

## **SYSTEM BREAKERS - CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP**

Lesson 2: Tuesday, July 11, 10:30-11:00

Be a System Breaker on the world's view of money management, Credit Cards, Debt

A circuit breaker is an electrical mechanism designed purely to protect an electrical circuit. If too much current or voltage comes from the source of power to the circuit, the breaker pops open to stop the flow of current to everything supplied on that circuit. We need circuit breakers to allow the flow of electricity to the system of items that need it, but occasionally need to break that circuit to prevent bad, incorrect or incomplete flow of electricity through the circuits.

At this year's conference, we are trying to see how we can become System Breakers...those who see how the system works and how it doesn't, and learn how to break the system when we need to in order to function as Christ-followers, not world-followers. Maybe the most important way we can learn this is in the area of how we handle possessions....particularly money.

The Bible is abundant in examples about how we handle possessions, how we are to be good stewards of all that we own and how God teaches us responsibility. Here are four ways we should look at our finances and let it influence how we handle everything the Lord blesses us with and entrusts to us:

1. We need to learn and act like everything belongs to God in the first place. Jesus asked, "Which of you think you can add a thing to your life?" We tend to think it all comes from us. We earn so much because we are so skilled, so needed to provide our services to the job market, so worthy of all our employers pay us. The Bible reminds us that God "owns the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10). Why do we think we are in charge of that which slips so easily and quickly through our hands? Christians should have a spiritual, heaven-minded view of all money, wealth and possessions. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim 6:17-19) We know we are in trouble as Christians when we start to count our money, hold onto it tightly and think we have control of what God has, for a short time, entrusted to us.

2. Money and resources are meant to be tools, not our life. Read Luke 18: 18-27. Tell of the rich young ruler who wanted to be saved, but rejected salvation because he loved money more than anything else. 1 Tim 1:6 tells us "The love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." It is very interesting to see that if we love money, we can even err from the faith. Why would we allow our resources to rob us of what Jesus gives us. Yet, sometimes, Christians are no different in their misery over not having enough money than non-Christians are. Matthew 6 tells us to NOT lay up treasures on the earth. Verse 21 can rightly be interpreted that where our money (treasure) is, there our heart shall be also. Our wealth is not to be our reason for what we do, but rather a resource through which the Lord provides our needs. When we are driven by always getting more, Satan is right around the corner.

3. We need to be wise in the use of money. Matt 10:16 tells us to be "Wise as serpents and

harmless as doves.” That is no truer than it is regarding our management of wealth. Wealth is a resource with which we can do many things. But we must never let it be a controller in our lives. Jesus spoke to the disciples about what it meant to be a faithful and wise steward in Luke 12: 42-48. He concluded the parable by warning them, “To whom much is given, much is required.” As the wealthiest nation in the world, we are certainly in a position for God to expect much of us. Jesus also taught us that, to those who have much (are faithful with what they have), more will be given.

A wise steward will know enough to save some of his resources for future days, yet we find Christians are often some of the least prepared in our culture when a crisis happens or when it comes time to retire. The Bible uses the example of the ant, who, with the community he lived in, put back and saved for future problems. Christians should be the most generous givers in our communities. Yet their testimony many times demonstrates just the opposite. We need to be generous and joyful in our giving the tithe to the Lord. No missionary we know should go without because we do not demonstrate giving beyond the tithe. We need to let God lead us in where every dollar we make should go. And, most importantly, we need to avoid debt...one of the greatest failures for Christians. The Bible tells us to “Owe nothing to anyone but to love them.” It also warns us to “avoid usury” or foolish debt. Christians need to be the best example of wise financial stewardship that the world sees.

4. Money will always show where our love lives. Jesus saw a rich man and poor widow both give alms at the temple. Jesus commended the widow who only gave two pennies because she gave with a right heart and gave richly from what little she had. It isn't the amount of what we give, whether it is money or talents or time. It is always the heart with which we give that Jesus cares about most. How we manage all that we have...all that the Master entrusts us with....will be a reflection less of what we have and more of how much love for Jesus we truly feel.