



FOR RICHER OR POORER

2.23.2014 - GROUP DISCUSSION

MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Choose your own question, please no names:

Have you ever spent time around a stingy or penny-pinching person? How do you feel around them?

Have you ever spent time around an audacious spender, who is always in debt but has everything money can buy? How do you feel around them?

SHARE

Welcome to part three of our series entitled, "Vows." We have all heard vows before; in fact most of us have made vows to ourselves and to others. We have vowed to lose weight, get in shape, make things right, fix that relationship, break that addiction, come through for someone. We have all sat at weddings where we have heard vows such as "...I take thee, for better or for worse, richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part," and we wait for the crescendo by the pastor when he states, "you may kiss the bride."

In week one we talked about the message entitled, "I Take Thee." We discussed how God chooses us and will not break his vows even if we do. In week two we talked about when life is "For Better or for Worse," and how that particular vow should really be changed to "For Better AND for Worse."

This week we will talk about what it means to be rich or poor in God's economy. From the outside it is easy to label people rich or poor according to what they have and don't have, but in God's economy a rich man might look poor and sometimes a poor man is extremely rich in this life. Those who are rich in God always put God first in their lives and believe that it is God who ultimately owns everything. Those who are poor in the things of God tend to believe they control life and that they own everything; ultimately they are responsible for everything they have.

So why should this matter to us? Whether you are single, divorced, or married, God has much to say about money. Why do we worry so continually about money or argue about money? We are just stewards of money here on earth, it is God who gives us the abilities to make money

and the breath of our next day to work, build and even have the opportunities to create wealth.

Jesus says something very interesting about how we order our lives in the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most profound teachings ever recorded about worrying.

Read Matthew 6:25-34 and we will focus on the following verse:

Matthew 6:33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

What do you tend to worry about most in life?

When are you most likely to worry about that area of your life?

What does it look like for you to seek first God's kingdom?

What gets in the way for you to trust God with your finances?

GROW

Trusting God can be difficult. The bible is overflowing with the word "trust." God continually lets us know that he can be trusted and that is exactly when our faith is most tested. Do we really believe God's promises? Does God really know best?

In the message Shawn talked about true riches. Living a life putting God first requires trust, and as believers we need to walk with God and keep in step with where he is leading. Let's take marriage for instance, in our marriages are we living life by the Spirit of God or are we trying to do life our way? Are we rich in God, full of love, joy and peace or are we exhausted, angry, bitter and quick-tempered?

Read Galatians 5:13-26 and we will spend a moment on the following verse:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The New American Commentary talks about the most important fruit a believer should experience as they walk by the Spirit:

Love as a characteristic of the Christian life is consequent upon God's unfathomable love and infinite mercy toward us. For Paul this was foundational to everything he had said and would yet say in Galatians—"I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:20). The result of the transforming, sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives is just this: that we are enabled to love one another with the same kind of love that God loves us. Paul profiled this kind of love in 1 Cor 13; it is a love that "seeks not its own."

If you are married, what fruit of the Spirit do you most need in your marriage right now?

If you are divorced, what can you share with the group that you have learned about yourself? What fruit of the Spirit do you most need God to help you with?

If you have never been married, are the fruits of the Spirit important when considering a potential spouse? Why or why not?

MOVE

God understands our brokenness and empathizes with our weaknesses. God understands our situation and knows exactly where you are in your walk with him. Knowing that God knows us intimately, there is nothing to hide from him. Hopefully you feel the freedom to be honest with God and others about your walk with God. It is okay to say, "I don't trust God, especially with money" or "I am failing in almost every category of the fruit of the Spirit." Allow yourself to be honest, start there and ask God to help reveal himself to you in a way only he can.

When it comes to talking about "for richer or for poorer," the issue is much deeper than what it appears. It isn't about how much you make that is the problem in your life, but who or what you are trusting in. If we trust in money to be rich in life, then what happens when a job is lost or hardship comes our way? How does it affect our relationships?

Read Matthew 6:19-24 and we will talk about this verse:

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.

In the message, Shawn talked about putting God first in our marriages, relationships and to keep God at the forefront of our lives in all we do. If we put God first in our life, marriage, dating, work, family and how we manage our finances, he will begin to change our lives. It doesn't mean this is a formula to make God do something for you, but a way of living that God promises that you will be rich in him.

How would you describe a person who serves money alone? How do you think it affects their relationships with others?

Do you have a personal story where you put God first in your life? What happened and what did you learn about God?

What steps do you think you need to take to start putting God first in your finances?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Malachi 3:10

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

Another great resource to read about giving, finances, investing and putting God first is Dave Ramsey's, Complete Guide to Money and Total Money Makeover. Both books are excellent and talk about getting out of debt, wise investing, and the principles of putting God first.

Special Note about this LG Weekly:

It is important to note that this LG Weekly study can bring up some difficult topics and memories. Remember, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For many of us who have experienced the pain of broken relationships or marriages, remember that you are forgiven, loved and belong. All of us have fallen short, so you are among a group that is all broken. The important thing is to decide what you think God wants you to do next for you are already loved and accepted by God.

Don't give up, dig in, ask for prayer and let's move on together!