

## A SHEEP OR A GOAT?

Jesus makes the difference between a sheep and a goat very clear in Matthew 25:31-46. A sheep is one who looks after the least among us. A goat is one who does not. Jesus tells us that this is the test that matters. How well are we doing?

- The money spent on gambling in the world today could feed all of the hungry in the world.
- The average Christian in North America today gives 2.5% of his/her income to God's work, and spends 10% of his/her income on debt interest.
- Over one third of church attendees give no offerings at all.
- In 1933, in the heart of the depression, American Christians gave a larger percentage of their income to the church than they did in 2007, at the height of our affluence.
- A recent survey of Canadian Christians revealed that over 60% would prefer to talk to their pastor about their sex life than about their personal finances.
- The average North American child in the 4-12 age range has \$1,200 per year of disposable income. More than 2 billion families world-wide have less.

The church has a prophetic role to play in countermanding the voice of advertising that has turned us into a culture of consumers. Scripture contains 2,172 verses on material possessions and our use of them. We have failed at least partially because the misuses and abuses of Scripture by flamboyant televangelists have embarrassed us into silence. We must reclaim a healthy, Biblical voice in this discussion.

What does the Bible teach us about our finances?

- God cares deeply about our attitudes and actions regarding money and possessions.
- Our God is generous, and has richly blessed us. He expects us to be generous in turn.
- God cares deeply about the poor, marginalized and oppressed, and he expects us to do something about it.
- God counts by percentage given, not total dollars.

We must re-learn the truth that life is about something much bigger than money and possessions. We must re-teach our members about the joy that comes from helping others.