

MAMMON MUSINGS

I've never been particularly thrilled by the idea of a capitalist, free market economy. Perhaps this is because it's a reminder of original sin. Is it not in our very nature to be selfish, to get one over the other? Add to that the idea that business success is often about the survival of the fittest, it seems a such long way from the teachings of Christ.

A government / planned economy can have just as many flaws, as history has shown, but if the first responsibility of government is to protect its citizens, protection from the excesses of the free market must be first in the queue. A few years ago, the UK found itself tagged with a label called 'Rip-off Britain', i.e. those who needed to 'top up' their electricity meter on a 'pay as you go' basis (usually low-income customers), found utility companies applying a premium cost. 'Pay-day' loans is a further example of how the free market targets vulnerable people, desperate for a way out of debt. Of course, with extortionate interest rates (frequently at 1000%+), the debt burden deepens. I could go on about the way food products are marketed to look healthy, but in reality, contain high sugar, salt and fat, but to do so would only raise my blood pressure!

Is there such a thing as the 'Christian economy'? I'm not sure, but Justin Welby in his 2016 book, *'Dethroning Mammon: Making Money Serve Grace'*, would very much like to see, "economics, as an alias of Mammon, subordinated to Christ, which means being controlled and led by an ethic that seeks human flourishing".

Should be an interesting discussion this Sabbath.

Here's this week's cupboard full of resources:

- **'Motives of the Heart' 3-minute video.** John Matthews wonders what opinion God has of all the materialism we have in the world. Could God be jealous of all the stuff we have?



LESSON 3. GOD OR MAMMON? BY JOHN MATHEWS

Stewardship Ministries videos of the Sabbath School Adult Lesson Study Guide for the 1st Quarter of 2018 by John Mathews, author of the lessons. Use these ...

All video introductions for this series of lessons can be found at:

<https://stewardship.adventist.org/online-videos?channel=1326917>

- 5 Q's for Life Change (attached): Easy to use, they encourage study groups to open and discover scripture, and then apply. This week's study: Psalms 33:6-9 & Matthew 19:16-22. 'Only with difficulty will a rich person be able to enter the kingdom of heaven'. With serious discussion expected, trust the Holy Spirit will get in a word or two.

To get the most out of this inductive Bible study:

1. Read the key text together (taken from the adult Sabbath School Lesson study).
 2. Use question 1, as the icebreaker, and introduction to the discussion.
 3. Use questions 2, 3, and 4, to dig as deep into scripture as your group wishes to go.
 4. Question 5 is for reflection/application.
 5. Surround the study with prayer.
- Lesson Notes (attached): Created for those who want to dig deeper into the Word. Authored by Shevanthi Bastiam Pillai. Class teacher or group leader? Don't miss these studies for providing both breadth and depth.

More resources for this series of lessons can be found at:

- Adventist Stewardship Ministries

<https://stewardship.adventist.org/>

- TED Stewardship Ministries

<https://ted.adventist.org/stewardship-ministries/resources>

- For numerous Sabbath School Lesson links such as CQ and Pine Knoll study notes and audio discussion, click on the following link:

<https://ted.adventist.org/stewardship-ministries/resources/2-uncategorised/1233-motives-of-the-heart-sabbath-school-lesson-q1-2018>

When opening the Bible personally, or in a group setting, I find this prayer helpful:

***Dear Lord
Here is my study time,
Here is my Bible,
Open my mind,
Open my heart,
And speak.
Amen***

Expect something supernatural to happen!

With best wishes,

David

David Neal | Stewardship Director

Faithful stewardship – more than a merely optional Christian grace.