

FOCUS:

When we gain money, we are stockpiling an important tool that can be used to change lives and spread the Gospel of Christ.

APPLICATION:

In modern church culture, we tend to look down on the accrual of wealth as a sign that a person is more concerned with money than with serving God. But money is simply a tool. We must learn that gaining money is a good thing, as long as it is done fairly and honestly, and that gaining money enables us to use it to make a difference in our local church, community and abroad.

GOD'S WORD:

Luke 16:10-13;
1 Timothy 6:17-19

GAIN
SAVE
GIVE

GAIN ALL YOU CAN

SMALL GROUP LESSON 1



LUKE 16:10-13

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

TRUST

When we think of wealth, it often conjures up negative emotions. We imagine bankers sitting in plush offices with piles of (virtual) money, foreclosing on poor families and kicking them to the curb. We think of corporate CEOs making millions of dollars, while their lowest level employees barely make enough money to make ends meet. In the context of church, we think of the money-grubbing televangelist, milking money from the pockets of his followers to pad his own pockets.

But, in Luke 16:9-13, you will notice an important word included in the conversation about wealth. Some form of the word “trust” is used five times in this passage and seems to have a direct correlation to wealth. We mistakenly believe money is the source of corruption and fail to recognize that it is merely a tool.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you believe wealth causes corruption? Is it possible to be wealthy and trustworthy at the same time? Why or why not?
2. If there seems to be a direct correlation between trustworthiness and wealth, why do you think there are so many untrustworthy people who are wealthy?

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

GAIN
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GIVE

TWO MASTERS

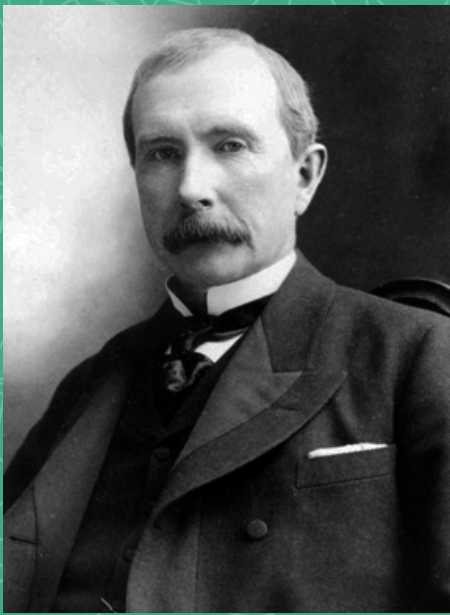
Luke 16:13 contains the well-known adage, “You cannot serve both God and money.” This is often interpreted to mean that, if you serve God, you must not have any money; or, if you have a lot of money, you must not be serving God. But the key word in this verse is “serve.” This goes along with the idea promoted by the previous verses: money is a tool. Serving money and using money are two different things. If you are serving money, then you are letting your love of money drive your actions. If you are serving God, then you are letting your love of God drive your actions. It is possible (and often the case) that someone can both be wealthy and a follower of Christ. It is also possible that they can be poor and not a follower of Christ. This is not an either/or statement. A person’s wealth isn’t necessarily connected to their spiritual life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between serving money and using money?
2. Can you think of anyone who is wealthy and serving God instead of money? What does that look like?
3. Is it possible to be poor, but still serve money instead of serving God? How would you describe what that looks like in a person’s life?

RICH IN DEED

It is easy to mistakenly interpret 1 Timothy 6:17-19 as saying we should not try to gain earthly wealth. But, again, these verses support the idea of money as a tool. The verse says not to *put our hope* in money. It doesn’t say we shouldn’t try to gain it. It goes on to say that we should be doing good things and be generous. If you look closely, Paul is not telling those who are rich that they shouldn’t be rich. He is telling them to *use their riches to help others*. He doesn’t condemn them for gaining money, only for not using it as a tool to further God’s Kingdom.



PROFILE: JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

Born July 8, 1839

Died May 23, 1937

Occupation: Oil industry business magnate and philanthropist

GAIN
SAVE
GIVE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of a person who makes a good income, but focuses on using their income to do good things for others and for the Kingdom of God? Share about this person and their approach to money.
2. The first verse refers to "arrogance." How does a person's arrogance affect their view of wealth? If a person is humble, how does that attitude affect their view of wealth? Can a person be both wealthy and humble?
3. What do you think Paul means when he says to "lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age?" How does that phrase connect to gaining money from a Biblical perspective?

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

John D. Rockefeller became America's first millionaire at the age of 33. At 43, he ran the largest company in the world. He became America's first billionaire at the age of 53. In the midst of his wealth, Rockefeller approached life from a perspective of generosity. He worked hard to make money and worked equally hard to give it away.

In 1891, Rockefeller's health failed. He had exerted himself so much through his work that it left him ill and near death. The newspapers had even written his obituary.

But something miraculous happened. Under doctor's orders, Rockefeller pulled himself away from his busy life and spent eight months recuperating. He chose to retire and no longer personally handle his business affairs. During this time, his interest in philanthropy increased. No longer focused on managing his businesses day-to-day, he dedicated more time and energy to generosity. As a result, two things happened.

First, Rockefeller regained his health and lived to the age of 97. By shifting his focus from worrying about money to trusting God to use his money, he was relieved of a great deal of stress. *By practicing generosity, he experienced healing.*

COMMISSION

Throughout the upcoming week, whenever you receive your paycheck, pay bills or spend money on things, take a moment and reflect on your approach to money. As you handle it on a day-to-day basis, are you using the money, or is the money using you? Think about ways you can approach these transactions from a perspective similar to Rockefeller's view during his later years.

Second, it is generally agreed upon that all of Rockefeller's greatest philanthropic achievements came to fruition after his retirement. His contributions launched the University of Chicago, regarded as one of the world's preeminent institutions of higher learning in its day, and which continues to be held in high regard. Because of Rockefeller's generosity, great strides were made in the medical field, including the formation of the biomedical research field and the eradication of several deadly diseases. Not only did Rockefeller's generosity change his own life, it changed the lives of countless others through far-reaching institutions founded by his money and vision. But that change only occurred because Rockefeller's focus shifted from a perspective of self-benefit to a perspective of helping others.

Most of us don't possess anywhere near the amount of wealth Rockefeller accumulated in his lifetime, but we can learn something from his generous spirit. He never stopped gaining wealth, but he used his wealth in service to God and others. When we give, however little or however much, something special happens. We change the life of someone else, bringing hope and encouragement. But we also experience a change in ourselves, physically and spiritually.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does Rockefeller's story tell us about the role of gaining money in the concept of generosity?
2. Reread 1 Timothy 6:17-19. How does Rockefeller's life reflect what this verse says?
3. Why do you think Rockefeller's health changed when he focused on generosity rather than on greed? What are some other benefits we receive when we choose to use our money instead of letting our money use us?

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