

## INTRO

Have you heard a list of the things you “don’t talk about in polite company”? Pretty sure “money” and “religion” are on that list, and we’re going to talk about both of them in this Brewed Theology.

Money is tricky. Our culture insists on defining the worth of...well, *anything*...with monetary value. This includes our worth as human beings: we’re valued by our pay, or production value. (And if you disagree, just consider how people talk – or don’t – about their jobs, or why the conversation about minimum wage can be such a hot topic.) Not only is money the biggest and baddest idol, as Martin Luther describes in his Large Catechism, but it also seems to hold (if not *be*) the reins in churches, ministry initiatives, or service. It’s quite likely that your faith leader (pastor, priest, etc.) feels this uniquely, given that 1) they know money is touchy, yet 2) Jesus talks about wealth and possessions all the time.

So, in this Brewed Theology conversation, we’re going to cover a lot of ground. We’ll discuss some of scripture’s writings on wealth, our own stuff and our tendency to hoard, the idea of abundance and seed-planting, “death cleaning,” and we’ll ponder gratitude and giving.

# MONEY, STUFF, & GENEROSITY

a Brewed Theology  
conversation starter\*

This conversation may be happening near stewardship season, capital campaign startups, transitional periods, or just because it’s good to talk about money, stuff, and giving. Come prepared to think about what you have, what you’ve been given, and how you can be generous in your life.

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What is your personal history with money? Did you grow up in a culture of scarcity, or abundance? How do you feel about money these days? What do you spend most of your money on? What do you worry about most? What resources do you have (beyond money)? What do you typically share with others? What is the culture, history, or ethos around money and property in your faith community? How does your wider community discuss money? In a culture of transactions, cost-benefit analysis, and “getting ours,” what does it mean to live life focused *not* on what we lack, but what we have? Are we born as “takers” or “givers”? As we age, do we become *more* or *less* generous? Who is the most generous person you know? Would you call that person happy, or unhappy?

## BIBLE BASICS on Community

- **Mark 10:17-31** – A rich man who wants to enter the kingdom of heaven. It’ll cost him.
- **Luke 12:13-21** – Greed, possessions, and hoarding that won’t help you now, or when you’re gone.
- **Luke 12:22-34** – Lessons about lilies of field, birds of the air, and hearts following treasures.
- **2 Corinthians 8:1-15** – Paul asks the people at Corinth to share out of their abundance.
- **Acts 20:17-38** – Paul speaks about the poor, giving, and receiving. Which is more blessed?

## ESSENTIAL READINGS and LISTENINGS

### How Rich Am I? – Global Wealth Calculator

Let's start with perspective, from charity finder GivingWhatWeCan.org. Punch in some numbers on their wealth calculator to see where you stand in terms of global wealth. While it's easy to call out the ultra-rich, we in the West (like Americans) have resources. What about you? (Note that they account for geography, cost of living, and inflation.)

### Accumulating a Mountain of Things (*possible paywall*)

This article by Alana Semuels for *The Atlantic* looks into online shopping, cheap prices, and how it's making Americans hoarders of stuff. (*Possibly behind a paywall, but a very pertinent read.*)

### Margareta Magnusson Discusses Death Cleaning (3:47 video)

Watch this 3:47 video on YouTube featuring Margareta Magnusson, the author of *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*. How does she sound to you? What is your relationship with your stuff?

### Giving Can Make You Happier

Research shows that giving does more for our happiness than receiving. Read this article on Wisconsin Public Radio on the research, but also on *how* to give, to foster happiness. (**Bonus:** Want more on this? [Read this Q&A with Professor Jessica Andrews-Hanna](#) from the U of Arizona about the psychology around giving, and/or [read this article by Harvard Medical](#) about how gratitude can make us happier.)

### Seeds of Abundance and Good Relationships

Author and business owner Rob Commodari talks about tending to relationships in this blog post. He describes managing his time as planting seeds that offer yields later on. What "seeds" have been planted in your life that you can see providing abundance today?

## BONUS READINGS (for the nerds...)

### Explore Your Relationship with Money

People handle money differently. Even *talking* about the topic of money causes people to react in all sorts of ways. Whether we save intensely, spend freely, talk openly, or avoid entirely, much of our perception and handling of money comes from how we learned about money growing up. Do you know why you treat money like you do? Read the "[Mysteries of Money Histories](#)" on why to write a money autobiography, [then try it. Use this guide and answer these questions](#) to learn about your relationship with money.

### Six Reasons Why People Give...or Not

Especially if you're doing some fundraising, or working on stewardship or giving appeals, browse this 2017 piece by Dr. Sara Konrath on *Psychology Today*.

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