



MONEY TALKS

The End is Near

Jesus defined the primary dilemma of money in terms of a master/servant dynamic, arguing that a person is either devoted to their impulses and appetites, or devoted to their Creator—mastered by stuff, or leveraging it for the benefit of others. Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised when our appetites for *more* conflict with the vision God has for our character and finances, because nobody is immune to the temptations of *more*. In the end, the difficult step of saying 'Yes' to God entails saying 'No' to ourselves. When it comes to finances, the first step is putting our priorities in order, giving before consuming.

Discussion

Start Talking

Have you ever responded to a classified ad, Craigslist page, or Facebook Market posting that you eventually realized was too good to be true? What happened? What tipped you off that the person was promising more than they could deliver?

How did you treat your Christmas or birthday money as a child? Were you a saver? A spender? The kid who put it back for some big purchase? Or blew it all on candy at 7-11?

Looking Back

Did you take any steps over the past week to leverage your money, time, and resources for the benefit of others? If so, what were they? If not, where and why did the breakdown between intentions and actions occur?

This week, when did you notice yourself slipping back into the mindset of ownership?
<Reminder: Andy defined ownership as a mindset focused on accumulation/consumption.>
Did you have any success redefining your role as that of a temporary manager (or steward)?



What About You?

1. Speaking honestly, with no fear of judgment, which do you find more comforting: the thought of a standing invitation to intimacy with God, or a guaranteed, renewable stream of money?
2. How do you feel about Andy's claim that money woes often begin in our character, not our income?
3. Where in your daily life do you find yourself most tempted to put yourself first? Where do you find it easiest to put others before yourself?
4. In your experience, has it been easier to prioritize God during easy times or emergencies?

Look It Up

Read the Following Passages: Galatians 5:16, 22-23, Luke 16:13, and Matthew 6:33

1. In your reading, what does it mean to "walk by the spirit" regarding finances?
2. In what ways do our appetites and impulses conflict with the list of aspirational qualities that Paul calls, "the fruits of the Spirit?"
3. How does the vision for your financial life derived from your appetite for *more* conflict with the vision for financial life that Jesus and Paul propose in these passages?
4. Jesus says here to seek first "the kingdom of God." Practically speaking, what do you take this to mean? What does it look like? In contrast, what does a "kingdom of self" look like?

Putting It All Together

1. What steps could you take in the days to come to safeguard yourself against the temptation to make the pursuit of stuff your master? How will you transform your momentary intentions to do good into habitual actions?
2. Thinking over your own financial habits, what will it actually take to reorient your priorities in order to give first, rather than as an afterthought with whatever resources haven't already been consumed?
3. In light of the fact that the Kingdom of God is an "others first" kingdom, Andy says that in addition to their local church, Christians should support non-profits that stir their passions. What causes and concerns has God laid on your heart? How can you leverage your money and resources to respond?
4. How will you evaluate your long-term progress? What will you do to determine whether you have slipped into habits that indicate you are being mastered by the pursuit of more money?

