

Syllabus for NT 3203: NT Theology of Money and Possessions
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
January 11-15, 2016

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OVERVIEW OF COURSE

Course Description:

In this Doctor of Ministry course we will study New Testament teachings about money and possessions, against the backdrop of the larger biblical witness on this subject. Teachings of Jesus and Paul, the Gospel of Luke, the Epistle of James, and the book of Revelation will receive close attention. Students will be invited to examine their own attitudes toward "stuff," discerning how their personal practices and views relate to patterns in their family of origin, church, and the wider culture. We will consider biblical warrants for Christians' participation in fundraising and charitable giving, and discuss how to engage in both practices most effectively. DMin students may tailor the summative assignment for the course to fit their DMin project. Alternately they may prepare a six-week Bible study or sermon series, or design and conduct a fundraising campaign for a charitable cause of their choosing. The course is also open to masters-level students who have taken Scripture II.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

In successfully completing this course the student will have demonstrated ability to:

- 1) Reflect biblically and theologically on the nature of humans' relationship to money and possessions. How can the relationship work both for and against devotion to God, neighbor, and creation?
- 2) Identify and critique societal attitudes toward money and fundraising, and discern and describe ways these pervasive attitudes have affected the student's own beliefs and behavior.
- 3) Engage in reflective practice pertaining to money-issues in a specific ministry context, by one of the following activities:
 - a) Designing a multi-week Bible study or sermon series for a congregation. Appropriate attention must be given to the identity and needs of the envisioned learners, and of the intended outcomes for the series.
 - b) Designing a fundraising campaign for a charitable cause of the student's choosing. Accompanying description of rationale and strategy will reflect knowledge and insights learned in the course as well as basic knowledge of fundraising best practices.
 - c) For DMin students: Designing a particular activity related both to the subject matter of the course and to the student's larger Doctor of Ministry project.

The foregoing outcomes correlate chiefly with DMin SLOs 1 and 5, and MDiv SLOs 1, 9, and 17. Rubrics for assessment of the projects are included in the Appendix.

Texts:

- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Sharing Possessions: What Faith Demands*. 2nd edition. Eerdmans, 2011.
- Lupton, Robert D. *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How to Reverse It)*. Harper One, 2012.
- Mumford, Debra J. *Exploring Prosperity Preaching: Biblical Health, Wealth, & Wisdom*. Judson, 2012.
- Nouwen, Henry. *A Spirituality of Fundraising*. Upper Room, 2011.
- Witherington III, Ben. *Jesus and Money: A Guide for Times of Financial Crisis*. Reprint edition. Brazos, 2012.

Requirements and Grading:

- *Class attendance and participation*. Consistent attendance and active participation are necessary for an effective learning experience in this course and will account for approximately 20% of the student's final grade. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or on the day of the class. Absence for more than one day out of the five will result in a low or failing grade in the course.
- *Notebook*. The student will keep a notebook integrating notes from all readings (biblical texts and secondary sources) and from class discussions. The notebook will serve the following purposes:
 - *While the course is in session*, it will assist the student in his or her participation in class discussion, and provide the basis for assessment of the student's ability to:
 - Reflect biblically and theologically on the nature of humans' relationship to money and possessions,
 - Identify and critique societal attitudes toward money and fundraising, and
 - Discern and describe ways these pervasive attitudes have affected the student's own beliefs and behavior (see Intended Learning Outcomes # 1 and #2 above).
 - *After the course is over*, the notebook will serve as a resource for ministry.

The notebook should be deposited in the course Dropbox (<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/m2myjaz1mo9uvqd/AACLeCiVuSp18Fs26aQh9d5wa?dl=0>) **by Monday, January 18 at 5 p.m.** It will be assessed for completeness, thoughtfulness, insight, and attention to topics noted above, and will account for 40% of the student's final grade. See the rubric for this assignment in the Appendix.

- *Final project*. The shape of the project will be worked out in conversation with the professor, but general categories are listed under Intended Learning Outcome #3 (above). The project will account for 40% of the student's final grade. See the rubric for this assignment in the Appendix.

Grade Calculation:

Regular and informed participation	20%
Completed Journal	40%
Final Project	40%

COURSE POLICIES**Use of Inclusive Language:**

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. For more information see: <http://lpts.libguides.com/content.php?pid=469569&sid=4083885>. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God.

Academic Honesty:

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. For more information, visit the Academic Support Center and see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) and the instructor prior to the start of the course.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on the following guides (available in the library and in the Academic Support Center):

- American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.
- Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Daily Schedule:

Morning Session: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
 Lunch Break: 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
 Afternoon Session: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS**Monday, January 11: A New Testament Theology of Money and Possessions: First Considerations****Monday morning session: Surveying the Biblical landscape.**

- Read Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 1-28. Be able to summarize Johnson’s reasons for arguing that there is no clear, singular mandate in the Bible regarding right use of possessions. What is your response to this argument?
- Read Witherington, *Jesus and Money*, 7-78. How does knowledge of the social and historical contexts of biblical texts about money and possessions affect your understanding of their relevance for Christians today? What are your takeaways from Witherington regarding the views of the historical Jesus about money?
- Throughout your reading of the above, keep your Bible at hand so that you can read the passages being discussed. Make notes about passages you want to explore further, exegetical questions that occur to you, recurring themes (in either the biblical texts or the secondary readings), and applicability to ministry today.

Monday afternoon session: Perspectives from influential forebears in the faith.

- Read Murray N. Rothbard, “The Economics of Calvin and Calvinism.” Online: <http://mises.org/daily/4070>.
- Read Charles Wiley, “What Do Presbyterians Believe about Wealth?” (<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today/wealth/>)
- Read John Wesley, “The Use of Money [Sermon 50]” (<http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-50-The-Use-of-Money>)
- Recommended reading: James A. Harnish, *Simple Rules for Money: John Wesley on Earning, Saving, & Giving*. Abingdon, 2010. On reserve.
- Throughout your reading of the above, make notes about recurring themes and applicability to ministry today. Also pay attention to your own emotions and responses: what do those responses say about your most deep-seated attitudes toward money?

Tuesday, January 12: Money, Stuff, and Self

Tuesday morning session: Possessions and our stance toward God and self.

- Read Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 29-72. See also <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/current-initiatives/economic-challenges-facing-future-ministers/articles-and-images/10-assertions-about-possession.pdf>.
- Read Gail Steketee and Randy Frost, *Stuff: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things* (Mariner Books; reprint 2011), 17-62 (= chaps. 2-3). On reserve in the library.
- Johnson discusses the human propensity to idolatry: humans' tendency to ascribe life-giving power to created things, including possessions. Does it make sense to you to discuss the theology of money within this framework (and why or why not)? How does the Steketee/Frost reading support (or qualify) Johnson's analysis of the functions that our "stuff" takes on?

Tuesday afternoon session: Luke's use of money as "symbol and mandate"

- Skim Luke and Acts in their entirety, making an index of passages relevant for the theme of the course.
- Copy the following passages into a format that you can annotate: Luke 12:13-34, 41-48; 14:12-24; 16:1-31; Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-5:11. Study carefully, making notes about questions or insights.
- Read Witherington, *Jesus and Money*, 91-106.
- Read Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 109-127.
- If you were teaching a Sunday school class on the topic of money and possessions in Luke and Acts, what knowledge or insights would you hope for participants to take away?

Wednesday, January 13: Poverty, Wealth, and Abundance

Wednesday morning session: The Epistle of James.

- Copy the Epistle of James into a format that you can annotate, and read it in its entirety, highlighting all passages that seem relevant (even indirectly) to a theology of money and possessions.
- Read Garrett, "James" (Study Guide from TheThoughtfulChristian.com on CAMS)
- Read Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 73-107 (focusing especially on 92-94).
- Read Witherington, *Jesus and Money*, 79-90.
- Throughout your reading of the above, make notes about recurring themes, exegetical questions, and applicability to ministry today. Why is James so harsh in his indictment of the rich? How can this indictment be made convicting to (relatively) wealthier Christians? What message about Christians' obligation to serve the poor should wealthier Christians take away from this epistle? What message about maintaining the integrity of one's commitment to the Gospel is conveyed by the epistle as a whole?

Wednesday afternoon session: The Gospel of Acquisition.

- Read Mumford, *Exploring Prosperity Preaching*.

- Read Sally McFague, *Life Abundant (Searching for a New Framework)* (Fortress, 2000), 71-87. On CAMS and on print reserve.
- Throughout your reading of the above, make notes about your insights and questions, along with reflections on the pertinence of the readings to your own work of ministry. Try to draw connections to materials and discussions from previous sessions. How can you as pastor or leader help those whom you serve come to a deepened understanding of the meaning of *poverty* and *abundance*?

Thursday, January 14: Fundraising as Evangelism and Pastoral Care

Thursday morning session: Paul's Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem

- Copy the following into a format that you can annotate, and read all passages carefully: Gal 2:10; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:1-9:15; Rom 15:25-31.
- Read an introductory article in a reputable Bible dictionary on “the Collection” or “Contribution for the Saints” in Paul’s mission. Bring a copy of the article with you to class.
- Read Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 100-103.
- Read Verlyn D. Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell, *Paul & Money: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Apostle's Teachings and Practices* (Zondervan, 2015), 163-82 (on CAMS).
- Throughout your reading of the above, make notes about recurring themes, exegetical questions, and applicability to ministry today. Why is Paul so unabashed in his pleas for money for “the saints?” How does he understand this work of fundraising in relation to his larger evangelistic and pastoral purposes?

Thursday afternoon session: Fundraising as pastoral practice.

- Read Nouwen, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*.
- As you read Nouwen’s essay, make notes about points you want to discuss, and questions for class reflection. The questions can be theological, pastoral, or personal. Here are examples: Can money from evil sources be redeemed by giving it to good causes? How would I articulate the spiritual benefits of generosity to people in my congregation? Am I afraid to ask people for money for my cause, and if so, what are the sources of that fear?

Friday, January 15: What Are Wealthy Christians to Do?

Friday morning session: Managing wealth in the midst of empire.

- Read 1 Thess 3:6-13; 1 Tim 5:3-16; and Revelation, chapters 1-3; 17-18; 21 (making note of passages that pertain to poverty or wealth).
- Witherington, *Jesus and Money*, 107-139.
- Throughout your reading of the above, make notes about recurring themes, exegetical questions, and applicability to ministry today. Do these biblical passages enhance or challenge perspectives on

wealth that have emerged through your study thus far? What should Christians take away from these texts?

Friday afternoon session: Sharing Wisely.

- Read Johnson, *Sharing Possessions*, 127-34.
- Read Witherington, *Jesus and Money*, 141-64.
- Read Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help* (Harper One, 2011). (Summary: <https://www.inphilanthropy.org/sites/default/files/files/pages/Toxic%20Charity%20Synopsis.pdf>)
- Lupton argues that charity should be extended only in cases of emergency; most effort should flow through partnerships that aim to empower persons or groups to exercise agency and develop self-sufficiency. Do you find his arguments persuasive? Can they be reconciled with biblical authors' regard for giving alms? How is Lupton's argument relevant for your own work of ministry?

APPENDIX: RUBRICS FOR ASSIGNMENTS

Rubric for Comprehensive Notebook, worth 40 points.

The notebook will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- 1. Organization, clarity, and usability: 5 points.** Notes should be prepared on a word processor, not handwritten, and must be sufficiently full to be comprehensible to the instructor (and to the reader herself or himself at a later date). The notebook may follow whatever organizational plan the student finds most useful, but the two obvious choices would be (a) according to author, or (b) topically according to the order followed in the syllabus. The student may find that choice (b) better allows for attention to questions raised in the syllabus and incorporation of points made in class discussion.
- 2. Completeness and proportionality: 5 points.** The student should comment on all assigned readings, with levels of attention suited to the length of the readings and their centrality to the course (e.g., Johnson, *Sharing Possessions* and Witherington, *Jesus and Money* should receive proportionally more attention than assigned book excerpts and shorter articles). *Tip: In addition to the five assigned textbooks [Johnson, Lupton, Mumford, Nouwen, and Witherington] and assigned biblical passages, readings include Rothbard, Wiley, Wesley, Steketee and Frost, McFague, Verbrugge and Krell, chosen article on the Collection for the Saints, and any additional supplementary readings chosen by the student.*
- 3. Depth and range of biblical and theological reflection: 15 points.** It should be evident that the student has reflected on the biblical passages assigned for course reading and has sought to bring the perspectives they express into conversation with secondary readings and points discussed in class. The goal is for the student to reach a new level of insight into the nature of humans' relationship to money and possessions.
- 4. Depth of understanding of self and ministry: 15 points.** It should be evident that the student has observed pervasive societal attitudes toward money and fundraising, reflected on ways

that these attitudes have affected the student's own beliefs and behavior, and evaluated such attitudes' implications for his or her current or future work of ministry.

The notebook should be deposited in [the course Dropbox](#) by **Monday, January 18 at 5 p.m.** *Late submissions will be penalized by a 5 point reduction (out of 40 points) for each 24-hour increment past the due date and time.*

Rubric for Final Project, worth 40 points.

A six-week Bible study or sermon series will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- 1. Description and analysis of social location and spiritual/intellectual needs of the intended class members or congregation: 5 points.** To whom will this series be presented, and what are their relationships to money and possessions (in the students' best analysis, and recognizing the dangers of generalization)?
- 2. Intended outcomes for the series, and correlation to content: 5 points.** What does the student hope/expect that the intended class members or congregation will take away from the series overall? From each installment? Are the structure and content of class sessions/sermons designed in ways that facilitate achievement of these outcomes?
- 3. Substance and insight of the six individual class sessions/sermons: 5 points@ for a total of 30 points.** Each class session or sermon should be outlined in some detail, with intended outcomes for that session and biblical passages being studied or preached at the top of the outline. Each session should make sense on its own and as part of the larger series.

A design for a fundraising campaign will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- 1. Rationale for choice of charitable cause: 5 points.** The student may choose a personal cause (such as raising funds for a person or family with specific acute need, or for a specific church project) or an established charity that facilitates campaign creation by supporters (such as [Charity: Water](#) or [Juvenile Diabetes Foundation](#)). Why was this particular charity chosen? What is known about its effectiveness and trustworthiness? *Tip: See www.charitynavigator.org for ratings of many existing charities.*
- 2. Rationale for choice of monetary goal and overall strategy for the campaign, and discussion of best practices for fundraising as they apply to this campaign: 10 points.** Here the student should justify the monetary goal and the strategy that he or she has set for the campaign. Discussion of strategy should reflect awareness of the variety of possible strategies for fundraising (utilizing websites such as giveforward.com and gofundme.com; and summarizing relevant points learned from books or other resources, such as the following [on library reserve]: Ilona Bray, *Effective Fundraising for Nonprofits: Real-World Strategies That Work* [4th edition; Nolo, 2013], or John Mutz and Katherine Murray, *Fundraising for Dummies* [3rd edition; Wiley, 2010]).
- 3. Design of materials to be used in the campaign: 15 points.** The student should prepare materials and/or events for the campaign and a proposed schedule for their deployment. Materials might include a website home page [see sample [here](#)], letters to prospective donors, or plans for special events. Additionally, each item should include supplementary commentary on its design and content.

4. **Implementation: 5 points.** The student should get the campaign up and running. Although it need not be concluded by the final due date for the project, a status report should be given at that time. (The instructor would be very interested to hear the final outcome.)
5. **Reflection on the experience of creating and implementing the campaign: 5 points.** How did you find this experience (up until the point of submission of the project)? Did it help you discern better your own attitudes toward fundraising and/or charity, and if so, how? In what ways were your views and experience in this fundraising campaign affected by what you learned in the course?

A final project that is individually designed to support the student's DMin research will be assessed according to criteria worked out in conversation with the instructor.

The final project should be deposited in [the course Dropbox](#) by **Monday, January 25 at 5 p.m.** *Late submissions will be penalized by a 5 point reduction (out of 40 points) for each 24-hour increment past the due date and time.*