

Wealth and Poverty

By Trey Dimsdale

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Proverbs 14:23 and 21:5. Reflect on your own life (even in areas unrelated to money, such as grades in school, sports, etc.). Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What concrete results have you seen when you worked hard versus when you did not? Does your experience match the wisdom of these verses?

Assignment Two

Read Hebrews 13:16. Note that the author of Hebrews commanded believers not “to neglect” sharing with others. We can draw from this that we are to actively seek the opportunity to do so. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are some concrete ways you can actively share what you have with others?

Assignment Three

Read Ephesians 2:8–10. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How are faith and works related according to this passage?

Scripture to Memorize

“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” 1 Timothy 6:10

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the disciple’s responsibility with regard to material wealth.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Tim was born into a large, working-class family. They never had much materially, but his parents were strong believers who taught him to honor Christ through hard work. After college Tim started a business that is becoming prosperous. He sees his business associates spend money on frivolities and commit more time to work than to church or family. He can feel the allure of what wealth can buy. What advice do you have for Tim? What temptations do you think he will likely face?

You are not poor. No matter the circumstances in which you now live, when compared to all of the people on the earth today, you are likely in the top 5 percent of the wealthiest people. This is usually no consolation when you are faced with the desire to have things you can't afford, tempted to spend money you don't have, or are generally discontent with your financial circumstances. Fortunately, the Bible has much to say about money and proper attitudes toward it.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6–13 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 6-13

Verse 6. who leads an unruly life. Paul identified those who lead unruly lives as the subject of the admonishment that follows. He contrasted unruly lives with the way he lived while he was among them, including working for what he had.

Verse 8. not be a burden. Paul did not depend on others to provide for his needs but instead worked hard to be able to pay for his own food so he would not create a hardship for any of the believers there.

Verse 9. a model for you. Paul emphasized that his willingness to work hard was to provide a model by which the believers should live. By refusing to be a burden on others, Paul's work was an act of love.

Verse 11. leading an undisciplined life, doing no work . . . , but acting like busybodies. Some in the community of believers were not following Paul's example. They refused to be involved in productive endeavors that would allow them to care for themselves. Instead, they wasted their energies on nonsense and expected the church to care for their needs.

Verse 12. command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul invoked his authority to address those who were not working for what they have. He made clear that they were to work and to be self-reliant.

Verse 13. doing good. Paul added a reminder that the admonishment he gave was for those able to work. He reminded the church that they were to do good, which included caring for those unable to care for themselves.

Assignment One Feedback

The disciple who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share answers to the following questions: What concrete results have you seen when you worked hard versus when you did not? Does your experience match the wisdom of Proverbs 14:23 and 21:5?

On Your Own

Paul used the term “undisciplined” to describe the lives of those whom he criticized in the passage above. Using the space below, list several areas where you are undisciplined, and then list ways you can correct those areas. If you were to persist in being undisciplined, list what you should expect based on the verses you have studied.

Read 1 John 3:17 out loud.

Studying the Passage, v. 17

Verse 17. sees his brother in need. The book of 1 John includes several qualities every believer should possess because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. One of these qualities is a willingness to share with those in need.

Assignment Two Feedback

The disciple who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share answers to the following question: What are some concrete ways you can actively share what you have with others?

Discussion Questions

Given what you learned from the passages above, you know God wants us to work hard for what we have. But He also wants us to be willing to use our possessions liberally for the benefit of others. Why do you think this is? What does this tell us about the nature of material wealth? What does this tell us about God’s priorities and how He expects us to order our own priorities?

Read James 2:14–18 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 14-18

Verse 14. Can that faith save him? Works cannot save us. We are saved “by grace . . . through faith” (Ephesians 2:8). James was not teaching that faith plus works saves. Instead he was teaching that genuine saving faith is a faith that will produce good works.

Verse 15. If a brother or sister is without. When a brother or sister comes to you with a genuine physical need and you fail to meet it—despite having the resources to do so—the faith you have is not saving faith.

Verse 17. dead. Such “faith” is dead and a counterfeit of the genuine article. True faith animates good works and motivates believers to love others and care for their physical needs.

Verse 18. show [others our] faith by [our] works. When someone’s priorities are God’s priorities, when he is focused on the good of others before himself, and when he is willing to *act* to see that others’ needs are met, this is a sign that the person possesses faith in Christ. A believer’s good works are a testimony to the faith that motivates that disciple to love and to work for the benefit of others.

Assignment Three Feedback

The disciple who completed **Assignment Three** during the week may now share an answer to the following question: How are faith and works related according to Ephesians 2:8–10?

Discussion

Faith in Christ motivates believers to do good works that benefit others ultimately because those works glorify Christ. How do you think a love of money and wealth could interfere with a believer's willingness to do good works? Are those with much wealth the only ones who could fall into this trap? What is the best way to avoid this?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to King Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

The Bible teaches three primary things about wealth.

1. First, if we are physically able, we should work in order to support ourselves.
2. Second, we should give of what we have in order to provide for those who are unable to provide for themselves.
3. Third, and related to the second, we should seek to meet the needs of others with our wealth so as to glorify Christ.

In summary, the material resources of a believer belong to him, but they are given to him for the benefit of others.

The temptation for all of us is to love our material possessions more than those in need. Ultimately the temptation is to love possessions more than the glory of Christ. Our adoration of Christ, flowing from our love and gratitude for His sacrifice, is the animating source for what we do that serves the needs of others.

When we become more focused on material possessions than the One who provided them, we are no longer in a posture of thankfulness, and we have sinned. At that point we easily fall into the trap of loving material possessions. Whatever we love, we serve. If we love money, our focus will turn from serving others to the accumulation of wealth. But if we love the majestic Christ with all our being, then it will be our joy and honor to care for others in His name.

Parent Question

Given what you have learned from Scripture about material wealth, what is the most God-honoring thing you can do with what God has provided to you?

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