

Series: With the People

Lesson 1: Stuff is Stuff

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Contrast spending one's life and investing one's life
- identify the potential risks and rewards of investing one's life in things that last

Materials Needed:

- ☐ \$500 per student in play money (that can be written on)
- ☐ Three small boxes or containers labeled "SPEND ON STUFF", "INVEST FOR LATER", "INVEST IN PEOPLE"
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Pens

Lead-In:

Tell the students that you are going to give each of them \$500...of play money. You may want to use photocopied \$100 bills with blank backs, since they are going to write on the bills. Give each student a pen and the \$500 and instruct them to write on the back of the bill what they plan to do with the money (don't use words like spend or invest as that would tip them off to the outcome of the Lead In). Any money they don't use by the end of five minutes, they lose. Go!

When they are finished, reveal three boxes marked "SPEND ON STUFF" and "INVEST FOR LATER" and "INVEST IN PEOPLE." Have students come up to the boxes and drop their bills in the appropriate box. For example, "SPEND ON STUFF" would be things like video games, make up, clothes, sports equipment, and so on; "INVEST FOR LATER" would be things like putting it in the bank or a university fund, basically saving it for later; "INVEST IN PEOPLE" would be things like gifts, outings with loved ones, and donations to social causes. You may need to explain what investing is or ask a student to explain it. There will be some bills that are hard to categorize. Work together to decide which box to put these in. These hard-to-define ones are important so allow for disagreement about where to put them. For example, is going to the movies a "STUFF" answer or a "PEOPLE" answer? What do they think?

Ask the students, *According to how we spent our money, what is important to us? Did we mostly spend it on stuff, invest it for later, or invest it in people? Why do you think that is? Also, imagine ten years have gone by, what will become of our stuff?*

Conclude the Lead In by saying something like, *Every day we make choices about what we will do with our money, our time, our energy, and so on. Will we spend ourselves on stuff and entertainment, pursuing our own pleasure above all else? Or will we invest in things that last?*

Task One:

Say something like, *Investing is about the future. When we invest in people or things, we are thinking about the future. When we buy a chocolate bar, we are thinking about the present ('cause it's going to taste oh so good!) Jesus invested in things that last. Specifically, he invested in the two things that will last forever. Can someone read Mark 12:28-31? Everyone else, listen and decide what the two things are.*

That's right! The two things are God and people. Jesus invested in God and people because both would last forever, unlike a Dairy Queen Blizzard!

Task Two:

Say something like, *If Jesus invested in things that last, it makes sense that his followers try to do the same. We are going to read about one of Jesus' followers who invested in others.*

Does anyone know who in the Bible was called the Son of Encouragement? Cool nickname, eh? The correct answer is Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and he was a person who made God and other people a priority.

Have students form small groups of two or three. Give each group a piece of paper, a Bible, and a pen. Give them the following instructions, which they can jot down on the paper. 1) Look up Acts 4:32-37. 2) Identify what Barnabas did with his resources. 3) What was important to Barnabas? 3) Make a list of as many risks and rewards that you can think of, either from the scripture passage or your imagination, that Barnabas faced for his choice. In other words, what good and bad things did or could have happened to him as a result of what he did. 4) Can you think of a similar situation from the present day? Instruct students to begin and give them enough time to finish the task.

When they are finished, solicit answers to questions 2 to 4. Question 2 is straightforward: he sold a field and gave the money to the apostles/church. Question 3 allows for creativity. Barnabas probably risked having less wealth; he probably gained a sense of community and participation in the kingdom of God. Question 4 also allows for creativity. An example that comes to mind is Henri Nouwen, who gave up a prestigious teaching post to help the mentally disabled. Of course, students should come up with one that is relevant to them. Guide the discussion, encouraging creativity and questioning, before moving on to the final task.

Task Three:

Say something like, *We've been looking at the difference between investing in things that last (people and God) and spending our lives or money on things that don't last. I have two final questions for you.*

- 1) *What do you think it would look like to spend your life on things that don't last? Can you give an example, maybe someone famous, who seems to spend his or her life on things that don't last?*
- 2) *What would it look like to invest your life in things that last? Can you give an example, maybe someone you know, who seems to invest his or her life in things that last?*

Again, look for answers that are relevant to the students. Maybe Lindsay Lohan will turn up in conversation, maybe Angelina Jolie. Maybe heroes of the faith from your own church or community who are exemplifying investment in others.

Closing:

Say something like: *Spending is about getting something now. Investing is about building something that will last. God and God's kingdom, God's people, will last forever. Jesus modelled that. Barnabas imitated him. What about you? Will you spend or invest your life?*