

FOLLOW: LESSON TWO (Leaders Guide) Offering My Time and Treasure Generously

BIBLE CONVERSATION

Read Matthew 6:19-24

1) Why do you think Jesus spends so much time teaching about possessions and giving?

There are many answers to this question. A major reason is because Money can very easily become our god (vs. 6:24 “No one can serve two masters”). It can control our moods: we can be happy when we have it and sad when we don’t. Possessions can distract us and consume our time. If I buy a fishing boat (for example) I must keep my boat clean, keep it running, winterize it, use it regularly on the weekends, make the payment monthly, etc. Things keep us busy. Things can also keep us from following Jesus altogether (see Luke 14:18).

2) What does this passage say about storing up earthly possessions? Does Jesus tell us it’s wrong to have things that we enjoy?

Jesus is not saying that owning earthy possessions is morally wrong, he’s just saying they are very temporary. The toys and gadgets that we just celebrated this past Christmas, will end up broken and discarded at Page County Landfill in just a few years. We need to take a sober look at the value of our possessions. Here’s another illustration like the one in the intro paragraphs:

Imagine yourself near the end of the Civil War. You’re a Northerner, stranded in the South by the war. You plan to move home when the war is over. While in the South, you’ve accumulated lots of Confederate currency. Suppose you know for a fact that the North is going to win the war soon. What will you do with your Confederate money? If you’re smart, you’ll immediately cash in your excess Confederate currency for US currency—the only money that will have value after the war. You’ll keep only enough Confederate currency to meet your short-term needs.¹

Jesus isn’t saying it’s wrong to store up earthly possessions he’s just saying it’s not smart. The smartest investment is in something that will last past this life. Have you ever seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul? No, it’s because you can’t take any of it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

3) Is the motivation in this passage God-centered or self-centered? Is it wrong to be motivated by reward? Read Matthew 10:42 and Philippians 4:17

This is a trick question because the answer is “both”. When we are doing God’s will there is no competition – working for our good and god’s glory can be one in the same.

In Matthew 10:42 we see that God is keeping track of every kindness that we do for someone in Jesus’ name. There’s something in us that thinks it’s wrong to be motivated by reward. But if it were wrong, God would not offer it as a motivation. Rewards are his idea.

¹ Alcorn, Randy. The Treasure Principle, Revised and Updated: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving (p. 7).

FOLLOW CURRICULUM

In Philippians 4:17 we see that Paul's aim is not getting a gift from the Philippians but allowing them to make an eternal investment.

**4) What does this phrase mean: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"?
Does our heart follow our treasure or does our treasure follow our heart?**

This is a tricky one because many of us have heard this verse and thought it meant: "Your treasure always follows your heart" – meaning if you're heart desires godly things then you'll give to missions or your church. However, if your heart is focused on the things of this world, you're spending will reflect that. I think this is true, but could it be the other way around too?

Could it be that our heart tends to follow our treasure? For instance, let's say you decide to invest your money in shares of Ford Motor company. You've always driven a ford but never been too interested in the details of the company. All the sudden you're reading financial articles online to learn more about quarterly earnings, a CEO transition, and new product development. You've never cared about that stuff before but you do now. Why? Because your investment is there.

What would happen if you gave money to fund a missionary in India? You'd hear a story about a earthquake in India and search desperately to find the location. You'd put a prayer card on your fridge or mirror and pray for them regularly. You'd want to travel there to see the work that God is doing. You'd read any newsletter that they sent. Your heart would follow your treasure.

What's the greatest way to get a heart for what God is doing in the valley or the world? Give. Because our heart always follows our treasure. This is a powerful point.

5) Can you give examples of places in your life where your heart has followed your investment of time or treasure?

6) What's the connection between being a generous church and a church on mission?