

Session One Wealth and Riches

Take It from One Who Knows

Maybe the best way to know about wealth is to talk to people who have it or have had it. Meet three of them, think about what their stories tell us, and answer the two questions at the end of the exercise for each of them.

1. John D. Rockefeller has a name that is synonymous with "megabucks" in the minds of most people. Here is what he once said: "I know of nothing more despicable and pathetic than a man who devotes all the hours of the waking day to the making of money for money's sake."



2. Read the story of Zacchaeus in *Luke 19:1-9*.

3. Kiplinger's magazine had a story about Peggy and Joseph McCabe, an elderly middle-class Iowa couple who decided to give about a half-million dollars to Coe College, of which Dr. McCabe was president for twenty years. The amount represents the total salary he was paid at the college plus the interest earned since his retirement in 1977. The gift will not leave the McCabes absolutely poverty-stricken, but it is a very big chunk of their life savings. Dr. McCabe says, "If you need a purpose in life, find a good small college and fall in love with it." He adds that the money will not really be going out of his family because "a small college has the intense advantage of being like a family." The McCabes give credit for the healthy growth of their money over the years to Coe College alumni who gave them sound investment advice.

For the people in each story, answer these questions: a) What was their experience with money? b) How did their experience affect their attitude toward money?

Wealthbuilding



The Bible has a lot to say about what true wealth is and how to attain it. Jesus was never very big on gathering earthly wealth. It fades away; it's a distraction from the effort of coming closer to God; it disappoints in the end because of its emptiness.

With the other members of your group, read the Bible passages assigned to you. Talk them over: Which ones relate to your life and experience? Do any really hit home? Which give you something new to think about? As you read, write down some ideas of what true wealth is. Then write down some suggestions for ways to go about "wealthbuilding." These are practical things you and your fellow students might do to build up the kind of riches God values. Be ready to share some of the main points you found in your reading, and your list of "wealthbuilding" suggestions.

Wealth and Riches

Group One: *Proverbs 11:28; 23:4-5. Matthew 6:19-21, 25-34. Ephesians 3:8. 1 Timothy 6:7-11. James 5:1-5.*

Group Two: *Proverbs 23:4-5. Matthew 6:19-21. Mark 10:17-27. Hebrews 13:5. 1 Timothy 6:17-19. James 1:11; 5:1-5.*

Group Three: *Proverbs 11:28; 23:4-6. Matthew 6:25-34. Mark 10:17-27. Ephesians 3:8. 1 Timothy 6:7-11, 17-19.*

Session One

Wealth and Riches

1. Worldly wealth can be—and in fact usually is—a transient and mixed blessing.
2. Scripture tells us about heavenly riches that never fade and are “unmixed” blessings.
3. As Christians, we believe that we should live in a way that values heavenly riches.

Students will:

1. Examine their own attitudes toward earthly wealth.
2. Study Bible passages relating to heavenly wealth.
3. Enumerate some ways they can build their heavenly wealth.

Key Concepts

Objectives

Background for Teacher

Our students are surrounded by ads, movies, TV, and music with the message that the pursuit of earthly wealth is a highly desirable goal in life. While we know that wealth can certainly be used for godly purposes, we need to make students aware that wealth can also become a trap and an ephemeral, ultimately disappointing goal. We want them to know that the Bible gives a "road map" to the Kingdom, where wealth is real, unfading, and generously poured out to us by God.

We cannot entirely change the impression many students have that wealth is desirable, and indeed most of us would agree that to be free of money worries is very desirable. To change that impression is not really the goal of this session. What we can try to do as our goal is to instill a desire for those heavenly riches that are the truly precious and lasting ones, and suggest some ways to gain them.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- 8 small slips of paper for each student
- container for slips of paper
- pencils or pens

Procedure

1. Open with a prayer. You may decide to use the same prayer each week, or alternate a few prayers, to make sure students know them. (The Lord's Prayer or the Prayer on Beginning Work—*Uzkordzus Tzeratz Merotz*—might be good choices. See page 24 of the student text.) Introduce the unit of study by saying that together you will be looking at various components of success from the point of view of the Church and the Bible. You can tell students about topics included in the unit and invite them to think now about questions they would like to discuss as you go through the weeks, or ideas they would like to present as you proceed. (10 mins)

2. Write on the board: **FOUR GREAT THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF I WERE REALLY RICH.** Give each student four slips of paper, ask them to write four things on their slips, then fold them. Collect the slips. Next, write **FOUR NOT-SO-GREAT THINGS THAT MIGHT HAPPEN IF I WERE REALLY RICH.** Give each student another four slips of

paper. Have students fill them out and fold them in half. Collect them, keeping them separate from the first group.

Put the folded papers from the first group into a basket or container. Have each student pick two, not their own (if they pick their own, they can simply put it back in and take another). Discuss what was written for the "great things" and let students voice their agreement or disagreement with what is written on the slips they have chosen. Do the same with the "not-so-great things" and acknowledge that we are probably less used to thinking about the possible disadvantages of wealth rather than its advantages. It may even be that some students have a hard time coming up with four items for the second part. So it's important to be aware that there are disadvantages, because our culture does not remind us of that very often. (Some possible ones: strained friendships because of jealousy, being robbed, losing sight of other values in life, people more interested in my money than in me, etc.)

Go back over the answers students gave, and put on the board those that came up more than once, even if they are similar but differently worded. (15 mins)

3. Have the group do the exercise, **Take It From One Who Knows** in the student text. After they have done so, talk together about their answers to the questions. Many points for discussion are possible; here are some suggestions:

1. John D. Rockefeller had probably done business with many people who let the accumulation of wealth fill their days and rule their lives. He was wise enough to see that such a use of life is not worthwhile.

2. Zacchaeus had been one of those who let his life be ruled by wealth. In fact, to acquire it he had been willing to be thought a traitor by his own people as a tax collector for their oppressors. But an encounter with the Lord was enough to make him see that there was something he wanted much, much more than the wealth he had worked so hard to get. In fact, it was enough to make him decide that from now on he would change his whole attitude toward gathering earthly wealth.

3. Peggy and Joseph McCabe clearly have seen that money is best used to serve a beloved cause. They have understood that giving is a way of being enriched. (15 mins)

Procedure

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4. Divide the class into 3 groups, (assign the passages to be read on page 2), and have them do the **Wealthbuilding** exercise in the student texts. When they finish, let them share the suggestions they have come up with, so that all class members can hear the whole range of possible ideas. (Be sure you are familiar with the Bible passages they are reading so that you can lead the discussion. Some points to discuss: Nothing belongs to us anyway. We are only stewards of God's gifts. Heavenly riches don't fade, rust, get lost in a bad stock market, etc.)

Close with Prayer 1 from the Prayer Page in the student text (page 24).

(20 mins)