

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

James 5:1-6

Lesson #20

Wealth's side effects

07/18/2021

Christians seem to have an ambivalent view toward material wealth and the rich.

- Is wealth a sign of God's favor or **a sign of worldliness?**
- Is wealth an indication of wisdom and hard work or **greed and selfishness?**
- Is material wealth vital to God's plan or **is it a distraction?**



1

Jesus and the Apostles seem to take a strange approach to material wealth.

- They are far more critical of the rich than we might be.
 - They seem more concerned about what wealth might do to those who have it, than what it can do for those who might need it.
 - They seem to have little concern for gaining and using wealth and its power for kingdom influence.

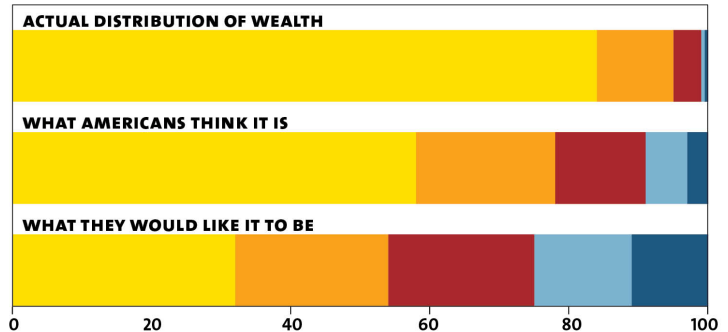


Are we missing something?

2

The gap between rich and poor in America is a threat to our core value of freedom and justice for all.

top 20%
second 20%
third 20%
fourth 20%
bottom 20%

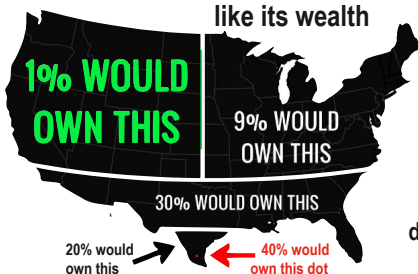


Source: Michael I. Norton, Harvard Business School; Dan Ariely, Duke University

3

The "have lots" in America

If U.S. land was divided like its wealth



The biggest worry with **concentration of wealth** is that the 1% will buy themselves favors from government.

The problem with the 40% in the red dot is that their lack of wealth is linked to dignity, access to goods and services, influence, and opportunity.

The **challenge** is to produce a more just distribution of goods & services without killing freedom and productivity.

4

James Kingdom Living in a Broken World

This is what we should know

Life's trials contain hidden blessings.

1:1-18

This is what we should do

"quick to hear"
"Listen up"

1:19-2:13

"slow to speak"
"Shut up"

2:14-3:12

"slow to anger"
"Cool it"

3:13-5:20

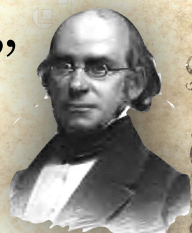
James 1:19

Our material assets are spiritual liabilities until we loosen our attachment to and with them.

5

“Wealth and
want equally
harden the
human heart.”

Theodore Parker
Unitarian preacher



6

James 5

“1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!”

4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.”

7

James 5

“1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your **miseries which are coming upon you.**”

The **major theme** of James has to do with the “have nots” and the “have lots”, not “faith and works”.

While all “have lots” (the rich) are not culpable to the same degree, they all are **affected** to some degree.

Negative side-effects of worldly wealth

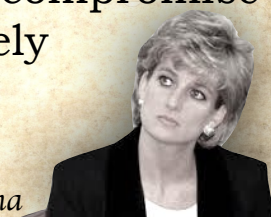
1. The failure to see any of
its negative side effects.

Two things Americans tend not to criticize:
Material wealth and Personal freedom.

8

“They say it is better to
be poor and happy than
rich and miserable, but
how about a compromise
like moderately
rich and just
moody?”

Princess Diana



9

James 5

“1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your **miseries which are coming upon you.**”

What does the Bible say about material wealth?

As a blessing
from God be
thankful.

As an opportunity
for ministry be
responsible.

As a dangerous
deception don't
let it **define** you.

As a **desensitizer** to
God, people, & your
spiritual need don't
let it **blind** you.

10

James 5

“2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be **a witness against you** and will **consume your flesh like fire**. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!”

2. The failure to see the fading and
superficial value of material wealth.

**There is one thing worse than not having our
basic needs met in this world
and that is to have them met in this world.**

James 1:10

“the rich man is to glory in his humiliation,
because like flowering grass **he will pass away.**”¹¹

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1 Timothy 6

“¹⁷ Instruct those who are rich in this present world **not to be conceited or to fix their hope on** the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to **be generous and ready to share**, ¹⁹ storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”

12

James 5

“⁴ Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, **cries out against you**; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”

3. The failure to respect the communal aspects of all who share “God’s Image”.

There are few if any “self made” fortunes.

1 Corinthians 4

“⁷ For who regards you as superior? And **what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?** ⁸ You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us;

13

Galatians 6:10

“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Observation #1 Christians have a primary responsibility to the Christian community.

Observation #2 Christians love and service is to extend to all whom God loves.

Observation #3 Christian service is conditioned on time and opportunity. We are not called to reform society.

This will be the topic of the next lesson.

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James 5

“⁵ You have lived **luxuriously** on the earth and led a life of wanton **pleasure**; you have **fattened** your hearts in a day of slaughter.”

4. The failure to appreciate the role of pain and brokenness in and around us.

The cracks of brokenness let the light in, they are not something to be covered over by wealth’s “flex seal” family of products?

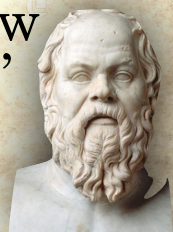
2 Corinthians 12:10

“when I am weak, then I am strong.”

15

“If a man is proud of his wealth, he should not be praised until it is known how he employs it.”

Socrates



16

Luke 6:20

“... **Blessed are you who are poor**, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

2 Corinthians 8:9

“For you know the Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake **He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.**”

Jesus’ healing miracles were signs, not solutions, to the human dilemma.



17

John 15:7

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly."



But how are we to understand abiding and abundance?

18

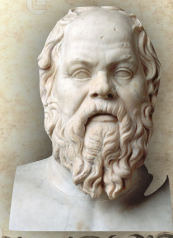
1 Timothy 6

"5 . . . men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. 6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. 7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 8 And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang."

19

"Contentment is natural wealth, luxury is artificial poverty."

Socrates



20

James 5

"6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous man; he does not resist you."

5. The failure to embrace the Way of the Cross.

Isaiah 53:7

"He was oppressed and afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth."

2 Corinthians 6

"9 . . . we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things."

21

Philippians 2

"5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond servant, and being made in the likeness of men 8. . . He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

22

The greater gift

"A monk in his travels once found a precious stone and kept it. One day he met a traveler, and when the monk opened his bag to share his provisions with him, the traveler saw the jewel and asked the monk to give it to him. The monk did so readily. The traveler departed overjoyed with the unexpected gift of the precious stone that was enough to give him wealth and security for the rest of his life.

However, a few days later he came back in search of the monk, found him, gave him back the stone, and entreated him, 'Now give me something much more precious than this stone, valuable as it is.

Give me that which enabled you to give it to me."



Anthony De Mello
Indian Jesuit priest 28