

STUDY GUIDE



TRANSFORMED
TRANSFORMED IN MY POSSESSIONS
MATTHEW 6:19-24
09/25/2016

MAIN POINT

Possessions don't last. Your relationship with God does.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When have you encountered something priceless?

What possession of yours would upset you most if you lost it?

We are physical beings, and we live in a physical world. It's natural, then, that we fill our lives with physical objects. We seek to possess things, but those things have a way of possessing us. Jesus calls us to seek a different type of treasure: treasures that last beyond this physical life. When we focus on God and follow Him, we find and invest in far greater treasures.

WATCH THE SESSION 3 VIDEO.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:19-21.

What did Jesus say was the downside of owning treasures?

Respond to this statement: "How we handle our money shows who and what has control over our hearts and minds."

How can our treasures own us?

Jesus said when we value eternal things, we gain something that cannot be damaged or destroyed—and we make an eternal investment. When we use our resources and possessions for kingdom purposes, we store up "treasures in heaven" (v. 20). As we consider our possessions, it's important to remember that we don't own anything; we merely

manage what God has blessed us with. We should view the possessions God has given us as tools to use for His kingdom. We make a better investment—an eternal investment—when we use these possessions for God’s kingdom work.

How does knowing that God owns everything relieve some of the financial pressures we face?

What are some resources God has given you that could be used as tools for His kingdom?

How do we go about collecting treasures in heaven?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:22-23.

How do these verses contribute to Jesus’ teaching about possessions?

We are drawn to what we focus on. In these verses, Jesus spoke of the good eye, borrowing from the Jewish idea that a good eye represented a generous attitude. By contrast, a bad eye was stingy and self-focused. Jesus was calling for a clear perspective on Him and His kingdom—and a willingness to see beyond ourselves.

What are the pitfalls of choosing to focus on material possessions?

How do you maintain a clear focus, so that “your eyes are healthy” and “your whole body will be full of light” (v. 22)?

Some ways you can fix your eyes on Christ are renewing your mind daily through His Word (Romans 12:1-2), confessing any selfish pursuits, interests, or goals that cloud your vision (Psalm 119:36-37), praying for godly Christ-centered vision (Matthew 7:7), and investing in others and building up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20-21).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:24.

What is your initial reaction to this verse?

In what ways do believers today try to serve both God and money?

Why is it impossible to serve both God and money?

We serve what we focus on each day. Most people live their lives as slaves to their own passions and desires, but Paul and James identified themselves as slaves of Christ (Romans 1:1; James 1:1). This is ironic because no one is freer than a follower of Christ. In this amazing paradox, a life lived for self leads to slavery, but a life lived in service and surrender to Christ leads to freedom.

When have you obeyed God with your money even though it didn’t make sense?

How can regular tithing increase our trust in God?

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What steps can you take this week to keep your focus on Christ?

What are some choices you can make today in order to make eternal investments rather than temporary purchases?

What are three things you have that could be useful for God's kingdom (i.e. my home, my money, my time, etc.)? Will you surrender those items this week in order to make an eternal investment?

PRAY

Close your time with prayer, asking God to help your group encourage one another to focus on God and not on stuff. Pray that God would be seen as valuable and precious, far more than the treasures of the world. Pray that your gratitude for all He's done in your life would lead you to give generously and invest eternally.

COMMENTARY

MATTHEW 6:19-24

The last half of Matthew 6 deals with wrong perspectives regarding the material realm—in a word, money. In 6:19-24 Jesus dealt with our greed, while in 6:25-34 He dealt with our anxiety over basic necessities. These two problems are actually cousins to each other, because both display a lack of trust in the Father and a lack of eternal perspective.

It is not as obvious in this portion of the sermon that Jesus was confronting the hypocritical religious leaders and contrasting them with the truly righteous kingdom servant. But in the context of the entire Sermon on the Mount (especially the theme of 5:20—exceeding the “righteousness” of the Pharisees), we may assume that such a contrast was intended. This is clear in light of the greed of the religious leaders (see 21:12-17).

There is a connection between this portion of the Sermon on the Mount and its immediate context (6:1-18). In the preceding section, Jesus contrasted the earthly reward of men's attention with the heavenly reward from the Father. In 6:19, He contrasts the transience of earthly wealth with the permanence of heavenly wealth. Even the teachings on anxiety (6:25-34) peak with the exhortation to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (6:33) in the assurance that the fulfillment of our earthly needs will naturally follow. All of Matthew 6 seems to be saying, “Look up!” when our natural tendency is to look at the world around us (see Col. 3:1-2).

6:19-21. Verses 19 and 20 are almost exact parallels, designed for easy understanding and easy memorization. This is a critical passage. Here the King drew an ultimate contrast between on earth and in heaven. He urged His followers to forget earth and think of heaven. We must not waste our time trying to get ahead in this world. It is the same idea He taught in 16:24-27. What does it profit a person “if he gains the whole world”? Jesus was demanding that His disciples look up and ahead—“for the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory and then He will reward each person according to what he has done” (Matt. 16:27).

Jesus was summarizing why the kingdom servant is motivated to practice righteous acts. It is not for temporary honor among men on earth, but for eternal reward before the Father in heaven. The point of this life is preparation for the world to come. The present tense verb here can best be translated, “Stop storing up treasures on earth!” But Jesus does specifically command us to store up for yourself in heaven. Moths were universally known as a destructive force (Job 4:19; Isa. 50:9; 51:8). Burglary was especially common in the day of mud-brick homes. Break is the Greek term meaning “break through.” It literally means “dig through.” There is no permanence in this world. You cannot take your treasure with you into the next world, but you can send it on ahead through kingdom-oriented stewardship.

Jesus not only saw nothing wrong with His followers working for reward; He went so far as to command it. The New Testament clearly encourages it (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 9:24-27). Jesus' words in the last few verses of the Bible emphasize it: “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12).

This concept of storing up heavenly treasure by doing good works was common in rabbinic tradition, and so it would have been easily understood by Jesus' audience and Matthew's readers. The conditional "if" statements of 6:22b–23a are parallel, again using the form of poetic wisdom literature.

6:22-23. These two verses can be confusing until we look at them in the light of the preceding and following context. We have not departed from the theme of the person's attitude toward material wealth. Jesus spoke of a small part of the body as being very important to the body as a whole, much as James claimed that anyone who could tame his tongue could tame his whole body (Jas. 3:1-12). No muscle of the body can relax if the eye is uncomfortable. Both Jesus and James were speaking of the inner human control over one's attitude toward wealth and one's choice of words. These two limited aspects of human choice can have profound consequences for the entire person (the whole body, figuratively speaking).

In keeping with the figurative language, the light would be an accurate perspective on the value of material wealth, while darkness would be some warped distortion of this truth. The person with a generous eye can see clearly, and life can be guided in wisdom and safety by such light. The person with a covetous, selfish eye is walking in darkness and is bound for harm he cannot see. Poor perspective causes stumbling.

6:24. The center of this verse is, again, a symmetrical parallel pair of statements, poetically memorable. The term Money is from the Aramaic mammon, meaning "wealth" or "property." It is anything in which a person places confidence. Jesus carefully chose here the picture of a slave. There could be no doubt about the issue of control. No person can serve two masters.

Any compromise of allegiance in this issue reminds us of the Lord's attitude toward those who are "lukewarm" in Revelation 3:15-16. It seems to suggest He thinks even less of those who claim to serve Him, but have other loyalties, than He does of those who claim no loyalty to Him at all. The terms hate and despise should be taken to mean "be less devoted to," "disregard," or "love less." On the other hand, love and be devoted to would imply a higher priority commitment, not necessarily an exclusive commitment.