



BALANCED

**GOING DEEPER
DISCUSSION GUIDE**

January 19, 2014

Discussion Guide

Use it or lose it

Luke 16.1-13; 1 Timothy 6.17-19

Connecting:

45 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a way of connecting with one another so that you might partner in the work God is doing in your lives.)

- In what ways did God move in your life this week? In what ways did you respond to him?
- What was your biggest challenge this week? In what ways, if any, did you invite God into this challenge?
- How honest have you been with us? (Graciously thank group members for their honesty if they answer that they have held back.)

Getting Started:

10 minutes

- If someone were to give you \$1,000, what would you do with it?

Diving Into the Text:

60 minutes

(The following questions are intended to provide your group with a simple road map through the text. Feel free to use these questions in ways that best fit your group and the dynamics of your own meeting.)

- Read Luke 16.1-13, aloud slowly. Seek to hear these words as if you were sitting in the audience hearing Jesus speak them.
- As you hear Jesus' words, what reactions or feelings, if any, rise up in you? Would you elaborate?

- What truths does Jesus teach about money and its proper use?
- Do you see people using money in the ways Jesus describes or in other ways? Could you explain why this might be so?
- Jesus states that money must be used properly, and Paul states that this must be understood by those who are rich. Read 1 Timothy 6.17-19.
- Being rich has been defined as having an ample supply; that is, having more than you need. Do you agree or disagree with this definition? Would you elaborate?
- According to Paul, what are the proper uses of money in practical terms?
- Do you find that using money as Paul describes is easy or difficult? Could you explain?
- Both Jesus and Paul note that our use of money has spiritual implications. In what ways, if any, do you find these implications working their way out in your own life?
- Sit with God, holding your use of money before him. Allow him to speak to your spending habits. Share what God says with your group.

Context and Background

Rich

In our culture, the term “rich” has come to be equated with Hollywood stars and Wall Street tycoons. When viewed in this way, being rich is based upon a simple comparison of amounts of accumulated or liquid wealth. However, this form of comparison does not truly reveal a person’s status as wealthy or poor but only the difference between what two people possess. One’s true wealth can only be evaluated by comparing what one possesses with what he needs. When a person possesses more than he needs, he is rich. Therefore, being rich is simply having an abundant supply, to have more than one needs. With this definition in mind, many in the Western World might be labeled as rich, something that income calculators which compare relative incomes across the world reveal. (See <http://www.givingwhatwecan.org/why-give/how-rich-am-i>) Views about being rich, today, range from desire, to envy, to disdain. In Scripture, the status of being rich was something to be neither pursued nor avoided (Proverbs 23.4-5; 30.8). Many people in Scripture were rich. Abraham, Isaac, Lot, David, Solomon, and Barnabas were all wealthy. Their wealth was viewed as a sign of God’s blessing, a blessing to be used for the benefit of others (Acts 4.32-37; 1 Timothy 6.17-19). Such a view of wealth has been consistently held by God’s people throughout the ages. The possession of wealth has been viewed as a sign of God’s blessing, a blessing to be shared with others for the working of good.

The Text

Luke 16.1-13: *Just use it*

In Luke 16, Jesus turns his attention to money matters, most likely because his audience consisted of people who loved money (Luke 16.14-15).

In this chapter, Jesus warns his audience of the consequences of using money in an improper manner (Luke 16.16-31) and instructs them in its proper use (Luke 16.1-13). Jesus uses a parable about an unjust manager to teach about money’s proper use.

In Jesus’ story, it is discovered that a rich man’s money manager has been using his master’s funds in an improper manner. The exact nature of his actions is not discussed, only that they are so terrible that the master finds he is forced to fire his manager. Facing the reality of unemployment, the manager concocts a plan which will put him in the favor of people so that he will possibly find future employment with them. The manager calls in those who are in debt to his master one by one. As each one sits down, the manager evaluates the debt owed and reduces it. It appears in his actions that what he may have done is removed the interest added to the bill. Thus one man would have owed 100% interest on oil and another 25% on grain. This is in keeping with standard practices. If the master is Jewish, then the inappropriate action could have been the charging of such interest (Leviticus 25.35-38), and the removal of such interest would have made the master and the servant look good. This is probably behind the surprising praise of the manager. It seems that he has acted in a way that has brought the master into proper alignment with God’s desires. In other words, the servant has corrected his ways.

Such a parable would have shocked Jesus’ audience because it contradicted current monetary practices, particularly the charging of interest. It seems that Jesus is implicitly condemning such practices. However, Jesus’ explicit point is that money may be used properly or improperly. Jesus’ followers are to use money properly, which Jesus defines as using money for the sake of others.

Jesus bolsters his point that the proper use of money is to use it on behalf of others with the use of a common proverb to state that the use of money reveals one's true character (Luke 16.10). Further, Jesus' followers can use money appropriately when they realize that money is not the substance of true wealth (Luke 16.11), and that they are simply stewards of the money they have (Luke 16.12).

1 Timothy 6.17-19: *If I were a rich man...*

The Apostle Paul provides concrete application to the words of Jesus concerning the proper use of money (Luke 16). Those who are rich are not to pursue wealth as something that will support them, but rather are to pursue God as the one who supports them (Matthew 6.19-34). (See Rich.) Money is transitory but it is given to people by God for a two-fold purpose. First, God provides money so that people might enjoy life. Second, money is given in ample supply so that it might be shared as a means of providing for the needs of others. Simply put, money is given for the purpose of being used both for ourselves and for others. This tension must be managed and proper management has an immense impact, freeing one to grasp true life.

Application:

Money is God's gift to people, a gift he provides freely for the purpose of being used. Just what is the proper use of money? Money exists to be used for people, both in caring for ourselves personally and for the needs of others. We use money in this manner realizing that is God's gift to us and that we are called to steward what we have been given. When we use money for its intended purposes we free ourselves to experience life as God intended it. While these truths apply to all people, they are especially important for those who find themselves having more than they need. The great temptation for those who find themselves having a surplus is to hoard and then spend this surplus upon themselves. The use of money for personal enjoyment is a good activity but it must be balanced with the use of money for the needs of others.

Want to know how this looks in real life? Check out Blake's blog at blakeshipp.blogspot.com.



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