

Discussion Guide, Beginner

Episode 5

These days, it seems that cash is king. But are there things that money shouldn't be able to buy? Are there things that should not be treated as market goods or services? Consider the following cases.

1.

In the American Civil War, men who were drafted for the army had the option of hiring a substitute to take their place, or paying a commutation fee to avoid military service. Are these practices tantamount to selling off one's duty as a citizen, or are they perfectly acceptable market transactions? Does it make a difference whether the transaction takes place during a war or in peacetime?

2.

A commercial surrogacy contract is an agreement to carry to term someone else's baby in one's own body in exchange for money. Should people be allowed to act as surrogate mothers? Should prospective parents be allowed to pay for their services? Should surrogacy contracts be enforced by the courts, even if the surrogate mother changes her mind and wants to keep the baby?

3.

What do you think about the morality of prostitution? Is it morally wrong to sell (or rent?) the use of one's sexual organs? Is it morally wrong to buy sex? Should it be legal to buy or sell sex?

4.

There are Web sites on the internet that advertise grooms and brides. Is it morally

wrong to buy a marriage partner from them, assuming that the transaction is voluntary and the bride or groom agrees to marry you? Should such transactions be illegal?

5.

Many people want to adopt a child, but there is always a shortage of infants. Should prospective parents be allowed to give money to young, single mothers who are considering giving up their children for adoption? Should the children who are now waiting to be adopted go to the highest bidder?

6.

Many people need organ transplants, but there is always a shortage of organs from deceased donors. Should the organs that are available go to the highest bidder? If not, how should they be assigned?

7.

In many developing countries, it is possible to buy a kidney for a few thousand dollars. The seller is often very poor and needs the money to support himself or his family. Is it morally permissible to buy his kidney? Should the sale of organs from living adults be illegal?