

Resonate

BIBLE STUDY

“DOLLARS”

Money. It can be a necessity as well as an obsession. It can be used for good as well as evil. We can have it or it can have us. The lure of it is everywhere. This week we will learn God's viewpoint on dealing with dollars.



Today's Scripture:
Genesis 13:1-2, 5-12

The Word

Genesis 13:1-2

¹ So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

Verse 1-2: Abraham was very wealthy. As we begin this week, please realize that there is no sin in having plenty. The sin comes with how we deal with the material possession we do have.

Genesis 13:5

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.

Verse 5: Lot was the nephew of Abraham. He, also, had many possessions. In our day and age, we do not associate animals with wealth. However, in this time and culture, the herds were their material possession. They represented food, clothing, and bartering currency. The reference to many tents means that Lot probably had many servants. This was another sign of being well-to-do. Lot and Abraham were both rich. However, contention arose due to their possessions. Interestingly enough, the fight was not between them.

Genesis 13:6-7

⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ And

quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

Verse 6-7: They had so much stuff that the land could not support all the animals. The caretakers of the herds began arguing over “property rights”. The fighting was intense. Sadly, it was taking place in the land of the Canaanites and Perizzites. The pagan nations were witnessing the brand new chosen people of God fighting over land. In our desire for more, and in our pursuit of what is best for “us”, we can be a poor witness about the character of God to a watching world. If people without God in their lives, fight over what is best for them, then how were Abraham and Lot’s herdsmen proving that they were any different by knowing God. Thankfully, Abraham intervened.

Genesis 13:8-9

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."

Verse 8-9: Abraham showed so much humility here. As the elder in the family, he could have bossed Lot around and told him to move on. Instead, Abraham allows Lot to choose his course and by default Abraham would go the other way. When we are dealing with dollars, our character and our humility should be considered more valuable than our material possessions. Sadly, Lot does not model this same attitude.

Genesis 13:10-12

¹⁰ Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.

Verse 10-12: Lot thought of himself. He looked to see what would benefit his interests. He did not care if Abraham would suffer or not. Instead, he just considered what would take care of himself. The lure of dollars is to make us think about what we want. We no longer care how it hurts others.

We want what we want and we want it now. Both Abraham and Lot were wealthy. Their attitudes toward it were completely different. Lot was willing to do whatever it takes to ensure his portfolio increased. Abraham, on the other hand, had learned that people were more important than possessions. Character was more valuable than cash. Humility was more profitable than herds. The wealth was not the sin. The reaction to material possessions is what could lead to our downfall.

Application

Confess anytime you may have looked out for your own material interest at the expense of someone else.

How do you feel about the statement that “wealth in itself is not a sin”?

In what ways can the way we deal with money matters, be a poor witness to unbelievers?

How do we often react like Lot?

What are examples of ways we can model Abraham in the way we deal with dollars?

DAY 2

Today's Scripture:
Matthew 6:19-24

The Word

Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²²"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Verse 19-24: These verses detail what our attitude should be towards wealth.

First of all, wealth should not be stored. This means to not hoard our wealth. It is fine for us to save in order to provide for our families in the future. That shows wisdom. However, to hoard your wealth is a greedy attitude of not wanting to give anything away to help others. It is to ignore the needs of others when you could easily help them to meet their needs. It is so focused on yourself that you miss opportunities to bless others.

Second, our wealth should never be our focus. We need to live for eternity. The way we spend our money should reflect the values of God. We should be more concerned about our eternal rewards received from our righteous actions on earth, then the money in our bank account.

Third, our eyes should be on God. When we look towards Him through the Word and prayer, we recognize how to use the material blessings God has given us in good ways. However, when we focus on the world, the darkness of coveting of things, jealousy of others, doing whatever it takes to get what we want, and other sins begins to take over. We become more and more like the darkness of the world instead of the Light to the world.

Fourth, we need to evaluate our hearts. Who do you love or serve: God or money? You can tell by your time, thoughts, and energy. Do you spend more time striving to get more things instead of serving God? Do you think about the stuff you want or about the ways of God? Do you give your all to what can make you money and then give God whatever energy you may have leftover? Think though what or Whom you truly love.

Application

We live in a material world that is obsessed with money and possessions. Ask God to help you recognize how this attitude has infiltrated your life. Ask for His light to shine in your darkness.

How do these verses conflict with everything we are taught in our culture?

What are ways we can stop storing treasures on earth and begin to store them in heaven?

How can we change our focus from the world to the eternal life?

How can we keep our hearts in check from straying from light to darkness?

DAY 3

Today's Scripture:
Matthew 6:25-33

The Word

The having of wealth can potentially lead to sin. However, the lack of material possessions can also lead to sin. We must be aware of the pitfalls of both in order to steer our hearts from the danger.

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Verse 25-33: These verses are in the context of the money verses that we studied yesterday. Jesus spoke about not treasuring the material possessions on earth. But now, He is addressing the worry from not having the wealth that we believe we need. When we do not have what we view as important, we can be led to the sin of worry.

We are told not to worry. It does not say worry about some things, or it is understandable if you worry some of the time. Instead, it says to never worry. In whatever situation you may be in, you are commanded to not fret, be upset, try to consider how to fix your problems, wonder aloud, wail, complain, in other words, to not worry. In fact, we are not to even worry

about our life. That covers every situation we could possibly come up with for a reason for worry.

We are not to be concerned with the necessities of life. It is not to be a source of fear. The very food and clothing we need is not to even bother us. The sad thing is, most of our worries are not even over necessities but over wants. Will we get to go on vacation? Will I be able to afford a better car? Should I buy a boat or a jet ski? If we are not to worry about our true needs, how much more do these verses apply to the things we want out of life.

It comes down to focus. Will I turn my attention to what I do not have, or will I look towards what I do possess? For example, the fact that you are alive at this moment is more important than the fact that you may have some financial concerns. Another truth we must focus on is the power of God. If He is able to feed birds and clothe grass, then He is surely willing and able to help us. Please remember, these verses are written in context of our needs, not wants. Do not stretch this verse as a promise to meet your heart's desires. If you begin your focus on the fact that you have life, then your wants will melt away in the reality of being alive. We are to realize that God is able to provide for us and place our faith in Him. When we do, we will stop saying, "What is going to happen to me? Will it all work out?" and instead will devote my words, energy, and thoughts to thinking about the Lord. When I realize His gift of life, I appreciate what I have. When I realize His power, I believe He can provide. When I realize He is aware of my need, I can trust His love for me. When I focus on God, the worries of this world no longer matter.

Application

Spend time turning your focus from your "worries" to your God.
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How do you usually deal with the material needs of your life?

What keeps us in a state of worry over our needs?

When we worry, what are we truly saying about God?

How can we turn from worry about our needs to trusting God with our needs?



Today's Scripture:

1 Timothy 6:6-10, Hebrews 13:5

The Word

We live in a culture consumed by greed. We see commercials which tell us that we need more. We feel deprived if we do not have the latest in technology, cheated if we are not dressed in the current fashions, and downtrodden if our car is a later model. There is evidence of foolishness when we confuse wants and needs. However, what is the harm in wanting more? The Scripture shows us the danger of the lure of money.

1 Timothy 6:9-10

⁹People 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. ¹⁰For 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.

Verse 9-10: The desire for riches leads to sins that can entrap us. Ruin and destruction awaits those whose sole pursuit in life is wealth. The love of money leads to different forms of evil. This is not just referring to the unbelievers in this world. For even Christians have wandered from the faith in order to pursue the material things of this world and it has led them to inflict pain upon themselves.

The seriousness of this matter needs to be fully realized by us. The pursuit of this world takes us from God and leads us to terrible places. It is not something to be taken lightly or to joke about. Often we minimize this sin and consider it to be not all that harmful. Yet, the Word of God shows the danger of the love of money. This love can grab a hold of anyone's heart: young and old, rich or poor, man or woman. We must realize the danger and guard our hearts. How do we do this?

1 Timothy 6:6-8

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Verse 6-8: Contentment is the key to protecting ourselves from the evils caused from loving money. We need to realize that what we have in this world is temporary. Everything of value here is worthless when we step into eternity. We need to be thankful for what we do have. If our needs are being met, then that is enough. We do not require anything more. When we set our attention on what we have, compared to what we want, then we will find contentment.

Hebrews 13:5

*⁵Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,
"Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you."*

Verse 5: Another reason to stay clear from the love of money by living in contentment is it helps us to realize the true riches available to us. The wonderful fact about life is that God will never abandon us. In whatever circumstance we may face, we have all we need for the Lord is with us. Everything we try to gain by pursuing money can never compare to all we have with the Lord. Because God is with us, why would we spend our time, energy, and resources pursuing the far lesser things of this world?

When we pursue money, we become spiritual poor for our life is spent on the things of this world. Our spiritual poverty increases as our focus on money increases. We are drawn away from the Only One who can satisfy

our hearts. For money and possessions can never fill the void in our hearts.

When we purposely live in contentment, we will pursue God and discover the spiritual riches that eternally abound. He is more fascinating than the latest technology. His beauty marvels the latest fashions. His power can stir our soul more than a new car. He abundantly meets all the desires of our hearts. He is the fascination of the universe. Diamonds and gold pale in comparison to the Glory of the universe.

When we choose to turn away from the love of money, we will discover that the Lord never left us even when we left Him to go after the things of this world. What a difference from the world! It is always willing to leave behind the person who does not have the right clothes, the expensive house, the fancy toys, and all the other things of this world which are passing away. However, God will never leave you. You do not have to strive to fit into His group. You are accepted. Not only that, you have eternal wealth living within you! That wealth is yours forever.

Application

Confess any love you have for money. Ask God to free you from pursuing this world and to help you to pursue Him instead.

What sins can the love of money lead to?

How can the love of money lead a Christian to abandon his faith?

Why is contentment so important?

How do we live a contented life?



Today's Scripture:

Mark 12:41-44

The Word

I remember sitting in a church staff meeting when the pastor brought up a large offering that a wealthy person would be giving on the following Sunday. I am not sure how he was aware of the money that would be coming in, but I do know that his reaction to it enraged me. He had decided to have this man stand in front of the church while the pastor shared the amount of money given so that everyone could celebrate this rich man's generosity. The following story came to mind as the pastor went on and on about the thousands of dollars that the man would be giving.

Mark 12:41-44

⁴¹Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴²But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

⁴³Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Verse 41-44: Many pastors often place themselves in view of seeing what people give. They do this in order to buddy up to the rich, the big givers. This is far from the example of Christ. He was watching but was unimpressed by the gifts of the wealthy. Instead, his eyes zeroed in on a woman, shabbily dressed, all alone who put in so little that it could buy nothing at the market. This would be someone whom most preachers would pass by. But not Jesus.

The Lord's voice is heard above the crowd. He is calling His disciples to come over to Him. They rush over, wondering what Jesus wants to share with them. What does God Almighty want to tell them? He points to a woman. A poor widow is singled out from the rest of the crowd. I wonder if the disciples were shocked. They were in the middle of the rich people

throwing in money to the temple treasury. Yet, this woman was a complete nobody. Why would Jesus want them to look at her? They would much rather adore the popular and prosperous. This woman was a nobody by the world's economic system. Yet, God Himself points to her and gives her a compliment that still resounds in Scripture today.

The woman who gave less than a penny gave more than anyone. Jesus did not evaluate the size of the gift, but the size of the heart. She gave all she had to the Lord. She counted her life as less important than giving to God. She could have justified by not giving saying she needed to buy food. It would be true. But this woman's heart was so in tune with God that she would rather give to Him, to His work, to His kingdom, than to give to herself.

How much are we willing to give to God? Do we give anything to His kingdom's work through the church? Is our priority to buy all we want first and then give to the Lord what is leftover? If we do give, do we feel good that others know we tithe? Is it all for show? Or do we actually think God should be grateful and commend us for giving to Him? Sadly, that is often our attitude.

This poor woman shows us the true model of giving. For one, it should be a priority. I know some of you are thinking, "There they go, always trying to get money for the church." On behalf of church staff's everywhere, let me apologize for all the ministers who are about money. There are some pastors who are money hungry. They are in sin and they will be held accountable for God for their evil. However, when I say giving should be a priority, I am not concerned about the money. God is the provider and sustainer of all needs. He owns everything. His church is not a beggar hoping for leftovers. The giving is for our spiritual good. It reminds us that the money is not truly ours, but God's. It is an opportunity to thank God for the gifts He has given us. It is a partnership with others in the kingdom of God who are taking the gospel throughout the world. It is the ability to help those who are suffering. It is obedience to God.

Besides the priority of giving, there is the posture of giving. She was humble. However, the wealthy were not. They were showing off their funds to all who was willing to see. "Look how spiritual I am as I give money to God." The Lord was sitting right there and He was not impressed. When we give, we are to be humble.

When we make giving a priority and we have the posture of humility in giving, then we will receive the honor of the praise of giving. Jesus commends this widow. He praises her in front of all His disciples. For thousands of years, this woman has been set before us as an example. What a compliment from Almighty God! When we give, God Himself is pleased. And He brags on you and will one day reward you for your faithfulness to Him. And that, my friend, is worth more than all the money on earth!

Application

Evaluate your giving in light of the truth of God's Word.

How is your attitude toward giving?

How can giving become a priority in your life?

Do you believe that your giving would please God? If not, how can that be changed?

In light of all we have learned this week, how have you been convicted about your dealings with the dollars in your life?