

**Series:** Tools of Faith  
**Title:** Connecting Attitudes of God & Money  
**Text:** James 1:9-11  
**Key Word:** Attitudes

Good Morning everyone. We're delighted that you have chosen to worship God with us today. I invite you to take out your sermon-handout. This tool can be helpful to write down any thoughts or insights that you may want to remember.

As you can see, we're in the midst of a series entitled, "Tools of Faith." We're exploring a short letter penned by James, a half-brother of Jesus. He also led the church in Jerusalem. James is teaching us some tools of a vital faith.

Last week we took out our first tool to help us build a vital, healthy faith. We were reminded that a tape measure helps us determine the dimensions of a room, a table, or whatever object or space were working with. James knew that Christians face all kinds of challenges to their faith. So, they would need a faith with solid dimensions in order to remain secure in an insecure world. If they would remain faithful and fruitful, they would have to keep measuring their faith by putting it into practice, even in difficult times. We learned that as we approach tough circumstances with the dimensions of Godly joy we will see God both change us and the world around us.

Every home should have one of these popular tools. Many have to use this tool to loosen or tighten screws which hold objects together. The screwdriver strengthens the hand's turning motion to the small, specially designed tip that is inserted into the screw's head. In many ways it makes the hand stronger so that it can move something smaller

than the hand itself. The screwdriver enables us to insert or remove, loosen or tighten, a screw which connects and fastens two objects together.

**James** teaches us that our faith becomes stronger when we connect, tighten, and hold fast two attitudes toward God and money. One's attitude toward God and money can become a device either to strengthen one's faith or to loosen one's faith. Our attitude can draw us closer to God or it can separate us from God.

Attitudes are the established ways of responding to people and situations that we have learned, based on the beliefs, values, and assumptions we hold. Attitudes drive behavior. Almost always, you have a choice as to what attitude to adopt. There is nothing in any normal situation that dictates how you must react one way or another. If you feel angry about something that happens, for instance, that's how you choose to feel.

One's attitude on life has a tremendous impact. Attitude, to me, is just as important as facts. It certainly is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home... a life. God offers us a tremendous gift and responsibility. We have a choice every day regarding our attitude. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is choose our attitude. Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you... we choose our attitude.

I am confident that **James** would have liked what Hubert Humphrey once said, “Oh, my friend, it's not what they take away from you that counts. It's what you do with what you have left.” It not what the government takes away from you, nor what your employer takes away from you, nor your teacher or parents, it is all about what you do with what you have left. We can choose our attitude.

**James** connected ones attitude toward God and money. He would applaud J. Brotherton’s words, “My riches consist not in the extent of my possessions, but in the fewness of my wants.” Our attitude toward God and money will determine whether God loosens the power of money over us, or tighten His connectedness with our hearts.

**James** learned from Jesus the tremendous influence of money in our lives. We find that in four different passages. Today we will consider the first of these passages in James 1:9-11. In this passage, James is talking about being mature Christians, about dealing with trials and temptations. Perhaps no area in our lives affects us, tempts us, troubles us, more than money. We live in a society where money speaks, where money is the driving force of all decisions that are made. Money is what enables us to get the things we need or want. Money is what most people strive for. We think it is money that will make us happy. We may even have a secret longing to be rich. He challenges us to strengthen our attitude by adopting a Christ-centered attitude.

**James teaches that humble circumstances tighten our relationship with God.**

James wrote, “*The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position.*” A relationship with Christ brings to the poor person a new sense of his/her

own value. He learns that he matters in the Church. In the church, God eliminates the distinctions of the world because all people matter to Him. The poor learn that he matters in the world. Every person is of value to God. Someone once said, “Call no man worthless for whom Christ died.”

Those who find themselves in “humble circumstances” can take pride in the fact that a high position awaits them in eternity. Bill Fix, of Taylor, Michigan, tells the story about his mom. She grew up around the coal mines where her daddy worked, deep in the mountainous regions of Virginia. She came from a large, poverty-stricken family, so she learned how to be content with little. His dad and mom were poor by the world's standards, but as a kid growing up, Bill didn't know it. They were rich in so many other ways. His dad had two—sometimes three—jobs, so his mom could stay home and be a full-time mommy to her five children.

She hummed softly as she went about her work. It was as if she had blocked all the bad news out and was contemplating what was good and right and lovely. She was always living in the present, fondly reflecting on the past, and looking forward to the future. She found that in the present there was love, in the past there was joy, and in the future there was hope.

Bill never forgot the day the doctors told his family that mom had terminal cancer. He was devastated by the news. Things didn't seem to change for mom, though. Whenever Bill visited her, she was busy cooking or baking, doing a load of clothes, or

sewing or working on something else. As she worked, she hummed a tune that seemed so beautiful.

When Bill spoke with her about the cancer, she remained calm. She told him that this was not really her home. She said she had a home in heaven and that she would be going there soon. She told her son not to worry, that she would be all right. Bill later said, "I saw a beauty in my mother that I had never seen before. In her affliction she had become radiant. When she died, she was 59-years-old. I have replayed her words many times: "This is not my home. I have a home in heaven. I'll be all right."

During my years serving as a pastor I have listened to many similar stories. I have had several opportunities to see many people, like Bill's mom, go to another home. No matter their circumstances they were radiant.

**Next, James teaches that riches can loosen our relationship with God.** James wrote, "*But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower.*" James instructs those of us who are rich, to not glory in our riches, but in our humiliation.

A relationship with Christ brings to the rich person a new sense of humility. Riches give a person a false sense of security. The rich feel that he is safe; he feels he has the resources to cope with anything and to buy himself out of any situation he may wish to avoid.

Imagine this. Rain arrives in the desert one day. The plants turn green. Then the next day, the sun and heat scorches that same plant and it dries up, withers away. This

is an image of life dependent upon riches. A person who puts his trust in riches is trusting in things which the chances and changes of life can take from him at any moment. Life is uncertain. The prophet Isaiah said it like this, *“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them.”* (Isaiah 40:6, 7)

Since life is so uncertain, a person is a fool to put their trust in things – like wealth. Riches may be attractive and beautiful at first, but they are temporary. Jesus said that *“the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke out the Word.”* Again, He warned: *“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”* The wise put their trust in things they can not lose.

**Finally, James teaches that a Christ-like attitude fastens God and money together.** The poor might believe that their human needs could be met if they only had more money. Yet, Jesus teaches us that He alone can meet our deepest needs. He desires to provide even the practical needs of food, clothing, and shelter. He longs to care for us and to provide for us if we will ‘seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’ (Matt. 6:33)

James is writing to people who have most likely lost everything they had as a result of persecution for their faith in Christ. They have forsaken literally everything in order to be faithful in following Jesus. He simply reminds them that God is their security, their provider. Contentment is found in him.

**So how can we be rich and poor?...**<sup>(v.11)</sup> Whether we are rich or poor, let's remember that we are the Lord's—if we are serious about following Jesus as the Lord of our lives. Enjoy the life of contentment. Rather than pursuing the things we do not have or trusting in riches, we are invited to *“be without covetousness, and be content with such things as we have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* Hebrews 13:5, Phil. 4:11-12

Remember that Christ is the source for everything we need! He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. He has promised to supply all of our needs. (Phil. 4:19)

True wealth is found in developing our spiritual assets, making spiritual investments, leaving kingdom legacies. Not in developing our financial assets. God is interested in what is lasting (our souls), not in what is temporary (our money and possessions) (Mark 4:18, 19) What we have left in our heart, not our bank account, matters to God and endures for eternity.

One day a couple was visiting one of the wealthiest men in the world. He invited the man and his wife to come to his lavish home for lunch. He was 75 years old, and throughout the entire meal he seemed close to tears. "I am the most miserable man in the world," he said. "Out there is my yacht. I can go anywhere I want to. I have my private plane, my helicopters. I have everything I want to make my life happy, yet I am as miserable as hell." The couple talked to him and prayed with him, telling him about Jesus who alone gives meaning to life.

Then they went down the hill to a small cottage where they were staying. That afternoon the pastor of the local Baptist church came to call. He was an Englishman, and he too was 75 years old; a widower who spent most of his time taking care of his two invalid sisters. He was full of enthusiasm. The love of Jesus and for others radiated from him. He said, "I don't have two dollars to my name," he said with a smile, "but I am the happiest man on this island."

Later the man asked his wife, "Who do you think is the richer man?" She didn't have to reply because they both already knew the answer. 2157