



## Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

### Stewarding Wealth & Possessions - James 5

9/20/2020

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."  
Jesus (Matthew 6:21)*

I've been around kids (my own and others) a fair bit in the last thirteen odd years, and one of the consistent behaviors amongst children is their unwillingness to share. The word "mine" is in fact often one of the earliest words added to their vocabulary. But, we obviously want them to share and so we set about teaching them how. One of the approaches we've employed (on good days) speaks to the heart of why they don't want to share. We've asked our kids at very young ages which is more valuable, the other child who wants to play with the toy, or the toy. It's very telling that it takes them a moment to consider the question (perhaps we can all relate to the inner conflict) before almost always deciding it's the other child. From there sharing comes naturally, because of course we're happy to give something to someone if it shows we love them. But our hearts are not naturally oriented that way. We have, seemingly from the beginning, an upside down understanding of what treasures can do for us. The beginning of James chapter five simply speaks to what happens if we never learn to fly right side up.

As Bill points out, this chapter indeed applies to all of us. Firstly because we all currently live in the U.S. (which automatically makes us relatively wealthy), but also because James is speaking to a heart condition, not a financial condition. To put it another way, it's not the wealth that's the problem, it's the heart of the person who has the wealth, and that heart condition would be a problem with or without the wealth. The problem would just manifest differently in the absence of wealth. The issue at hand is the love of wealth, which as 1 Timothy 6:10 says, is the root of all kinds of evil. Jesus addresses the matter in Matthew six, verses nineteen through twenty-four, wherein he teaches that we cannot serve both God and money. We will either love money more than God, or we'll love God more than money. We cannot love them equally.

So the answer isn't to hate money, it's to love God. Once again we see the teaching pointing us to correctly orienting ourselves toward God, and letting the rest flow from there. Naturally, if we have placed the very real goodness of God first in our time and intention, we will not have an unhealthy desire for money. Our hearts, guided by Holy Spirit will be taught a posture of gratefulness and therefore generosity. The act of sharing and giving then naturally flows from us, just as greed naturally flows from us when we believe treasure will fulfill us. So we see that God is really asking us the same question we've asked our children (or vice versa). Which is more important, things or relationships? (Mark 8:36)

#### **So, Consider:**

1. How do you answer the question of whether things or relationships are more important?
2. Does your use of time align to the way you answered the first question? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Do you agree that none of us can love money and God equally? If so, why? If not, why not?

#### **Take Action:**

This week, spend time each day praying and reflecting on Matthew 6:11, wherein Jesus teaches us to ask for what we need today. Write down your reflections and experiences throughout the day.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Ben Scott