

Bible Study
Money Under God



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Money must be one of the most awkward topics for us to talk about. On the surface it's very unemotional and matter of fact, but we don't need to scratch far beneath the surface and to realise how much money relates to some pretty deep and personal things! Priorities, desires, temptations, fears, hopes, our sense of security and even our sense of worth. Amidst all of this I think we'd like to give the impression that we've got it pretty well sorted out, when for many of us this is an area with lots of uncertainty and a fair degree of anxiety. Wouldn't it be great to grapple with this together around God's word as we allow him to reshape our perspective, lift our vision and reshape our desires? Jesus said that money risked being a direct competitor with God for our worship (Matthew 6:24) and Paul called greed for what it is - idolatry (Colossians 3:5) so we clearly need to take it seriously. But there's also great hope as we hear Jesus' great promise that he alone offers us true rest from our wearisome burdens, which includes the burden of our financial anxieties (Matthew 11:28-30). So let's expect gospel challenge and gospel hope in equal measure as we consider what it looks like to place our Money Under God.

If you find these studies helpful but would like to dig deeper and read further, then you might like to consider the following books:

Beyond Greed by *Brian Rosner*

Redeeming Money by *Paul David Tripp*

Counterfeit Gods by *Tim Keller*

Managing God's Money by *Randy Alcorn*

Study 1. Enjoying Money

Why do you think we find it awkward talking about money?

Martin Luther reportedly observed that 'there are three conversions necessary to every man: the head, the heart and the purse.' John Wesley later commented on this that 'the last part of a man to be converted is his wallet.' Do you agree with these comments?

Read Psalm 104:1-35 and Deuteronomy 8:6-18

What do these passages teach us about where our material possessions come from?

What response towards God do these passages call for and model?
(see Deut 8:6, 18 and Psalm 104:1, 31-35)

How do these passages challenge your perspective on your money?

Read the following proverbs:

Proverbs 11:4, 18, 28

Proverbs 16:8, 16, 19

Proverbs 28:18-27

What do these proverbs teach us about:
Right and wrong ways to make money?

Right and wrong attitudes towards money?

What do these proverbs say about the way our attitude toward God and other people impact the way we think about and use money?

Discuss:

All the passages we have looked at are from the Old Testament. Without Jesus we might feel like there is no hope for us when we fail to live up to these ideals. How does the gospel of grace put this into perspective?

Would you regard yourself as a rich person? What criteria would you use to decide what it means to be rich?

How would you summarise your own current attitude towards money?

How would you describe your own track record in managing the money God has given you?

Let's learn a memory verse for this series:

1 Timothy 6:17-19

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. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 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.

Pray:

Give thanks for the material and spiritual riches God has blessed you with.

Ask him for forgiveness for the times when you have been unfaithful to him with your money.

Ask him to give you wisdom to enjoy money the way he intended.

Study 2. Dethroning Money

When do you find it hard to be content? Have you found anything that helps you grow in contentment?

Read Luke 12:16-21

In what way was the rich man enslaved by his money? (hint – see v17-18)

In what ways had he forgotten God? (hint – see v19)

It is easy for us to point the finger at the ways other people might live like this. Instead of doing this, take time to jot down a few ways that you might be prone to doing this in your own life.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-12

How does v7 put our discontentment in stark perspective?

What is the risk that verse 9-10 sets out?

What is the alternative that v11-12 sets out?

There is a contrast between 'wandering from the faith' v10 and 'fleeing from all this' v11. Can you think of ways that the love of money might cause us to 'wander from the faith'? What might it look like to deliberately 'flee from all this'?

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Pray:

Take time in confession, acknowledging the ways we have put money on the throne of our lives rather than Jesus. Use these words of Jesus to prompt your confession:

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew 7,35?

Take time asking that God would replace the love of money with a deep love of him and his kingdom – that your heart would be rich towards God. Use these two short parables of Jesus to prompt your prayer:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." Matthew 24,55-46

Study 3. Investing Money

What are some charities or ministries that you are glad to give to and why? How has giving to these charities or ministries impacted you – perhaps changing the things you are thankful for or anxious about?

Read Luke 12:22-34

Jesus begins this section with the instruction in v22 'do not worry about your life...' and in v32 comes back to the same idea of worry and fear. How does v32 provide the ultimate antidote to our worry about our material prosperity?

In v33 Jesus goes on to say 'Sell your possessions and give to the poor' He doesn't stipulate how many possessions, but the clear encouragement is to make cash available to allow for generosity. How does the assurance of v32 give confidence to take this radical financial action?

What further motivation does v33-34 give for generosity?

Re-read our memory verse for this series from 1 Timothy 6:17-19

What is the main contrast that is made in verse 17?

Can you identify one or two aspects of life that might be different if you applied v17 to your own situation?

v18 seems simple enough, but it draws on more resources than just money – what other resources are being invested here?

v19 presents a very long-term investment horizon (eternity!), which is much longer than our usual 5 or 10 year horizons or even superannuation for retirement. What do you find challenging about this perspective? What do you find encouraging about this perspective?

Discuss:

What are some barriers to you being more generous and deliberate in giving?

What could you do to overcome those barriers?

How can we encourage each other to view our possessions with an eternal perspective?

Pray:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 5,7

