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1.20.19 • CRAIG • HOPE FOR OUR FINANCES

BOTTOM LINE

What we possess is claimed by God (Acts 4:32) but belongs to us (Acts 5:4). Sacrificial giving is voluntary not compulsory (Acts 4:34b) and is possible when we live with margin.

KEY VERSES

Acts 4:32-37
Acts 5:1-4
1 Timothy 6:17-19
Philippians 4:10-13
James 1:5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. That the early church made no claim to their own possessions and knew their possessions were entrusted to them because they understood that everything they were and owned belonged to the Lord. Share of the moment this truth became real to you or, if you are hearing this truth for the first time, how does this insight challenge or inspire you? What questions does it leave you having to work through?
2. Pastor Craig stated that the hope for those struggling financially comes from the fact that the early church were 'kardia kai psyche mia' (of one heart and mind). In other words, they devoted themselves completely to the mission of Christ in the world and God took care of their needs. Reading Philippians 4:10-13, noting verse 13, what financial practices can help us be devoted to Christ's mission so that the mission does not lack?
3. How can we best avoid the idea that sacrificial giving, over and above the tithe, is obligatory? How can we avoid our giving becoming disingenuous or insincere because it's given begrudgingly?
4. The miracle of Acts 4 is not simply that no one had need but that the right amount came in on time, every time, from time to time. There are no simple financial decisions because financial decisions are seasonal and relational, not rigid and static. How do you make your financial decisions?
5. Christians made it a habit to discern God's will for their finances. Such discernment requires both wisdom from above and priority setting because spending decisions are spiritual decisions. Looking at your current practices, how wise are you in regard to how you spend money? Do your spending habits attest to the priorities you have set? Do you even have priorities or know how to set them? For a few moments, consider the implications of this portion of the text for your life right now. What do you need to do to apply this text to your life?
6. Rob Blue says that there are only "give" things we can do with our money: Live, Give, Owe (taxes), Owe (debt), and Grow. Prioritizing one of these areas always impacts on the other. Growing up, which of these five was the least discussed in your household and which was the most? What impact did these conversations have on your understanding of finances?
7. Talking about finances is difficult but sharing the wisdom we've learned on our way is important. So, let's try this exercise. Ron Blue uses a tool called the 'margin meter.' As you look at your life right now, where is your 'margin meter'? Are you struggling to make ends meet, 'surviving' by living paycheck to paycheck? Are you 'stable' saving some with an emergency fund? Are you 'secure' because you are saving for long-term goals? Or, finally, are you living with 'surplus' because you have more than enough? If you find yourself on the stable to surplus side of the meter, share some insights that helped you get there. What encouragement would you give those who are struggling and surviving?