

LIVING FAITH – The Book of JAMES Part 8

A Mature View of Material Wealth

KEY PASSAGES: James 1:9-11, 2:1-7, 5:1-6

3 Distorted Views James Challenges

1. Building an IDENTITY based on wealth

How does society shape identity through wealth or status?
Where do people today commonly build their identity around what they own?
How can wealth subtly influence how we see ourselves or others?

2. FAVOURITISM towards those WITH wealth

Where do we see favouritism based on wealth in our culture or church life?
Why does wealth often gain influence or honour?

3. MISUSE of wealth for SELFISH purposes

What are common ways people misuse wealth today?
How can we tell when money is serving us versus when we are serving it?

Opening PREMISE: There's a SPIRITUALLY MATURE way to view / treat / handle money and an IMMATURE way.

- * Jesus' Core Teaching: You're going to have to PICK your LORD: God or money (Matt 6:24).
- * Foundational Principle: You will only experience PEACE in the areas FULLY SURRENDERED to God, including & your especially finances (Job 22:21).
- * The Danger: If we build our IDENTITY on what we OWN, money begins to TAKE God's PLACE; we look to money to give what ONLY GOD can provide.

Why do you think money competes so strongly for our allegiance to God?
Why do surrendered areas of life produce peace? Have you experienced this personally?
What does it mean practically to choose God, not money as your 'lord'?

3 Heart DANGERS & Kingdom SOLUTIONS

DANGER #1: The PURSUIT of MONEY overtakes your PURSUIT of GOD.

- * i.e. Money becomes your LORD (1 Tim 6:9-11).

SOLUTION #1: Put the PURSUIT of GOD firmly BEFORE money (Matt 6:33).

How can the pursuit of money crowd out the pursuit of God in daily life?
What are warning signs that money is becoming an 'idol'?
What practical habits help you put God's kingdom first?
What does it look like to seek God before financial security?

DANGER #2: Your HAPPINESS is too closely TIED to the size of your BANK ACCOUNT.

- * i.e. Money becomes your HOPE.
- * The world is LYING to you: Bigger, better & more do not, cannot & will not take you where they PROMISE.
- * Money makes a wonderful SERVANT, but a terrible MASTER.

SOLUTION #2: Tie your HAPPINESS to the strength of your RELATIONSHIP with GOD, rather than MONEY.

- * There's tremendous TEMPTATION to sacrifice what TRULY MATTERS in pursuit of a higher STANDARD OF LIVING.

Why is it so easy to believe that more money will bring happiness?
What does it mean to tie happiness to your relationship with God instead of your circumstances?
What pressures tempt us to sacrifice what truly matters for a higher standard of living?
How can we maintain joy regardless of financial circumstances?

DANGER #3: Money starts to TAKE HOLD of your HEART.

- * i.e. Money becomes your FORTRESS (2 Tim 3:1-2).
- * If that 'LOVE' takes root, you will increasingly GUARD it, COMPROMISE for it, & ultimately SERVE & WORSHIP it.

How can love of money lead to compromise or spiritual drift?
Why does money seem to promise security or control, but fail to deliver it?

SOLUTION #3: Make GIVING IT AWAY, not HOARDING it your joy (Prov 11:24-25, 2 Cor 9:6-11; Matt 6:21).

- * GIVE and you FREE your heart.
- * Your heart will never be truly INVESTED where your treasure is WITHHELD.
- * Generosity turns possessions into PURPOSE & wealth into WORSHIP.
- * Once your financial life is SUBMITTED (Job 22:21), then and only then will you have PEACE, JOY & FREEDOM.

Why does generosity free the heart? Have you experienced this?
How does giving change our relationship with money?
What does it mean that your heart follows your treasure?