

Sex, Power and Money – Growth Group Study

Hebrews 13 – 19/7/2020 – John Malcolm

(This study touches on aspects of human experience which can be a cause of pain, please be sensitive to those in the group who may have suffered some form of abuse and for whom this study may be difficult)

What big stories have been in the news headlines recently regarding:

Sex/Marriage/Relationships - Power/Leadership - Money/Wealth

And are these stories generally good news or bad news?

Why are these big drivers of human emotion, need or longing which can be so positive, often the cause of oppression, pain or abuse?

Read Hebrews 13.1

What key aspect of Christian life is highlighted in this verse?

Rightly understood and applied, how can this help us avoid misuse of sex, power and money; and help to bring healing and restoration to people who have been hurt through experiences in life?

Read Hebrews 13.4

Why do Christians believe marriage should be honoured?

Why do you think the bible only permits sexual intimacy in the context of marriage and what are the dangers of treating this casually?

Why does the misuse/abuse of sexual intimacy have such an effect on people's lives, their self-image or self-worth?

Read Proverbs 31:15–20, Acts 4:33–37 and Hebrews 13:5

How does the woman in Proverbs provide a good role model for the creation and use of wealth?

What motivated generosity in the early church?

What do you think the writer of Hebrews means by the love of money? What behaviours or attitudes might we find in a person who loves money? How might wealth possess or take a person captive?

Compare/contrast the rich young ruler (Matthew 19.21-22) and the widow (Mark 12.41-44). What do you see as the key differences in their attitude to money?

John told the story of the ten Boom family sacrificing income to help maintain the reputation of a fellow Christian (Included at the end of the study). What do you think of the idea "*there is blessed and unblessed money*"?

How might this correspond with the idea of ethical investment?

Read Ezekiel 34:1–10 John 10.11 & Hebrews 13.7 & 17

Recent protests have brought into question the reputations of several civic and military leaders with people asking if they are truly worthy of having statues of them on display.

All leaders are flawed, but what do you look for in a leader and who might you suggest as an example of a good leader?

On the world stage we might see national leaders who cling on to power, even changing laws so they may maintain power. And we may also see similar behaviour in local clubs and societies. What is it about power/authority that is hard to let go of or which entices people to use it for their own benefit?

Why was God upset with the leaders of Israel in the time of Ezekiel and what action was he about to take?

What does God expect from leaders and why will he hold them to account?

What can we learn from Jesus, the Good Shepherd, about the use of power and influence?

Read Hebrews 13.8

In this series we have looked closely at the supremacy of Jesus who is greater than, Angels, Moses, Aaron, and the Old Testament sacrificial system.

What do you think the writer of Hebrews meant when saying Jesus *is the same yesterday and today and for ever*? In what manner is he *the same*?

Reflecting on marriage, money and leadership how might this “sameness” of Jesus shape/inspire/empower our approach to life?

Take time to pray for each other being mindful of our varied experience in life and possible wounds which have been inflicted on us.

For reflection:

How do you show respect in your own marriage or towards the marriage of others?

Do you own your possessions or do they possess you?

How do you exercise power at home, in the workplace in service of others?

How are each of the above expressions of brotherly/sisterly love for others?

*The ten Boom family prayed one morning that God would send a customer that day to the family shop to purchase a watch, the income from which would pay the bills that had come due at the bank. During that day a customer with a large sum of cash came into the store. He picked out and paid for an expensive watch but, at the same time, he complained about a **Christian** watchmaker, suggesting that the merchant had sold him a defective watch. Casper, Corrie's father, asked the man if he could examine the watch that was not working properly. Only a minor repair was needed, which Casper made, assuring the customer that he had been sold a fine quality watch that would work well for him. He then gave the astounded gentlemen his money back, and the man returned the watch he had just paid for.*

Corrie asked, "Papa why did you do that? Aren't you worried about the bills you have due"? Her father responded, "there is blessed and unblessed money", explaining that God would not be pleased with another Christian's reputation being ruined. God would provide, he assured her.

Just a few days later another man came into the shop and paid for the most expensive watch produced at the time. The purchase not only allowed the family to pay their bills, but also provided funds for Corey to receive training in Switzerland as a watchmaker for two years.