

Life Group Questions

1. Do you have things boxed up in your garage that you haven't looked at in years that your children will end up throwing away? Why do we keep those things? Why did we buy them in the first place?
2. Is the idolatry of money so embedded in America that it is impossible to identify in your own personal life?
3. Which one of the quotes in the outline did you like the best and why? Which one was most convicting? Which one was hard to understand?
4. If it is with great difficulty that the rich make it to heaven, and Americans are rich, will there be many Americans in heaven?
5. Is it true that being rich automatically means that you oppress the poor? Does it mean you have to be at least careful of the possibilities of oppressing the poor? Is buying a NIKE tennis shoe in America that was made by slave labor in Thailand make you an oppressor? Should we at least be concerned about how and where the product was manufactured?

Quotes

"We may have life and liberty, but the pursuit of happiness isn't going so well. . . . We constantly hanker after fancier cars and fatter paychecks— and, initially, such things boost our happiness. But the glow of satisfaction quickly fades and soon we're yearning for something else."

-Jonathan Clements

"It is because man experiences consumption as a sacred delirium that he is plunged into the Orphism [endless worship] of yet more, and still more, and that advertising arouses such a sympathetic vibration in him. If he obeys advertising...it is, more than anything else, because he has been sensitized beforehand by the worship of consumer goods."

-Jacques Ellul

Outline

When and why money is an unsatisfactory idol:

1. The rich oppress the poor and red tape prevails, Ecclesiastes 5:8-9.
2. Dissatisfaction abounds – you may have it all but without **joy**, Ecclesiastes 5:10; 6:1-2, 7-9.
3. It attracts the wrong kinds of **people**, Ecclesiastes 5:11.
4. Money increases your worry and **sleeplessness quotient**, Ecclesiastes 5:12.

5. Money is never **permanent**, Ecclesiastes 5:13-14.
6. You can't take it with you, Ecclesiastes 5:15-16.
7. Getting it causes **loneliness**, anger, misery, Ecclesiastes 5:17.
8. Loving money is worse than being dead, Ecclesiastes 6:3-6.
9. It has no intrinsic lasting **value**, it really doesn't matter, Ecclesiastes 6:10-12.

The conclusion of the matter:

1. God is good to us in every season: enjoy! Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.
2. Think clearly, **biblically**, about money and things. "Keep yourself from idols," 1 John 5:21.

"The unmasking of idols will always be received badly by society at large, for people do not appreciate it when things they hold to be sacred Are portrayed as, lacking in substance and benefit...to threaten the position of the gods is to threaten the security of the worshiper, as the apostle Paul found out in Ephesus, Acts 19:23-41.... False gods cannot be named as such, for truth is only ever personal. If it is true for me, then who are you to say otherwise? To set out to unmask idols will only ever bring pain..."

-Iain Provan

"We are awash today in greed. It meets us at nearly every turn, beckons us from almost every advertisement, is woven into the fabric of regular interaction, and diabolically remains so inconspicuous. It gnaws at the uneasy conscience of our finances, as we openly acknowledge its ugliness when unrestrained, but benefit from its unintended effects 'for the public good.' We might gasp when we catch greed red-handed, but typically it's so careful to stay out of sight, where it breeds and multiplies, evasive and pervasive. Our society, by some common grace, may condemn greed in theory, but we're slow to point a finger at specifics, especially when the finger might land on us. As John Paul Rollert writes, 'If we reject some conduct but rarely admit an example, we enjoy the benefit of being high-minded without the burden of moral restraint.' We also embolden that behavior, which proceeds with a presumptive blessing. As a matter of public discourse and polite conversation, 'Greed' is unlikely to be 'Good' anytime soon, but a vice need not become a virtue for the end result to look the same. We may not formally baptize unrestrained greed, but we have winked at it a thousand times, and swallowed our reservations. And the weed happily grows to fill every inch we give it."

-David Mathis