

## Loving Money

"Money makes the world go around, the world go around, the world go around. Money makes the world go around, of that we can be sure." (lyrics from the musical "Cabaret")

Economists place no moral significance on money. They explain that money is simply and primarily a medium of exchange. Without money, we would have to trade goods or services for everything. And how inconvenient would that be when we wanted, say, a Kit Kat bar?!

But God, who looks beyond the balance sheet and into the hearts of his children, knows that money has a much broader meaning and role in our lives. And He sees, and grieves, when money takes His place as the master of our lives.

Read Luke 16:13.

How are ways that you see people loving money instead of loving God?

What are the areas where we need to guard ourselves when it comes to money?

Read Matt 6:19-21

What are steps we can take to fulfill this verse?

How do we "lay up" future resources?

How can we appreciate wealth but honor God?

We all need to make money in order to buy things we need, but what happens when "making a living" becomes the master of our lives? Should we congratulate ourselves for being so talented at making money? Or instead, should we recognize who is the author of our wealth and what He intends for us to do with it?

October 15, 2016

**James - Faith That Works**

*It's all about who?*

Pastor Rick Rufenacht



James 4:11 - 5:6

**I cannot know** others.

**I cannot see the** future.

**I cannot love** money.

We, as a society, revere the independent, strong-minded "self-made" man (and woman). This character type is found abundantly in popular literature, thanks largely to the 19th Century author, Horatio Alger. He wrote stories of impoverished children who, through "luck and pluck," turned their lives from "rags to riches."

As a result, we like to believe that we, as humans, can single-handedly accomplish anything thanks to a "positive attitude," "being in the right place at the right time," and "stick-to-it-iveness."

But does God encourage us to always and exclusively "take the bull by the horns" and wrestle life into submission on our terms, and based on our own perceptions and thoughts?

Or should we accept that we are not the "masters of our own destiny" and instead place our trust and dependence somewhere else?

### **Knowing Others**

"Reality" TV has made Judging into a spectator sport. From conducting faux legal proceedings like "Judge Judy," to revealing family indiscretions such as on "Jerry Springe," to even determining a business's chances of success or failure as seen on "Shark Tank," we as viewers are asked to imagine that we are sitting in judgment of some poor soul's actions, motivations and character strengths or flaws.

But can we really see into our neighbor's mind and soul, and understand what is happening with that individual? What could cause us to unfairly and incorrectly judge another's situation?

Read Luke 6:37 and Romans 2:1.

What is our responsibility and role as Christians in regards to these verses?

What causes us to focus so often on the thing we shouldn't do as opposed to what we are challenged to do? ( i.e forgive)

We seem quick to point fingers at others without looking at ourselves. What are some areas in the Church where we have some "blind eyes" and need to look inside?

As Christians are called on to decide on our own actions and how the actions and promises/threats of others may affect the lives of us and our loved ones. When it is appropriate to judge or "take a stand" for or against some one or some thing?

### **Seeing Ahead**

TV commercials for investment advisors assure us that we will enjoy a carefree future of days on the beach or in our backyard pottery studio, if only we take action--today--to entrust them with our money. School children are urged to plan their "college career" in order to assure themselves of an adulthood of security, abundance and satisfaction. There's even a car company that asks us to imagine how an infant riding home from the maternity ward will someday be old enough to drive that very car! (Because it will last that long and remain that safe.)

Yet James tells us "You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." (James 4: 14). So how Biblically appropriate is it for us to devote such energy and hopefulness to our vision of the future?

A popular song says that, if the singer learned that soon life would end, he would "go sky diving, rocky mountain climbing and six seconds on a bull named Fu Manchu." What would we do if we knew we only had a month to live? How would we spend our time, our money? Who would we call? How would we witness?

Read Luke 14:28-31, Proverbs 19:21 and Lamentations 3:37. Is God against planning? What does God want us to consider and include as we make our plans?