



Session 4 Leader Guide

Read

The word mammon only occurs four times in the New Testament in Jesus' teaching. Luke 16:9-16 contains three of these occurrences. The fourth is in a parallel passage in Matthew 6. Jesus used the word mammon as a name here to indicate that He was talking about some kind of demonic spirit or false god.

Mammon comes from an Aramaic word that means "riches." Mammon does not mean money, rather mammon is actually a spirit. The Assyrians (one of the people groups who speak Aramaic) borrowed the concept of a "god of wealth" from their Babylonian neighbors. Babylon was a city founded on pride and arrogance. The history of their pride goes all the way back to the account of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11. At its heart, pride is an attitude that says, "We don't need God. We're self-sufficient." This is what the spirit of mam-mon tries to tell us as well: "You don't need God. Trust in riches!" The word Babylon essentially means: "sown in confusion." Mammon, with its roots in Babylonian history, still brings confusion to this day. Mammon is the spirit of the world and the spirit that rests on money not submitted to God.

Jesus makes a very strong statement about the spirit of mam-mon. He says emphatically, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). The spirit of mammon diametrically opposes God. You cannot follow the god of this world, while at the same time, follow the One True God. It is impossible to serve both at the same time. Jesus says that you will love one and hate the other. You will be loyal to one and despise the other.

Mammon tries to take the place of God. Mammon promises us those things that only God can give—security, significance, identity, independence, power, and freedom. Mammon tells us that it can insulate us from life's problems and that money is the answer to every situation. Mammon wants to rule your life, and is attempting to steal your heart away from trusting in God.

The reason we cannot serve God and mammon is that the spirit of mammon is the opposite of the Spirit of God. Mammon tells us to take and hoard; God says to give and trust. Mammon is selfish; God is generous. Mammon is nothing more than the system of this fallen world that

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stands in sharp opposition to God and His ways. For example, mammon says to buy and sell; God says to sow and reap. Mammon is anti-God.

When the Bible teaches about a spirit of anti-Christ being in the world, it is referring to the spirit of mammon. In the book of Revelation, the Antichrist will attempt to dominate people through the use of economics-preventing people from buying or selling unless they submit to him (Revelation 13:17). In this way, the brief rule of the Antichrist will be through the spirit of mammon.

Don't get the wrong idea. Money and mammon are not the same thing. Money is not inherently evil-it is neutral. It can be used for bad or for good. It can be submitted to God or to the spirit of mammon. One of the most frequently misquoted verses in the Bible is 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil." Of course, most people misquote this verse as "Money is the root of all evil." The Bible warns us that the love of (or worship of) money is the root of all kinds of evil. The idolatrous love of the spirit of mammon (or anti-Christ) is evil. When we serve mammon, we are allowing greed, covetousness, and selfishness, which are all manifestations of the spirit of mammon, into our lives.

The key to breaking a spirit of mammon is by tithing to your local church. Just as we discussed earlier in this series, when you tithe the first ten percent of your money, God redeems the other ninety percent. The ninety percent is submitted to God.

Money that is submitted to God and His purposes has God's Spirit on it, which is why it both multiplies and can't be consumed by the devourer. Money that has been submitted to God, or wealth devoted to serving Him rather than trying to replace Him, is blessed by God. In reality, God's Spirit blesses it. On the other hand, money that is not submitted to God has the spirit of mammon on it by default. That is why people often think money can bring them happiness or peace.

We can use money for unrighteous, temporal purposes, or we can use it for righteous, eternal purposes. The choice is ours. Consequently, we are to use money for what is eternal, such as bringing souls into God's kingdom. The reality is that all things in this world will be gone one day. God is going to make a new heaven and a new earth. The only things that will remain are souls.

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In Luke 16, when Jesus tells us to use unrighteous mammon to gain friends, he is not telling us to simply gain friends here on this earth. He specifically says that we are to win friends for the day "when we fail," meaning when we die. Then, those friends we made will welcome us into our everlasting home. The only way your new friends can welcome you into an everlasting home is if they have been saved. Jesus is telling us to use money to bring people into the kingdom. The more people you bring into the kingdom, the more people there will be to welcome you into your eternal home.

Your money can be used to help people come to know Jesus. When you give your money to the local church, or to a ministry that helps people, your money is being used for God's purposes. If you were to give to a missionary and because of your gift, someone was saved, that person would be in heaven as a direct result of the way you used your money.

God says that those who are faithful with little will be entrusted with much. When we are faithful with the little things, like tithing and giving money to God's work, He will entrust us with true riches. True riches are people. Your money can be used to serve a spirit of mam-mon, or it can be used to build God's kingdom and bring more people into heaven.

Discussion

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought, "If I only had more money, I could fix this problem"? What did it feel like to be in this situation, and what was the result? If you are comfortable, tell about a time when this happened and how you responded.
2. Mammon deceives us by promising the things only God can give security, significance, identity, independence, power, or freedom. In the past, which of these things have you been most likely to believe that wealth could give you?
3. Imagine a world where the love of money did not exist. What would the world look and feel like, and how would people behave? In your own words, describe how the world would look. Does it reflect any-thing you have read in the Bible? If so, explain.
4. Jesus said that only those who are faithful in small things should expect to be entrusted with bigger things (Luke 16:10). What are some of the "small things" that God has entrusted to you? How can wise stewardship of those small things lead to bigger things?

5. God is looking for good stewards to whom He can entrust more resources, because he knows they will faithfully invest in saving souls, help those who are hurting, and advance His kingdom. What are some key characteristics of a good steward?