows us and others that God's will is good by producing peace in us and blessing in our relationships and work. Materialism, pride and covetousness are pushed aside as we live with our minds transformed and our lives dedicated to God.

7. Encourage group members to share the verse or passage they chose. If people cannot think of a passage right away, consider Romans 12:1-2 as a start. Also Luke 12:15 or Colossians 3:1-4 could be good passages. Meditating on God's Word can be a first step in transforming our minds.

8. No matter where we are in our financial understanding, it's crucial for us to know how we are spending our money. We will get this information by keeping a record of everything we spend for the next 5 weeks. Sound challenging? Really, it's not complicated at all!

Memorize

Then He said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

Luke 12:15

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Exercise For the Next 5 Weeks

Carry a small notebook with you to record your expenses, or make an on-going list on your smartphone. Be sure to capture everything for these 5 weeks, as you will need this information for weeks 5 and 6. Here are suggested categories to use while tracking your spending (You can also sneak a look at the Spending Plan in lesson 5 for ideas.):

- Church / giving
- Saving
- Housing (even if you don't pay monthly)
- Utilities and phone/internet
- Groceries
- Car expenses (gas, repairs, insurance)
- Books / materials or other supplies
- Credit card payment
- Eating out / entertainment (including online purchases)
- Clothing, cosmetics, etc.
- Hobbies/sports
- Fun money!



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