

Money and Possessions: The Quest for Contentment



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BIBLE STUDIES

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P R E S S

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MONEY AND POSSESSIONS: THE QUEST FOR CONTENTMENT

The subject of money seems to be one of the most emotional issues of our times. For many of us, money rules like a despot over our attitudes, our time, our decisions, and our politics. An individual's personal economic status can cause his or her emotions to rise and fall like the stock market.

Money determines what we can buy, the things we can possess, the lifestyle we can attain and maintain. And we think we'll find contentment, if only we can accumulate enough.

Yet money is more than a measure of one's well being, the supposed security of one's future, or the means for bettering ourselves. The way a person

handles money is a barometer of that individual's relationship with God. Money and possessions are a matter of the heart. They show where our true affections lie. This is why the New Testament devotes so much attention to money and possessions, for as Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

In light of this truth, we need to know what God has to say about money, where it comes from, how we are to handle it, and what our accountability may be in respect to whatever we have. We hope you will find this study revolutionary and liberating as you gain new insights regarding your quest for contentment.

WEEK ONE

The psalmist declared that the earth and all it contains belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1). The book of James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes from our heavenly Father (1:17). Truly, all that we possess, even the air we breathe, is given to us by God.

As we read through the Gospels, we see Jesus reminding His followers frequently of their accountability to the Father. The writers of the Epistles also make it clear that how we choose to spend our time and resources can result either in God granting us rewards or declining to reward us when we meet Him face to face.

With all this in mind, we want to prepare for the day when we will give an account of what we have done with all we've been given, so that we are ready and unashamed.

OBSERVE

Let's begin by studying a parable told by Jesus in the final days of His earthly ministry.

A parable is a story which, although not usually factual, remains true to life and teaches a moral lesson or truth. To correctly interpret a parable you need to determine the occasion of the parable. Why was this parable told? What prompted it?

Luke 19:11 gives us the setting in which Jesus told this particular parable.

LUKE 19:11

¹¹ While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

LUKE 19:12-15

¹² So He said “A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return.

Leader: *Read aloud Luke 19:11.*

- *Have the group mark every reference to **Jesus**, including pronouns, with a cross: † Have the group say “Jesus” aloud each time they mark a reference to Him.*

DISCUSS


- Look at every place you marked *Jesus*. Where was Jesus when this incident took place?
- Why did He tell them a parable? (Look at what follows “because.”)

OBSERVE

Let’s continue with the parable. Remember, Jesus is speaking in this passage.

Leader: *Read Luke 19:12-15 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...*

- *underline every reference to **the nobleman**, including pronouns.*

- *mark every word that indicates a sequence of **time**—then, when, until, after—with a clock, like this: *

DISCUSS

- Review the sequence of events in respect to the nobleman's comings and goings. What happened before he left and after his return?
- What did you learn from marking the references to the nobleman?
- In addition to the nobleman, who are the other two groups of people mentioned in this parable? Describe their relationship to the nobleman.

13 “And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, ‘Do business with this until I come back.’

14 “But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’

15 “When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done.”

LUKE 19:12-25

12 So He said “A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return.

13 “And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, ‘Do business with this until I come back.’

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OBSERVE

Leader: Read Luke 19:12-25 and have the group do the following:

- Circle every reference to **slave or slaves**, including pronouns.
- Draw a box around every reference to **minas and money**, including pronouns.

DISCUSS

- According to verse 13, how many slaves were there? And from what you read in verse 16, how many minas then were given to each slave?
- In respect to the nobleman’s travels to a far country, when did he distribute the minas?
- What were the slaves to do with the minas?

- To whom did the minas belong?
 - When were the slaves who were given the minas called to give an account to the nobleman?
 - What right did the nobleman have to know what business the slaves have done while he was away?
 - On what basis did the nobleman reward the slaves? Discuss his treatment of the three.
 - Which of the three slaves received the greatest reward? Why do you think he received what he did? What was the percentage of the return on the nobleman's investment?
- what business they had done.
- 16 "The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.'
- 17 "And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.'
- 18 "The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.'
- 19 "And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'
- 20 "Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief;

21 for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.’

22 “He said to him, ‘By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow?’

23 ‘Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?’

24 “Then he said to the bystanders, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’

- Why was the first given even more after the third slave gave his accounting?
- Do the nobleman’s actions seem fair to you? Did they seem fair to the bystanders? What was their concern?
- Do you think people would respond the same way today? Why or why not?
- Do you think most people expect to receive the same treatment as others no matter what they do? Why?

WRAP IT UP

How easily we become preoccupied with money and the material things of this world! We tend to think that we have earned them by the sweat of our brow or the cleverness of our thinking, forgetting that everything we have comes from God. In truth, we are merely stewards, or custodians, of what He chooses to give us; and therefore, rich or poor, we will be held accountable to Him for what we do with it.

Second Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10 tell us that Christians will one day stand at the judgment seat of Christ, where we will give an account of the works we have done. We will be called to explain what we have done with our lives, our gifts and abilities, and our monies and possessions. We have only a lifetime to serve God, and then we'll be rewarded for all eternity based on how we've handled our blessings here on earth. May God stamp eternity upon our eyes and remind us that when Jesus returns His reward will be with Him. What is one lifespan—seventy years or so—compared with all eternity?

Revelation 20:11-15 tells of God's judgment of those who remain dead in their trespasses and sins because they rejected life. They refused to believe in Jesus and receive Him as their Lord and their God, to have Him reign over them. Even in the lake of fire there will be degrees of punishment according to a person's deeds. God is just. Always. With all people.

In the light of these sobering truths, why don't you pause for a few minutes and quietly talk to the Lord—either in silence or as a group—about what you have learned.



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