

Cash Values *Matthias Media*

1. GOD & MONEY

Christians tend to have something of a love-hate relationship with money. We enjoy what money gives us the power to do and to have, and we recognize it as God's generous gift to us, and yet we have problems with it as well. We struggle with the pull of materialism and greed; we battle to use our money well; we despair at how quickly it seems to slip through our fingers.

Historically, this love-hate relationship has manifested itself in a variety of attitudes among Christians towards money and possessions. At one end of the spectrum, some have seen money (and lots of it) as God's blessing for the godly person, thus making our bank account something of a barometer of our spirituality. God longs to make us materially rich, it is argued, and it is only our sin and lack of faith that stands in the way.

Other Christians have taken the diametrically opposite view. For them, money contaminates our relationship with God, and only by ridding ourselves of as much money as possible can we ever know God properly. A vow of poverty has been at the heart of many religious orders (such as the Franciscans).

Perhaps neither of these extremes appeals to us very much, but each contains a grain of truth. There are strands of biblical teaching that emphasize the goodness of God and the material blessings that he showers on his people, as well as parts of the Bible that warn of the dangers of money. What should be our attitude towards money? Should we despise money, or be thankful for it, or both? How much of it should we give away, and to whom? And what does God want us to do with the money we keep?

In these five topical Bible studies, we'll look at these sorts of questions. We won't cover everything that the Bible says on the subject—that would require a far longer book—but we will look at some key

themes and the implications of those themes for how we deal with money.

In this first study, we'll look at the basic question of how God and money are related. What does God think of money? Is he against it?

To answer these most fundamental questions, we need to go back to the very beginning and think about creation.

INVESTIGATE

Read Psalms 24:1, Psalm 50:9-12, Psalm 104:24-30; Matthew 10:29.

1. What is God's ongoing relation to his creation?

2. How do you think money fits into this (cf. Hag 2:8; Job 41:11)?

Read Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15; Psalm 8.

3. What is mankind's relation to creation, under God? What are our duties and privileges? (Make sure you answer these questions from these passages, not from your general knowledge.)

Read 1 Timothy 4:4-5, 6:17.

4. How should we regard the things in God's world, including money?

Those in Christian history who have regarded money and wealth as intrinsically evil have made one serious blunder: they have forgotten that everything in the world, including wealth and possessions, comes from the hand of God.

God made everything. He owns everything and, as Paul says, “nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim 4:4). Riches and wealth are part of God’s creation. He owns them.

Then again, those who talk a lot about wealth and about how God will shower it on his people have made a blunder too. We will come to that one in our next study.

IMPLICATIONS

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- Would you regard yourself as a rich person?

- What criteria would you use for deciding what it means to be ‘rich’? Are you rich compared with most of the people in our society? What about compared to most of the people in the world?

- How would you summarize your own current attitudes towards money?

- What questions do you have about how you should use your money?

GIVE THANKS AND PRAY

- Praise God for creating and sustaining the world and everything in it, including you.
- Thank him for richly providing you with good things to enjoy.
- Ask him to give you wisdom as you use your money so that you will not set your hope on “the uncertainty of riches” (1 Tim 6:17).
- Pray that our church would have an increasing spirit of generosity among us