

INTRO

So this one time, we (your Brewed Theology writers) met with someone to buy a trailer hitch we found on an online marketplace (random story, but true). We met the seller, and asked if we could pay in cash, to which he immediately replied, “Of course! Cash is King!”

It sure seems like money “is king” and makes the world go ‘round. In the scope of human inventions, currency seems like a great idea. But there seems to be truth to the sentiment that More Money = More Problems. The pursuit, hoarding, and inequality borne of wealth acquisition and distribution consumes our lives, and our neighbors.

The First Commandment (Ex 20) decries idols, the prophets (Amos, Micah, & more) regularly call out economic injustice, and Jesus regularly concerns himself with money. Why? Probably because God knows money is a significant power-player in our lives, and a competitor for what (and whom) we worship.

So, we’re going to talk about it, even (or rather, *especially*) as an “impolite” topic. Be an objective, open, patient person, among your fellow money-dependent humans.

Manna. Mammon. MONEY.

a Brewed Theology
conversation starter*

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

How do you think about money? What is your relationship with it? How did you think about it growing up? How was it handled? How does that impact how you view, handle, and/or give away money today? Did you (or do you) feel rich? Poor? Do you know anyone who was “changed” by money? How? Why? Who is the most (or least) generous person you know? What do you remember/know about how Jesus talks about money? How do you engage with his toughest teachings about it (see some of them below)? What should our relationship with money look like? What does God think about money?

BIBLE BASICS (Lots of these! Do some reading!)

- **Exodus 20:1-6** – The First Commandment: one God, no idols.
- **Exodus 16** – God provides manna and quail in the wilderness, enough for each day. Read the whole story, but pay attention to what happens when people try to stockpile excess (hint: **16:19-20**).
- **Micah 6:3-15** – The Prophet Micah laments a people who cheat the poor (see especially vv.10-12)
- **Amos 8:4-6** – The Prophet Amos denounces those who “trample on the needy” and leave nothing.
- Jesus talks about money a lot, in direct lessons and metaphor. Read these, then find more on your own:
 - **Luke 12:13-21** – A parable of a rich fool storing up treasures in the wrong place.
 - **Matthew 6:19-21** – Where your treasure is, there your heart will be.
 - **Matthew 19:16-23** – Camels, needles, and a rich man asking Jesus how to inherit eternal life.
 - **Mark 12:38-44** – Is this widow, who gives all she has, generous? Or being manipulated?
- **1 Timothy 6:9-10** – A common saying about money, commonly misquoted. Find the misquote.

ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS

YOUR MONEY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

What is your relationship with money like? Explore why you and money get along the way you do with this Money Autobiography, from the United Methodist Church. Skim and consider the questions, or do it all.

MARTIN LUTHER ON MAMMON

Reformer Martin Luther wrote at length about the first commandment, idols, and “the most common idol in the world:” money, or “mammon.” Lengthy, but take your time, and **focus on parts 1-14 (or especially 1-9)**. How does Luther define a god? An idol? How does money/mammon function this way?

DOES MONEY MAKE US MEAN? (16-minute video)

Social Psychologist Paul Piff shares research about the relationship between wealth and behavior (and a rigged game of Monopoly). Watch the whole TED Talk, and/or click Read Transcript.

HOW MONEY CHANGES THE WAY YOU THINK AND FEEL

This 2018 article for *Greater Good Magazine*, by Carolyn Gregoire, lays out some of the “psychology of wealth and money.” Spoiler – it ain’t too pretty: empathy, morality, addiction, mental health, judgementalism, and happiness are all at risk, and subject to the influence of wealth.

JESUS ON WEALTH AND WORRY (7-minute video)

A whole video and study guide on the topic of “Wealth and Worry” by the BibleProject. In their own words: “Jesus urges followers to love God and others—not wealth. Possessions, like masters, command our attention and distract us. But by trusting our generous creator and focusing on what God values, we can become more free and content.” Watch and read.

A SERMON ALL ABOUT MONEY (16-minute watch)

Brewed Theology’s own writer and Reverend Ben Eisele gives a sermon all about money, at Farmington Lutheran Church in Minnesota. (For a quicker watch, listen to why we should talk about money, and how talking about it can be such a strangely difficult thing to do, [starting here](#).)

WEALTH INEQUALITY IN NINE CHARTS

Wealth inequality is a growing problem in the United States. These Nine Charts from the Urban Institute describe the vast (and growing) disparity between those with lots, and those with little.

NEW LIFE IN RELATING TO MONEY

Read Grace Duddy Pomroy’s story about how her thinking about and relating to money evolved in her life, from “small living to expansive stewardship.” She’s the Director of the Stewardship Leaders Program at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN.

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