

Is It OK to Pray for More Money?



Session 1



1 Timothy 6:6-10

Session Objective

Participants will explore the concept of want versus need: When we desire money, is it because we need it in order to live or because we want it? This session examines the idea behind the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer ("Give us today our daily bread") and the ways in which it does and does not address the topic of money.






Faith Statement

Question 130. What is meant by the fourth petition, "Give us today our daily bread"?

We ask God to provide for all our needs, for we know that God, who cares for us in every area of our life, has promised us temporal as well as spiritual blessings. God commands us to pray each day for all that we need and no more, so that we will learn to rely completely on God. We pray that we will use what we are given wisely, remembering especially the poor and the needy. Along with every living creature we look to God, the source of all generosity, to bless us and nourish us, according to the divine good pleasure.

— Study Catechism: Full Version

Session Overview

 Enter	Option A: Wants, Needs, and Weeds
	Option B: You Spent Your Hard-Earned Money on <i>That?!!</i>
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Enhancements

Family Connections
Mission Connections
Book Club Connections



For instructions to download Web Resources and the coffeehouse version, see page 1.

Spiritual Reflection for Leaders

The topic of money sometimes gets lumped in with other subjects deemed too personal or contentious to be brought up in church. But, like some of those other taboo topics, money is too important an issue to be avoided.

The Bible is greatly concerned with money and considers it in many different lights—as do we all. What are your own views on money? In what ways and circumstances do you see it as a source of good, a necessity, or a luxury? Is it a source of temptation? What does money mean to you from the perspective of your Christian faith?

Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10 several times and reflect on the following questions:

- The author equates contentment with having adequate food and clothing. How do *you* define contentment?
- In your view, does the pursuit of wealth lead to “ruin and destruction”?
- In what ways does the possession of money inhibit religious faith? In what ways does it help strengthen faith?
- How does this passage challenge your values and priorities?

Pray for the youth you’ll be leading through this session as they wrestle with the many faces of money and its influence in their lives.



Understanding the Scripture

Although 1 Timothy claims to have been written by Paul (1:1), many scholars believe that it was written by an unknown author early in the second century. The author was no doubt an admirer of Paul who sought to give the letter an added sense of authority by writing in Paul’s name. We shouldn’t be scandalized by this, as the use of a famous pseudonym was a common and accepted practice by writers of the time. It was meant not to deceive but to show honor and respect, indicating that the work was heavily influenced by its namesake.

First Timothy addresses problems that had arisen in certain churches. At the root of the issue, as the author saw it, was a growing tradition of heretical teachings promoted by an unidentified group of preachers or evangelists. The author of 1 Timothy was concerned that these false doctrines threatened the theological and social health of the churches.

The focus passage for this session, 1 Timothy 6:6–10, is part of the letter’s concluding summary. Its primary subject is “godliness,” the result of true devotion to Jesus Christ (v. 3). Apparently, the false preachers were teaching that godliness was a means of material gain (v. 5). The author, on the other hand,

insists that the true reward for godliness is not material but spiritual, a divine gift that is received when Christians combine godliness with “contentment” (v. 6).

At the time that 1 Timothy was written, contentment was a popular virtue among “Stoics and other pagan philosophies.” In these schools of thought, it was seen as the fruit of self-sufficiency. In the Christian church, by contrast, *contentment* meant—and means—being “dependent on God for peace and happiness.”¹

Peace and happiness are two of the fundamental human desires, and Christians affirm that they only come from God. Unfortunately, Christian or not, people often turn to cheap imitations of peace and happiness, trying to satisfy their God-given desires through worldly goods. The author of 1 Timothy identifies “the love of money” (v. 10) as one of these misplaced desires, warning that the pursuit of material wealth, far from producing any lasting joy, leads to “ruin and destruction” (v. 9), and that it is “a root of all kinds of evil” (v. 10). The clear implication is that the love of money is a disease that begins by infecting the greedy, but then spreads its poison, infecting others and claiming many innocent victims.



Understanding the Faith Statement

While not part of the *Book of Confessions*, the Study Catechism, from which this session’s faith statement is drawn, was approved in 1998 by the 210th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for use by congregations as a tool for teaching. A shorter version of the Study Catechism is used widely by Presbyterians for confirmation classes.

Like the older catechisms that are part of the *Book of Confessions*—the Shorter and Larger Catechisms, which date from the mid-seventeenth century—the Study Catechism illuminates important scriptural and creedal statements, including the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer. Unlike the older catechisms, however, the Study Catechism does so in simple contemporary language.

The Study Catechism is especially helpful in its explanation of the Lord’s Prayer, because it encourages us to slow down and consider the implications of the words. The Lord’s Prayer is widely known, and chances are that many of the youth in your congregation have recited it many times. But how often do we stop to think what it means when we pray, “Give us today our daily bread”?

1. M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The People’s New Testament Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), p. 666.



Teaching Today's Question

Teenagers are well aware of the value, importance, and power of money. Money enables them to participate in our entertainment-driven culture and grants them mobility, in the form of gas (and sometimes insurance) for their cars. Many teenagers have jobs—some for spending money, some to help support their struggling families. To youth, money feels—and in some ways *is*—indispensable. So why not pray for money? (It can't hurt!)

For youth, most of whom are still fairly new to having and managing money, the idea that one might have *too much* money, or that money can become a danger, may seem bizarre. It might be helpful to use the concept of want versus need to help them begin to consider the power, the pros and cons, and the biblical view of money.

In any case, be sure to stress to the young people in your group that no one is trying to convince them that money is inherently evil—only that God cares what we do with our money and that our faith can and should have a role in determining our behaviors and attitudes toward money.



Enter

Option A: Wants, Needs, and Weeds

- Three sheets of newsprint, markers

Before the session, write *Wants*, *Needs*, and *Weeds* on separate posted sheets of newsprint.

As participants arrive, hand them each a marker and invite them to list material items on each of the posted sheets of newsprint:

- Wants—Items that they want
- Needs—Items that they need
- Weeds—Items that may be both a want and a need, depending on an individual’s perspective

After a few minutes, review the responses together. Explain that distinguishing between wants and needs will be an important focus of this session.

Option B: You Spent Your Hard-Earned Money on *That?!!*

Form groups of two or three. Within each group, have participants take turns giving three “facts” about items or services on which they spent money in the past week. Two of the statements must be true and one of the statements must be false. The other group members should then guess which “fact” was false.

When everyone has finished, invite participants to name things that came up during this activity that they found particularly interesting. Explore the following questions together:



- Which expenditures were for wants and which were for needs?
- Which expenditures were more prevalent: wants or needs?

Explain that this session will explore the ways we handle money and the ways that God might be calling us to handle money.



Engage

Option A: Resting with the Question

Lead the participants in a conversation that engages the question for this session: “Is it OK to pray for more money?” Encourage participants to ask and discuss their own questions that relate to this question or use the following questions to guide the discussion:



- What is the difference between want and need? What are some examples of this difference?
- Why do you pray? What sorts of things do you pray for?
- Does the reasoning behind your prayer requests matter to God? Why or why not?
- Is it ever OK to pray for money? Why or why not?

Pray the opening prayer.

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, money is a powerful force—especially when we don't have enough, or when we have too much. The love, and even worship, of money is all around us, and we confess that we feel ourselves being sucked into that way of living. Remind us that you are the true object of our devotion, and teach us wisdom in dealing with money. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Option B: Multiple Choice

Designate four areas of your meeting space as A, B, C, and D. Ask the following questions, having group members indicate their responses by moving to the designated areas. Pause briefly between the questions to observe and discuss the participants' responses.



- What is your single greatest need: (A) food, (B) clothing, (C) a home, or (D) love?
- What would do if you found a one-hundred-dollar bill in the hallway at school: (A) turn it in to the school office, (B) put it in your savings account, (C) spend it on something that you've wanted for a long time, or (D) buy groceries for your family?
- What would do if you found a one-hundred-dollar bill at the mall? (A) turn it in to the mall's security office, (B) put it in your savings account, (C) spend it on something that you've wanted for a long time, or (D) buy groceries for your family?
- What would you do if you really, *really* wanted something, but didn't have the money to buy it: (A) ask your parents/caregivers for it, (B) save your money for as long as it took, (C) steal it, or (D) do without it?
- Of these items, which would you consider your most pressing need: (A) coffee, (B) ten hours of sleep a night, (C) a smartphone, or (D) trendy shoes?
- If your family were starving, what would you be willing to do to help them: (A) steal food, (B) beg for food or money to buy food, (C) go to a charity food pantry, or (D) whatever it takes?
- Which of these statements best describes how you feel about money: (A) "Money is what gets me out of bed in the morning," (B) "Money keeps our economy going," (C) "Money leads to all kinds of trouble," or (D) "Money is not such a bad thing"?

Explain that, in this session, the group will explore the concept of want versus need and try to respond to the question, “Is it OK to pray for more money?” Pray the opening prayer.



Explore

Option A: For the Love of Money

- Bibles, copies of “Session 1 Discussion Questions” (Web Resource 1a), copies of “Session 1 Faith Statement” (Web Resource 1b), newsprint, marker

Make sure each participant has a Bible and read 1 Timothy 6:6–10 together. On a posted sheet of newsprint, lead participants in paraphrasing the Scripture passage by rewriting each verse in their own words.

Form groups of two or three. Give each group a copy of “Session 1 Discussion Questions” (Web Resource 1a). Have the groups read the paraphrased version of the Scripture passage from *The Message* and discuss the questions on the page. When all are finished, give the groups an opportunity to name the highlights of their conversations. Ask: How would the writer of 1 Timothy 6:6–10 respond to the question, “Is it OK to pray for more money?”

Distribute copies of “Session 1 Faith Statement” (Web Resource 1b). Read the faith statement together and explore the following questions:



- How does what we’ve learned from 1 Timothy 6:6–10 compare with what the faith statement advises?
- What new insights does the faith statement provide?
- According to the faith statement, is it OK to pray for more money? Why or why not?

Option B: Timothy’s Lost Letter

- Bibles, copy of “Timothy’s Lost Letter” (Web Resource 1c), copies of “Session 1 Faith Statement” (Web Resource 1b), pens

Give each participant a copy of “Timothy’s Lost Letter” (Web Resource 1c) and a pen. Read the following list of parts of speech to the group and have participants write an example of the specified word type in each blank without paying attention to the words around the blanks (for example, participants should write a noun such as *tree* in the first blank):

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|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| (1) noun | (6) adjective | (11) plural noun |
| (2) noun | (7) verb | (12) adjective |
| (3) plural noun | (8) adjective | (13) noun |
| (4) plural noun | (9) adjective | (14) plural noun |
| (5) an emotion | (10) verb | |

When finished, give participants an opportunity to read aloud their versions of Timothy's lost letter to the rest of the group.

Make sure each participant has a Bible and ask the group to read the real version of 1 Timothy 6:6–10 silently. After everyone has had time to read the passage, ask for a volunteer to read it once more aloud while the group listens. Discuss the following questions:



- The author describes being content as having adequate food and clothing (v. 8). How do you define contentment?
- Does the pursuit of wealth lead to "ruin and destruction"? Give examples of how it does or doesn't.
- How does this passage make you feel about your wealth, your "stuff," and yourself?
- How does 1 Timothy 6:6–10 help you respond to the question, "Is it OK to pray for more money?"

Distribute copies of "Session 1 Faith Statement" (Web Resource 1b). Give the group time to read the faith statement silently, and then read it aloud. Discuss the following questions:



- What new insights does the faith statement provide?
- What troubles you about the faith statement? Why?
- If there seem to be contradictions between the Scripture passage and the faith statement, how might they be resolved?



Express

Option A: Limited Response

Some social networking websites limit posts to 140 characters. Have participants work together to create a 140-character response to the question, "Is it OK to pray for more money?" Encourage participants to use information and insight that they've gained so far in this session as they create their response. If possible, publish the response in your congregation's newsletter or on your congregation's website.


Option B: Making Music

Form groups of two or three. Have each group create and present a song or rap that responds to the question, "Is it OK to pray for more money?" To simplify this activity, you may suggest that groups rewrite the words to familiar tunes, such as the theme song to a popular television show or a hymn that everyone knows. If possible, have the participants present the songs or raps to other groups in your congregation or film the songs and raps and put them on your congregation's website.


Option C: Film Clip—*Everything Must Go*

Everything Must Go (2010; R) and movie-viewing equipment

Before the session, preview the following clip from *Everything Must Go*: 5:16–10:36. This is chapter 2, beginning with Nick driving home from work and ending with him sleeping in a recliner on his front lawn.

 The main character in *Everything Must Go*, Nick Halsey, is an alcoholic who loses his job at the beginning of the film. In the clip used in this session, Nick is shown drinking beer, including while driving. There's no other offensive material or language in this clip.

Introduce the film clip by explaining that this clip begins with Nick Halsey driving home from work, having just been fired from his job. Watch the clip together before discussing the following questions:


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- What is your impression of Nick as he's driving home from work?
 - Are you surprised by Nick's reaction to having just been fired from his job? Why or why not?
 - What do think Nick's main concern is at this point in the film?
 - How would you feel if you came home to find yourself locked out and all your possessions in the front yard? What would you do? What would you pray for?
 - How might such a situation redefine your perception of "wants" versus "needs"?



Be Thou Our Vision

Copies of "Be Thou My Vision" (Web Resource 1d), recording of "Be Thou My Vision," music player

Distribute copies of "Be Thou My Vision" (Web Resource 1d). Listen together to a recording of "Be Thou My Vision" while participants follow the lyrics on the page. (Note: Depending on the recording, the words may differ slightly from those on Web Resource 1d.) Invite the participants to reflect on the words of the hymn in light of their learning in this session by discussing the following questions:

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- How does this hymn make you feel?
 - What does the title, "Be Thou My Vision," mean?
 - This hymn is a prayer for something besides money or material riches. What is it a prayer for?
 - What is the hymn's perspective on money?

Pray the closing prayer.

Closing Prayer

Be Thou our vision, O Lord of our hearts. Grant us a perspective on money and material possessions that is grounded in your priorities, we pray. Whatever riches we may attain in our lives, may we always hold on to you as our true treasure. Through the One who is Lord of all. Amen.



Enhancements

Other Ways to Connect with the Session

Family Connections

"Family Connections" (Web Resource) has a set of discussion questions that families can talk about after each of the four sessions in this course. Provide each family with a copy of this resource.

Mission Connections

As a way of informing the congregation about what the youth are studying and involving the whole church in a project of giving, hold a church-wide "Wants and Needs Drive." After getting the appropriate permissions, create a display, do some publicity, and invite members and friends to donate one "want" and one "need" to those who are less fortunate. For example, a "want" could be a toy for a child, while a "need" could be a food or clothing item. Work with your pastor or missions committee to determine appropriate recipients.

Book Club Connections

As a group, read together Tracie McMillan's *The American Way of Eating: Undercover at Walmart, Applebee's, Farm Fields and the Dinner Table* (New York: Scribner, 2012). The publisher's description reads in part, "In 2009 McMillan embarked on a groundbreaking undercover journey to see what it takes to eat well in America. For nearly a year, she worked, ate, and lived alongside the working poor to examine how Americans eat when price matters." *The American Way of Eating* examines a topic that we consider a "need," showing how our "wants" and our relative wealth determine the quality, nutritional value, and taste of the food we eat. Leading the youth in a book study is a great way to engage them outside the church setting.