

Stewardship

Kingdom, Mission & Money (part 2)

Session 2 | Stewardship

Introduction

This study builds on the information presented and discussed in Week 1. The passage and questions below have been prepared to assist the group in preparing for a more in depth discussion on the relationship between our citizenship in the Kingdom of God and how we view money.

Worship Preparation (10-15 Minutes)

Read Psalm 86 (1-13)

1. **What does this Psalm teach us about the character of God?** (vs. 5, 8, 9, 10, 13) Note the themes of God who alone is worthy of praise; a God who is worthy of worship from all nations (the true King); a God who hears us and rescues us.
2. **Take time as a group to praise God and thank him and glorify his name** (vs. 12). Specifically, remember and identify with the fact that we are all "poor and needy" (vs. 1) and that everything we have is from God.

Review

Last week the study focused on how the ministry of Jesus marked the fulfillment of the longing for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Lord's Prayer reminds us that we are to enter into Christ's mission of making the Kingdom visible in our workplace, relationships, and neighborhoods. Understanding God's Kingdom means realizing:

- Everything belongs to God - Psalm 24:1-2
- God as King rules over the heavens and the earth - Psalm 47:8-9
- We are to live lives that reflect Kingdom values - Romans 12:1-2

The image of what the Kingdom of God 'looks like' was examined in light of Isaiah 11:1-9. One author summarized the image this way when he wrote that the Kingdom of God is "the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation, fulfillment, and delight". This is what the Hebrew prophets called shalom, a "universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight -...in other words, ..the way things ought to be". (C. Plantinga).

1. **Read and discuss the quotes below. Do we seek/need a sense of purpose and mission in our lives? How does the city in which we live influence our sense of mission? How might money influence our sense of mission?**

2. **Read the passages below. What are some dangers that accompany material wealth? (I Tim 6:7-10) What is it about money that is so potentially destructive? How are we supposed to view our money?**

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray:
 " 'Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
 your will be done
 on earth as it is in heaven.' "
 (NIV) Matthew 6:9,10

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".

Jesus, Matthew 6:21

"New York - You have money on your minds. So my words won't make a dime's worth of difference - So here's to you New York"

- Art Garfunkel, "A Heart in New York"

"I'd asked around 10 or 15 people for suggestions.... Finally one lady friend asked the right question, "Well, what do you love most?" That's how I started painting money."

- Andy Warhol, "Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Businessman"

Man is eminently a storyteller. His search for a purpose, a cause, an ideal, a mission and the like is largely a search for a plot and a pattern in the development of his life story-a story that is basically without meaning or pattern.

- Eric Hoffer, "The Passionate State of Mind"

Read 1 Timothy 6:7-11, 17-19, Luke 12:32-34

3. Read Matthew 6:1-4,19-27 and discuss how money gains power over us; how it can become an idol in our lives. Remember, identifying something as an idol means asking "Does this thing/person control me by providing me with my sense of worth and identity?" Discuss the following potential 'traps' of making money an idol. Understanding idolatry - (vs. 21), Status - (vs. 2), Self-approval - (vs. 3)

4. How then should we give?

a. We are to give a tithe (10%) of our 'firstfruits' (defined in 21st Century as 'gross income') is recognized as the minimum biblical standard. In the Old Testament the tithe was given to support the temple (equivalent to the NT church) and the poor (Leviticus 27:30-33, Deut 14:22-29). Again, remembering that we are citizens of the Kingdom of God; that God owns all things, and that we are just stewards of his resources, makes this an 'incredible deal' by any standard. Imagine working for an owner of a business that gave you 90% of the gross profits! This is effectively what God has done.

b. Giving must be sacrificial - Paul says about the Macedonians, "they gave as much as they were able and even beyond their ability" (II Cor. 8:3). Some of us can give more than 10%. We should always be aware of those in our community who are marginalized. We have the responsibility and the privilege as God's ambassadors to participate in his mission by giving of our time and money to make sure that everyone experiences the shalom of the Kingdom. (Lev. 23:22, Deut 10:18-19, James 1:27).

c. Giving must be Systematic and Thoughtful - Paul directed the Corinthians to set aside a portion of their wealth each week until he could come and take it to famine victims (I Cor. 8:10-11). Spontaneous unplanned giving, while often joyful, is usually not in biblical proportions. Some have argued that this kind of systematic approach is counter to the Biblical notion of being a 'cheerful' giver. In other words, I shouldn't give if I don't 'feel' cheerful. While it is important to guard against giving in a non-worshipful way, it is equally important to not use this as an excuse for not giving. There are many times when we don't 'feel like' praying, or reading the Bible, or loving our spouse - does that mean we shouldn't?

d. Plan your giving wisely - If you aren't able to give 10%, think about how you can give more than you are giving now, and work your way towards the tithe. Practically, this means you shouldn't give if you are going to substantially:

- Compromise your health and safety (I Tim 6:6,8)

- Become a burden to others - it is wise to budget/save so that we can provide for our health and safety.

- Renege on your obligations - some have student loans, etc that must be paid back. It is important though to guard against excess

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

debt that becomes an obstacle to Kingdom investment.

5. Gospel Meditation - My motivation for giving.

- a. Although I 'know the grace', how have I forgotten it?
- b. Have I reflected seriously on what it meant for Christ to become 'poor' for my sake?
- c. Have I reflected recently on what it means that I am 'rich' as a result of Christ's 'poverty'?
- d. Take some time as a group to pray through this verse, giving thanks for Christ's great sacrifice for us. Then take some time to pray for the ministry of Christ's Kingdom at Redeemer, specifically remembering the financial needs of the ministry.

APPLICATION

Having spent some time in reflection and prayer, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does my money control me?

In other words, do I have good resources and use them to maintain and pursue a lifestyle that is at the upper limits of what I can afford. Do I let a fear of losing my lifestyle keep me from being generous? Do I compare myself primarily with those who have either the same or greater standard of living than me? Do I ever consider how I can simplify my lifestyle in order to free up resources to invest in God's Kingdom? How you answer these questions will determine to what extent money controls you.

2. Am I giving proportionately and intentionally?

In other words, do I invest at least 10% of my gross income to support the work of God's Kingdom? If not, do I resist this guideline because I am still unsure that it is Biblical (if so, there are many resources available to assist you in this way), or do I resist because I have never taken reflected seriously on the principles in the passage above?

Am I impulsive in my donations, or do I plan how much I am going to give and then give it regularly? For example, you may decide you want to start giving 10% of your income to ministry, but aren't in a position to do that yet. This might require a plan to simplify your lifestyle so that you can attain your goal over a reasonable period of time.

3. Investing in Redeemer

If you consider Redeemer Presbyterian Church (RPC) your primary Church community, the place where you feel invested in, this worksheet is for you.

Redeemer's annual operating budget for 2002 is approximately \$5.7M. Redeemer has no endowment set aside for its general budget, therefore the church relies on the weekly giving of its members and friends. The information below is designed to assist you in planning your potential giving to Redeemer's mission.

Annual Budget = \$5.7M

Average Attendance = 3500

If you assume the average salary at RPC is \$40,000, then if 2500 people gave only 6% of their income to the church would provide \$6M.

Exercise:

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-2, 6-18

Take time to reflect on how God is portrayed

- a. One who provides (vs. 11, 12, 16, 17)
- b. One who rules (vs. 12)
- c. One who tests us for generosity (vs. 17)

Take some time to:

- a. Praise God for his goodness, power, & generosity
- b. Confess ways you have not responded with gratitude and generosity of time and money.
- c. Rejoice that Jesus has passed every test we have or will fail.
- d. Ask God to help you become one who invests in His Kingdom.

Personal Worksheet - for group members to do with exercise

Example Annual Gross Income = \$50,000

| % to RPC | Annual Contribution | Weekly Contribution |
|----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 3% | \$1,500 | \$29 |
| 5% | \$2,500 | \$48 |
| 7% | \$3,500 | \$67 |
| 10% | \$5,000 | \$96 |
| 12% | \$6,000 | \$115 |

Use the chart below to calculate your current percentage of giving, as well as help you estimate a potential higher level of giving.

Annual Gross Income =

| % to RPC | Annual Contribution | Weekly Contribution |
|----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 3% | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| 5% | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| 7% | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| 10% | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| 12% | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |