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Use it or lose it!

Studies in Stewardship

Introduction

In our previous studies we have looked at the principle of using our Time, Talents and Treasure for God. We use all for Him because:

- It all belongs to God anyway;
- We are accountable to God for what we do with 'it';
- When we follow Christ, we surrender our lives completely to him; and,
- There is great reward in 'using it' well.

In this study, we are looking at how we might best use the finances that God has entrusted to us.

Discussion starter:

Some Christians feel very uncomfortable talking about their money and the way they spend it. Why might this be so? What benefits might be found in our talking honestly about our use of money?

Using our Treasure

Read Luke 18:18-30

1. Jesus' interaction with the Ruler seems to turn on the question of inheriting eternal life (v18). Why do you think Jesus first draws the Ruler's attention to the Old Testament commandments? What do you make of the Ruler's declaration that he has obeyed the commandments since he was a boy?

2. This is the only recorded occasion where Jesus calls a person to actually sell up everything and give to the poor before following him. Why do you think Jesus asks this man to sell up all before becoming a disciple?

At the beginning of verse 22 Jesus says that the Ruler lacks one thing. What do you think it is that he lacks?

3. No matter how you look at it, it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. In the same way, in verse 27, Jesus says it is humanly impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, but for God it *is* possible. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach us here?

"The less you have, the easier it is to talk about." Do you agree?

"I don't like talking about my personal wealth with other Christians because of the disparity that exists across the church." Discuss with reference to 2 Cor 8:13-14.

4. How might your attitude toward money and wealth be a barrier to your entry into the Kingdom of God?

For personal reflection: Try to put yourself in the sandals of the young Ruler. Imagine his discomfit as Jesus exposes his values and character for public critique. Fortunately this study is more 'private' in nature. However, this study does aim to help us honestly examine our deeply personal attitudes to the money God has entrusted us with in this life. Could maintaining wealth and/or financial security be driving your life-decisions? How could you test this?

5. The book of James has much to say to those who are rich in this world. **Read James 5:1-6.** What problems are associated with wealth in this passage?

Optional discussion:

How should a Christian with a non-Christian spouse approach giving to Christian ministry?

6. We have previously looked at Jesus parable of the farmer who wanted to set himself up comfortably for the rest of his life (see **Luke 12:13-21**). His problem was greed that resulted in Spiritual poverty. How might a person use their wealth such that it would help make that person rich towards God?

There are many Christian causes asking us for money. What criteria might we use to evaluate each request? Do the same criteria apply to giving to the church you attend? (Why / why not?)

7. What principles for the use of money would serve a Christian person well?