

Money Matters Week 2 - 5 July 2009

What can we learn from the “Credit Crunch”?

What we covered in Week 2

The “Credit Crunch” has had a very real impact on many of our lives. Many of our previous certainties may have been challenged and we may feel both poorer financially and insecure as a result. Recently we have also been made aware of a lack of trust in our politicians. It can seem a messy world! But crisis can signal opportunity as well as danger.

So first of all what can we learn? Could God have brought us to a place where failings and complacency are exposed so that we can come again to the first principles of how to live as a Christian in an attitude of genuine discipleship? Perhaps we can discover a new level of daily trust in God? Perhaps we have realised that many of the bad things of the Credit Crunch demonstrated that the world out there has more influence on us than us on it. If this is the case then we are likely to want to develop a fresh perspective on our money and our possessions. With this perspective we are then more likely to be able to serve and reach a hurting and dysfunctional world. The questions we discussed during this session are intended to help us think these ideas through.

A thought about money and possessions from the words of Jesus

We should trust God daily for our needs - Jesus instructed us to pray that God will “Give us each day our daily bread” (Luke 11:3).

An example from the life of Nehemiah

Nehemiah seems to have led an exemplary life of faith. But this did not stop him from identifying with the wrong things that had his countrymen had done. He was genuinely sorry for what had happened in his wider society and sought God’s forgiveness with sincerity and heart ache. When Nehemiah heard about the state of Jerusalem he did not find someone else to blame. ‘I, my family and the rest of your people have sinned by choosing to disobey you and the laws and teachings you gave to your servant Moses (1:6 and 7).

Have we said sorry to God for the failings of our world’s financial arrangements – or do we consider that that is nothing to do with us?

A prayer for the week

LORD I am sorry if I have failed you in the way that I handle my money and possessions. You are the LORD of all my life and these are yours as well. I am also sorry for the part that I and the Church may have played in letting the “Credit Crunch” happen - however small that might seem to be. May we discover what it really means to be salt and light for a fallen world.

The Money Matters finance tip

Jesus urged his disciples to use their money wisely – ‘use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves’ and in the parable of the talents the Master commended the servants who had put the money they had been given to good use.

An example of how we can do this might be to shop around for a credit card that will either contribute to a charity or a similar body or pay cash back to you when depending on how much you use your card. Although the amounts may sometimes seem small every penny counts! You

might even choose to use the cash back from a credit card scheme like this to increase your Christian giving.

A Money Matters Question

One question we asked last week was ‘How much money is too much money?’ The does not seem to be an exact answer to this question and may be the question is the wrong way round. Rather, too much money is when it gets in the way of my relationship with God. This is likely to be different for each of us. If we use our money as ‘God’s money’ then it is likely that there will not be an upper limit! John Wesley, who founded the Methodist Church, is often quoted for having said “Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can”. Despite earning a lot of money during his lifetime he died with very little. He seems to have understood the words of Jesus that we should ‘provide ourselves with purses that will not wear out’, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted.’

To help us not forget what we have already covered.....

The Money Matters Assignment

For us to summarise from the Money Matters sessions the ways which we believe that as a Church we can better deal with money matters to:

- Grow in our understanding of God;
- Support one another in financially difficult times;
- Develop a distinctive Christian lifestyle; and
- Reach out to those in financial need in the wider community around us.

The Money Matters quiz

How many song titles can you come up with which have a monetary theme? You need to list the artist and the song. Entries must be submitted by Sunday 19 July 2009 and the winner will be announced in our final Session on Sunday 26 July!

What we covered in Week 1 – The sacred and the spiritual: do their paths really cross?

We sometimes struggle to make our faith relevant to our everyday lives. We may even be oblivious to the fact that what we believe can be inconsistent with how we live. If ever there was an issue that calls out for this to be sorted out it is in our relationship with our money and possessions. It talks about the practical application of our faith. So often we don’t seem to consider issues like this and the muted reaction of the Church to the Credit Crunch seems to bear this out. However much we talk about our faith this is not the same as living it out. In the words of Brian McLaren is our faith more about ‘a system of belief’ rather than ‘a way of being’? How can we change this? Use the questions that we have discussed during our first session to think through these issues a little further.