



the mystagogue

Finding simple wisdom in scripture as it applies to practical life is less about mining scripture for easy principles to follow than about discovering the deeper framework for understanding the relationships and responsibilities we have in life that are related to what God desires for his people. We will not exhaust all that we might find in scripture as it relates to any given subject,

but we will seek to discover the fundamental basis for understanding those relationships and responsibilities that can guide our actions as we work to live lives faithful to our creator, fulfilling our responsibilities to one another and his kingdom. You are invited to use these frameworks to explore additional ways God calls you to living in fidelity to his invitation to “know what is the hope to which he has called you,” and “to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (Ephesians 1.18; 4.1).

Write out your notes and responses to the questions below (include the “see also” passages in your reflection). Record insights gained in discussion. Return to them periodically as a reminder of the wisdom God has shared with you, adding to them as he continues to bless you with his resources and the grace to grow in your use of those resources in and for his kingdom.

Experiential reflection

- What kinds of financial resources has God has given me? What other resources has he given?
- What responsibilities do I have for the way I use those resources (to my family, to Jesus, to his church, to others)?
- What goals do I have for using those resources?
- Are my goals aligned with what God desires?

Sources of wisdom

Notice that we have many more sources of biblical wisdom that are about or that draw upon money and financial matters. More than many important practical subjects, scripture is full of concern about the accumulation and disposition of wealth and its effect on our relationship to God and place in his kingdom.

Genesis 1.27-30

- What is the human vocation created by God?
- Whose resources are we given to steward?
- What are we meant to do with those resources?

Genesis 4.2-12

- What is the nature of the resources Cain and Abel offer to God? What is the difference between Cain’s offering and Abel’s?
- What is the nature of God’s warning to Cain before he kills his brother?

Deuteronomy 26.1-15 (see also Proverbs 2.9-10)

- What are the first fruits that are mentioned? Where do they come from?
- Why is the tithe connected to the recitation of Israel's creation and redemption?
- How is the tithe used?
- What is the tithe meant to demonstrate about the way his people are to understand and to use the resources with which they are blessed?

Psalm 50; 51.15-17

- Why does God not accept the very sacrifices (tithes and offerings) he decreed as part of his covenant with his people?
- What does he seek that would make those sacrifices honorable?

Malachi 1.6-10; 2.1-3.12

- What is the issue God takes with the tithes and offerings his people are giving?
- What does God mean when he says his people are robbing him in their tithes and offerings?
- What does God seek from his people that would be evidenced in an offering he would accept?

Matthew 22.15-32; 23.23-24

- What is it that really belongs to Caesar? What really belongs to God?
- Why would Jesus' response to the trap laid by the Pharisees astound them?
- What does Jesus' response imply about our resources and to whom we bear responsibility for their use?
- What is his warning to the Pharisees about the tithe? What is he saying about their stewardship of the resources he has given them?

Matthew 6.19-21

- What does God have to say about resources in this familiar statement about storing up treasures?
- What is he implying about the stewardship of the resources we are given?

Mark.10.17-31

- What is the issue that leaves the man shocked and grieving?
- Why does Jesus say that the wealthy have difficulty entering the kingdom?
- What is it that God seeks from the wealthy (and everyone)?

2 Corinthians 9.6-15

- How does Paul describe the resources we have?
- For what purpose are we given those resources? How are they to be used?

See also Genesis 14.17-20; Numbers 18.8-32; Nehemiah 10.35-39; Psalm 15, 24, 49, 62; Amos 5.6-27; Matthew 13.44-45; Matthew 18.23-35; Matthew 20.1-16; Matthew 25.14-30 Luke 16.1-13, 19-31, 21.1-4; 1 Timothy 6.17-19

Living in wisdom

- How does the biblical wisdom we explored shape the way I understand the source of the financial resources I have?
- How does the biblical wisdom we explored help me understand the responsibilities I have to use the financial resources I have? To whom am I responsible for the use of my financial resources?
- What does the biblical wisdom we explored suggest about where and how the financial resources I have are used for the sake of those to whom I am responsible? Does it help me think differently about the notion of wealth, financial security, or giving?
- How does the biblical wisdom we explored challenge me to look differently at the priorities I have given to the things in which I invest? What do my financial priorities say about where my commitments are found?
- What does the biblical wisdom we explored tell me about how to face the challenges I am experiencing or anticipating in seeking, using, or letting go of my concern about financial resources?
- What can I commit to do to meet those challenges based on the wisdom gained?