

john 15:4
Ambid^e in ME



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 5 - Number 13
The week of February 23, 2020

Jesus-Formation
Thinking Like Jesus...
About Ambition
Matthew 6:19-34

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

Main Point: Undivided devotion to God produces uncluttered trust in God.

How to Honor Your Maker with Your Wallet
by Ivan Mesa and Ron Blue¹

Discussing money can be awkward, especially among Christians. Some assume God's Word has little to say about the topic. Others are afraid of being judged for how they spend money, or for their debt; they believe how much they give their church is no one's business. Still others view money as distraction from the truly important things of life. To help gain perspective on this subject, I [Ivan] corresponded with Ron Blue, the author of more than 20 books on biblical financial planning. In this interview we learn how money is both a revealer of and an entry into the heart, [and] why it's hard for Christians to view money as part of discipleship.

You often say money is a "revealer of the heart" and "entry into the heart." How so?

I like to use the analogy of a window and a door here. When I say money is a *revealer* of the heart, I mean it acts as a window that we can look through to see the deepest desires of our hearts. Likewise, when I say money is an *entry* into the heart, I mean it acts as a door that, when opened, releases our hearts to find freedom, contentment, and joy in our finances.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). The things we spend our money on are the true desires of our hearts. By using money to look through the windows of our hearts, we can identify our true desires. Then, when we allow God's Word to alter the priorities of our spending, we open the door to our hearts and begin treasuring things beyond our stuff.

Changing the flow of our money will change the attention and loves of our hearts.

I often tell people that if you show me your checkbook, I can show you your priorities. This is the window. If we take the next step and allow God's Word to shape our priorities and enter our hearts, we can actually move our hearts to treasure new things. Changing the flow of our money will change the attention and loves of our hearts.

Why is it hard for Christians to think of financial stewardship as an aspect of discipleship?

If we define discipleship as helping each other become more like Christ, it seems bizarre that Christians would separate their finances from discipleship. Finances are something we all think about on a daily basis, after all. Still, many Christians want to separate any discussion of money from their spiritual lives. I believe this happens because most of us get suspicious when a church starts talking about money. We think, *This is my money; mind your own business.*

If we define discipleship as helping each other become more like Christ, it seems bizarre that Christians would separate their finances from discipleship.

But this mentality arises from a failure to understand that all that we have is God's, including our money. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." If everything we have is God's, then we are stewards of *his* money (not ours) and we'll have to give an account to him of how we used it. Understanding this concept of stewardship should lead every Christian to pursue growth and discipleship in their finances. A right understanding of ownership often corrects the myth that finances and discipleship should be kept separate. In fact, it will drive us to seek out discipleship and accountability in our finances.

What's the most important thing pastors should teach their churches about finances?

Teach them what Paul said in the greatest support letter ever written: "I seek not what is yours but you" (2 Cor. 12:14). Teach them that the reason they need to know what the Bible says about money isn't merely to meet the needs of the local church, but to become free from the hold money has on their hearts and lives.

Money is a cruel master. The Bible has much to say about it—more than 2,300 verses are about money, and 16 of Jesus's 38 parables deal with it. Additionally, much of what is written about money warns of its dangers. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income." Yet despite all of the verses and warnings, most of us tend to believe that if one person can handle the trappings of wealth, it's us. Well, we can't.

If we allow money to become our master, it'll lead to fear of loss, resentment in our families, and ultimately a despising of God. . . . Money will never relent in its pursuit of everything we value.

The only way I've seen people avoid the trappings of wealth is to hold their money with an unflinching open hand. These people are radically generous with their wealth; they know if they're not, it'll end up mastering them. Luke 16:13 tells us that we can't serve both God and money, that we "will be devoted to the one and despise the other." If we allow money to become our master, it'll always lead to fear of loss, resentment in our families, and ultimately a despising of God. Money will never relent in its pursuit of everything we value.

Churches must teach that the only way to experience true freedom and contentment in finances is to become extravagantly generous just like our Father: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." Talk about extravagant giving! Churches should talk about money not because they need it, but because people need freedom from its dangers.

How can Christians save for the future while also trying to increase their giving?

Priorities. The only way to increase giving and to save for the future is by establishing priorities. To set priorities, we must understand there are really only four ways we can spend our money. I call them: "Live, Give, Owe, Grow." Most people begin by allocating their money to the "Owe" category by paying off debt and taxes, then they move to the "Live" category and spend on their lifestyle. Finally, if there's anything left over, they look at "Give" and "Grow" (giving and saving). On the other hand, the Bible tells us that the most productive uses of our money are "Give" and "Grow," the required uses of money are the debt and taxes of "Owe," and only after these are taken care of should the "Live" category be considered.

By taking stock of our priorities, we're able to see how every spending decision affects every other decision, and we're able to make decisions based on previously determined goals and objectives.

There's no financial silver bullet. The only silver bullet around is creating and then maintaining a financial habit or discipline, motivated by financial goals and priorities. Begin by prayerfully asking the question, "Lord, what would you have me do in my financial life?"

¹ **Ivan Mesa** (MDiv, ThM, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is an editor for The Gospel Coalition.

STEP ONE . . .

OBSERVATION

What does the text say?

~ Matthew 6:19-34 ~


¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

1. Underline **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth** (v. 19) and **Do not be anxious about your life** (v. 25).
2. In the left margin of v. 19 write: *Undivided devotion*.
2. Double underline **but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**.
3. Circle all occurrences of the word **treasure(s)**.
4. Place brackets around **For** in v. 21.
5. In the right margin of v. 21 write: *heart = the control center of life*
6. Draw an  over each occurrence of the word **eye** in vss. 22-23.
7. Place parentheses around **two masters** in verse 24. Draw a line to the left margin and write: *mixed devotion*.
8. In the left margin of verse 25 write: *Uncluttered trust in God*.
9. Circle all the occurrences of the word **anxious** in verses 25-34.
10. In the right margin of verse 25 write: *Worry erodes trust*.
11. Double underline the phrase **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**.
12. Place a Δ over all the references to **God** and **heavenly Father**.

Complementary Passage
~ 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 17-19 ~

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. ¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

STEP TWO . . .

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

What does the text mean?

The commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

¹⁹ **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.** Literally, “Do not be treasuring-up treasures.”

Where moth and rust destroy. Or, the consuming, eating-by-rust destruction. Moth and rust would refer to the consumption of different categories of treasure (i.e. food, clothing, coins). **Moth:** Jesus may be referring broadly to the eating of treasures by insects, worms, and all other natural, earthly processes. **Rust:** If Jesus also has metals in view, then the rust that destroys refers to corrosion (a word not found elsewhere in the Greek language).

²² **The eye is the lamp of the body.** Compare Luke 11:34. The eye is the gateway of light for your body, physically and spiritually. Whether the eye is focused on earthly or heavenly treasures will determine whether you live in light or darkness.

So, if your eye is healthy. Or, simple, sincere. The ESV takes this to mean spiritually healthy; without guile. In this study, we take it to refer to single or undivided devotion.

But, if your eye is bad. Jesus seems to mean double-focused. Seeing double results in darkness for the whole body. It will bring darkness and confusion to your life.

If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! If your focus is on earthly treasures, your darkness is very great indeed.

²⁴ **No one can serve two masters.** That is, at the same time. Can be translated, “being a slave to, serving as a slave to.”

Or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. Or, treat with contempt, look down upon. See also Romans 2:4. A slave will be for one of the two masters.

You cannot serve God and money. Or, property. Their agendas and directives lead down different paths. See 1 Timothy 6:9-10. Some translations use the Aramaic word Mammon, which is wealth personified.

²⁵ **Therefore I tell you.** That is, that you might live in accordance with the location of your treasure and heart in heaven.

Do not be anxious about your life. Or, be worried about or be concerned about. The word anxious appears four times in this passage. Elsewhere, the word means, “be anxious about” in Matthew 10:19, Luke 12:11, Philippians 4:6.

And yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Literally, “worth more than, more valuable.”

²⁷ **And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?** The phrase has been understood to refer to the length of one’s life or the span of one’s height. Life-span seems to be a better choice of meaning.

²⁸ **... Consider.** Or, observe closely. This is the only occurrence in the NT.

³¹ **Therefore do not be anxious.** Or, do not worry. The word focuses on the habit or pattern of being anxious. We are not to be in the habit or process of worrying.

³³ **... And your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.** The word order here is different from the previous phrase in verse 32. The emphasis here is on the word all.

³⁴ **... Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.** The word sufficient means enough or adequate. The trouble of each day is enough for that day. Leave tomorrow to itself.

STEP THREE . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. Icebreaker: What is one thing you treasured as a child? When did you begin to understand the value of possessions or property?

2. In this passage, how does Jesus teach us to think about earthly wealth?

3. Jesus introduced this section with the image of “treasures in heaven” (verse 20). What is heavenly treasure?

4. How can treasure or money darken your eye and divide your heart? How does the image of a dark eye support Jesus’ message in the verses immediately before and after it?

5. Why did Jesus say in verse 24 that it is impossible to serve two masters?

6. Based on evidence from your lifestyle, do you think your eyes are dark in the areas of money, divine provision, and trust?

7. How do the concepts of heavenly treasure and darkened eyes give you a new understanding of the command not to worry?

8. How does worry reveal a lack of faith? How can you focus more on doing what God wants and less on worrying about what you need?

9. Verse 30 is a mind shift for us. and should pierce our hearts. How is Jesus showing us how to think differently about living?
10. What should be the primary priority for believers (v. 33)? What are some ways to put your treasure in God's kingdom?
11. How do the two parts of this passage (vss. 19-24 and 25-34) fit together?
12. What are some specific areas of your life you need to trust God is in control?

Prayer

*Dear Heavenly Father,
Too often my eye is clouded and my heart is heavy.
Worry, fear, and doubt
Surround me on every side.*

*Your unceasing kindness
Is never withheld from those who know You.
Along with all who call upon You,
Hear my cry.*

*Lord, I trust in Your mercy.
Set me free from every form of anxiety and stress,
That I may rest in Your loving care.
Amen.*

STEP FOUR . . .

APPLYING

How is the text lived out?

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers. ~ James 1:22

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

Memory Verse

~ Matthew 6:33 ~

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.

Sermon Notes: Matthew 6:19-34

Thinking Like Jesus: *About Ambition*

Read the Bible: Reading Plan for 2020

Sunday, February 23 thru Saturday, February 29 2020
Ex. 6, Luke 9, Job 23, 1 Cor. 10; Exodus 7, Luke 10, Job 24,
1 Cor. 11; Ex. 8, Luke 11, Job 25-26, 1 Cor. 12; Ex. 9, Luke 12,
Job 27 1 Cor. 13; Ex. 10, Luke 13, Job 28, 1 Cor. 14;
Ex. 11:1-12:21, Luke 14, Job 29, 1 Cor. 15