

Week two

Wealth warning!

► Getting started

There are over 6 billion people in the world. If the world were shrunk to a village of 100 people, how many people in the village would:

- Have access to clean water? _____
- Not be able to read? _____
- Be malnourished? _____
- Have a university education? _____
- Control one third of the world's wealth? _____
- Live on 3% of the world's wealth? _____

How rich are we by comparison with most of the world?

■ Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 5:8-20 and Deuteronomy 8:6-18

|| Discussion questions for both passages

1. What pitfalls of wealth are outlined in the Bible reading?
2. Despite these pitfalls, does anything in this passage indicate that wealth is a gift from God? How can wealth be used so that it is a blessing?
3. Both passages were written against a background where there were wide gaps between the rich and the poor. Does this change how you understand it? How similar is it to our own context?
4. Last week, we saw how the 'poverty trap' works – do you think there is a 'wealth trap' too?

■ Bible reading: Luke 18:18-30

5. Why do you think it's so difficult for the rich man to give up his wealth?
6. Why do you think the hearers were surprised by Jesus' words (v.26)?

7. What examples can you think of in our society or in the church where wealth is a sign of success or where wealthy people are role models? Is this always the case?
8. Are Peter and Jesus talking about financial wealth (v.28-29)? If not, what will the disciples of Jesus receive now and in the future? How does their conversation – and your knowledge of the lives of Jesus and Peter – relate to a ‘prosperity gospel’ whereby followers of God receive material rewards?

▶▶ Activity

Read more about Annie below. What might wealth mean for her?

Annie’s story – week two

MRDF partner, Gender Support Programme, works with groups like Annie’s. Her group of orphans will soon receive credit to buy a cow and training in milk production. They have already made the bricks for the cow shed in anticipation. Selling milk will help the group members earn a living and break out of the poverty trap, and repayment of the small start-up loan will go into a communal fund, so that other local groups can benefit too.

† Closing prayer

Christ of the market place,
even when I handle it poorly,
give me the courage
to account for my money
to others,
and in so doing,
to recognise again
that everything in my life
is a gift
of your love.
Amen.

*Peter Millar, Waymarks: Signposts to discovering God’s presence in the world,
Canterbury Press Norwich 2000, p147*

◆ This week

Each time you go shopping or withdraw money from the bank, pray for wisdom in how you use it.