

Imagine...A New Normal
September 10, 2017
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

“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.” (Matthew 6:24 NIV)

Why is LHUMC devoting so much time and energy to the subject of money, one that many of us consider private or even taboo? Quite simply, because the Bible does. There are at least 800 scriptural references to material possessions, debt, and wealth. Did you know that Jesus talked about money more than any other subject, including heaven, forgiveness, and salvation? As we prepare to launch our church-wide *Imagine* campaign this week, let's spend some time thinking about a few key things the Bible teaches about money.

Digging Deeper

How we relate to money is a SPIRITUAL issue.

- Matthew 6:21 NLT says, “Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will be also.” So basically, whatever has your heart, has you. Once we begin to place God in His rightful place at the center of our lives, the desires of the heart begin to match up with His will for our lives. The same principle is true when we place our trust in our finances. Have you ever considered your relationship with your checkbook to be a spiritual one? Do you think your spending habits accurately reflect your values and beliefs? If not, can you easily identify the line items that might need further scrutiny?

Money is a POWERFUL force.

- What you do with what you've been given shows God who you are. However, thinking of money as a gift from God can be dangerous because we then see its gain or loss as a blessing or curse. Consider the story of the widow's offering as told in Mark 12:41-44. What a powerful illustration of what really matters to God! Not that you give a lot of money, but rather that your giving is indicative of the condition of your heart. What heart condition do you think Jesus is trying to emphasize when he states in Matthew 19:23-24 (NIV) that “it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven”?
- Has a conflict over money ever created a wedge in one of your relationships? Were you able to resolve the matter, or are you actively working toward that end?

Money is a wonderful SERVANT but a terrible MASTER.

- Make no mistake about it, we are to serve God and make money our slave to serve the Lord's purposes. In Financial Peace University, you will hear Dave Ramsey talk about living like no one else now, so you can live and give like no one else later. Does the idea of making sacrifices today so that you can do more with your money later sound exciting or daunting? Why?

- Read 1 Timothy 6:3-10. Money is not evil in and of itself. The LOVE of money is what corrupts our hearts and causes us to dwell in a state of misplaced adoration. Does thinking about money (or your lack thereof) take up too much valuable real estate space in your head?
- What are some things you could eliminate right away that would either help you begin to chip away at debt or increase your ability to give generously? How do you think accomplishing those things could align your attitude about money more closely with that of God's?

Money must be MANAGED.

- In Matthew 12:17 (NIV) Jesus says, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." While this was a reply to the question of should we have to pay taxes, how can we take that advice and apply it to all aspects of our lives? How can thinking of our money as God's first help us when it comes time to say goodbye to it?
- Another thing you will hear Dave Ramsey ask in FPU is, "Do you tell your money where to go, or does it tell you?" What do you think it means to be a good steward of your personal finances? Do you know where every dollar you make ends up? Why do you think this would be important if you are striving for biblical stewardship?

Conclusion

All of these things make up the heart of what the LHUMC *Imagine* campaign is all about. Can you imagine taking control of your finances, destroying debt, retiring with freedom, and giving extravagantly? Can you IMAGINE A NEW NORMAL? Let's use the next few months we spend in our *Imagine* campaign to work toward turning our money into a tool we can master with the purpose of serving God, our one true Master.