

life groups' sermon guide

the treasure principle

eyes on eternity



Life Groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for spiritual growth, caring for one another, and reaching out to others.

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” – Jesus (Matthew 6:21)

Imagine yourself pulling up behind the long line of cars at the stoplight, wondering how many cycles you'll have to endure before getting through the light. You're in the left lane and you look over at the median. Standing there in an Army-issued fatigue jacket is an unkempt man with a hand-written message on a tattered cardboard sign, "Homeless. Need money for food. God bless!"

The light turns green and your line inches forward as cars are making their way through the intersection... What's going through your mind as you move closer to the man by the side of the road?

Q:: What kind of reactions do we typically have in such situations? Why?

Q:: What's the struggle?

Q:: What might Jesus do if He were in the driver's seat?

Discussion:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus identifies the tension through which countless people have struggled from then until now—earthly wealthy versus eternal reward (Matthew 6:19-21). As Jesus explains, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Randy Alcorn summarizes the idea well: "As surely as the compass needle follows north, your heart will follow your treasure. Money leads; hearts follow" (The Treasure Principle, p. 44)

Perhaps you've experienced this idea.

Illustration: A few years ago, a man walked into the office of a local church here in Avon. It was obvious from looking at his outward appearance and listening to his story that "Keith" was homeless. I happened to be in the office, and as one of the pastors there, I offered to help.

People coming to the church for help was a common occurrence. And with each situation, we tried to evaluate the legitimacy of the need and determine how best to steward our resources to meet it. In this case, I decided to take Keith to the local Super 8 motel. But not until after providing him with basic hygiene necessities and some modest food options. He was very grateful for the help. And as I left him for the night, I promised to come in the morning and pick him up.

Was it the right thing to do? As I drove home that night I knew it was. In talking with my wife, Jean, that night we found joy in being able to help the least and the lost.

Open-Hand Principle:

One of the key ideas which helps each of us better understand the Treasure Principle is that “My heart always goes where I put God’s money.” Implicit in this idea is the guiding question, what does being a good steward of God’s resources mean for me? The goal is to bring our hearts in line with the heart of God.

Q:: As we consider our world, what is the heart of God for people, and how might we follow His heart?

Q:: If, for example, Jesus were living in the 21st century here in suburban Indiana, where would His treasure be?

There are multiple clues in Scripture to help us determine the heart of God answer this question (e.g. Prov. 31:8-9; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 John 3:16-18). The challenge, however, is to apply these divine imperatives to our lives. We know we are give to, and serve, the poor. But we struggle with our human tendency to view our material possession as exactly that, *our* material possessions. We forget that we are merely stewards for the real Owner.

Q:: What is the difference between an owner and a steward?

Q:: Why is this difference so critical toward understanding how we should approach our treasures here on earth?

Q:: Why do we tend to struggle with holding too tightly to our possessions?

The old Gospel song reminds us of the words of God in Psalm 50:10, “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.” We voice belief in this idea that God is sovereign and in control of our world. But does God really own the cattle on a thousand hills? *Really?*

Q:: Why is so difficult to trust God sometimes?

Q:: What can we do to increase our trust in Him?

We’re not going to have a heart that gives until we get in touch with the heart of God. And as learn to trust God, we develop a more liberal attitude in our sacrifices toward other people. That is right where God wants us to be, because that’s where He is.

Application:

“For God so loved the world that he gave....” – John 3:16

Throughout Scripture, God continually demonstrates His priorities. And nowhere was this more tangibly demonstrated than when God came down to earth and walked among us. Jesus in word and deed revealed the heart of God. And God’s heart is grounded in giving. It is a heart that gives without the guarantee of getting anything in return.

Not so with us...if we’re honest with ourselves.

Illustration: “And now, the rest of the story...” about Keith

After leaving Keith safe and secure in the hotel, I went feeling like I was finally putting some real feet to my Christian faith. And I was ready to give him a Bible the next morning.

I picked Keith up and immediately found out he had thrown the rest of the food I had given him away up in the hotel room. In fact, as I was checking him out of the motel, Keith seemed to have adopted an air of ungrateful entitlement about him. And when we got back in the car, he asked me to drive him over 50 miles down the road to another church or hotel. He adamantly refused my offer to take him downtown to the local men’s mission.

When Keith realized that I wasn’t going to enable him any further, he jumped out of the car and rushed off across the parking lot in a heated barrage of colorful language. And it was by then that I realized my worst fears...I had been swindled. My heart of compassion had been taken advantage of. And another layer of cynicism was taking its place.

I went back to my office at the church, absolutely infuriated at both myself and Keith for allowing something like that to happen. In my anger, I rehashed with God all of the things I had done for Keith, all of the sacrifices I had made...only to have Keith blatantly throw everything I had done back in my face.

And in that “Whoa-is-me!” moment I heard God’s quiet voice clearly say to me: *“Now you know what it feels like....”* Ouch!

How often do we forget all that God has done, and continues to do for us, even when we don’t do anything for Him? Or worse, when we throw it back in His face by assuming that the blessings we enjoy have come from our own hand?

And yet, if we strive to truly pursue the heart of God, we must understand that it involves sacrificial giving toward the least and the lost in our world. And the rewards we receive may not stack up on this side of heaven. But the calling remains the same, to give to others so that we may “receive that crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12). There is no greater reward!

“We’re most like God when we’re giving.” – Dixie Fraley