

Lesson 1: The Importance of Money

Welcome to a theology course on money!

One out of every seven verses of Jesus' words pertain to money and possessions – more than any other topic!

The Bible has two thousand, three hundred and fifty verses about money – Jesus is the best Financial Adviser. Therefore, the church should preach and teach on money.

Problem: Some preach too much on money—they are afraid of the people not giving.

Some preach too little on money—they are afraid of the people's misgivings. *Both are fears!*

Solution: With firm faith and warm love, let's focus objectively on what people *need* to know about money. According to Jesus, heaven or hell often hangs in the balance. *Money is a salvation issue.*

Theology Course – not a financial advisor

Jesus said, "The sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light" (Lk. 16:8).

You will receive a lot more shrewd counsel on handling investments, taxes, etc. from a financial advisor.

However, you may not receive *perspective*—the larger context of the Money Game.

Illus. Invited to play a game, intrigued by the rules and strategy, but what else needs to happen today?

Should we even be playing this game? Are we arranging deck chairs on the Titanic?

E.g. How many financial advisors will counsel you to save money in heaven (Mt. 6:19-20; Lk. 12:33)?

How many financial advisors will counsel you to make friends in heaven (Lk. 16:9)?

As Christians in America, our sense of "normal" is particularly warped by our materialistic world.

Illus. "I will also smite the winter house together with the summer house..." (Amos 3:15; cf. 6:11).

"The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none..." (Lk. 3:11).

We are truly "those who are rich in this present world"—tempted to pride and misplaced trust (1 Tim. 6:17).

Illus. James Montgomery Boice – perhaps give all your savings away (sermon from Philippians 4)

Money Is Important – as an introduction to a theology course, hear what the Bible says...

Money Is a God

The Bible is not against money in and of itself:

God gives the power to make wealth (Dt. 8:18; 1 Chr. 29:14, 16). Money is a "defense" (Eccl. 7:12).

"The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it" (Pr. 10:22)

However, because of how people live for money and depend on money, money is personified as a god:

"You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Mt. 6:24; Lk. 16:13 – cf. the "Almighty Dollar").

As such, Money is "unrighteous" and an "abomination in the sight of God" (Lk. 16:11, 15).

Such behavior is foolish: Money cannot keep you alive (Mt. 4:4; Lk. 12:15).

Such behavior is wicked: All forms of greed are idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

Money Is a Snare

We live among the Canaanites and their gods will become snares to us, if we "wisely" compromise:

"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare..." (1 Tim. 6:9).

And this is not hypothetical—as seen in the words "some" and "many" in the Pastoral Epistles:

"Some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves..." (1 Tim. 6:10).

Illus. *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* story of tax evasion, Wentworth Street Baptist Church deacon

Therefore: "Flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness..." (1 Tim. 6:11).

This warning was spoken to a pastor—no one is above this danger. This sin leads to other sins (v. 10).

Money Is an Indicator and Director of the Heart

The old saying is: "Do you want to know your priorities? Look in your checkbook."

Illus. Rich Young Ruler vs. Zaccheus (Lk. 18:18-27; 19:1-10)

Not just an *indicator*, but also a *director*—note the verb tenses:

"Where your treasure **is**, there your heart **will be** also" (Mt. 6:21; Lk. 12:34).

Now listen to yourself...

"I have lots of money, but I do not love it." You will.

"I want to get rich, in order to give." You are inviting a snare.

"If only I had a heart for missions!" Start giving and you will. The tenses work both ways.

For *that* reason, I am excited for you to take this course. Let's begin with Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*.