

## Of Greater Worth Than Gold

July 15, 2018

Whether we realize it or not –or whether we like to admit it or not – it can sometimes be our nature to imitate other people. All we have to do to prove that it can be human nature to imitate other people is to turn on our television or computer, or open up a newspaper or magazine. If we weren't prone to be imitators of other people, companies wouldn't spend the amount of money they currently spend on advertising. I recently read an article that mentioned that 183 billion dollars was spent on advertising in 2015 in the United States, and that in 2017 that number jumped to 207 billion dollars.

Since we are prone to imitating other people and their behaviors, it is important for us to make sure that we are following or imitating the right people. **Ephesians 5:1-2** tells us, “**Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**”

As our creator, God knows that we are going to have a tendency to imitate someone else. So, He told us that He is the only one that we are to be patterning our life after. He has a plan and a purpose for our lives. That's why He doesn't want us to chase after the things of this world or to live like people who don't have a relationship with Him.

This morning, as we take a closer look at how important it is for us to make sure that we are living our lives the way God wants us to instead of following the pattern of this world, it's important to keep in mind that while we are living our daily life, there is also a spiritual battle waging around us. In that spiritual battle, Satan is constantly trying to distract us and pull us away from God, and Jesus reminds us of that in **John 10:10**. That verse reads, “**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.**”

So, even though Satan is trying to entice us with everything our hearts desire in this world, his real intent is to destroy us. On the other hand, Jesus wants us to stay focused on what really matters, and that's the victorious life He came to give us. God wants to give us His best as we pattern our life after Him. **Hebrews 11:6** reads, “**And without faith it is**

**impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”**

God is our loving Heavenly Father. As a God of love, He isn't sitting on His throne in heaven just waiting for us to mess up so that He can discipline or punish us. Instead, He wants us to earnestly seek Him so that He can reward and bless us as we pattern our life after Him and live a life of total surrender and obedience to Him. The word we translated as “earnestly” meant “to search” or “to crave.” God wants our relationship with Him to be something we seek and desire more than anything else.

Unfortunately, I believe that we have sometimes let the fact that we are living in an affluent society with an unreal amount of material possessions lull us into equating our wealth with God's blessing, never stopping to think that maybe our wealth might be placing a wedge between us and a deeper relationship with God. We sometimes equate material possessions with blessings and happiness.

Because of that, I thought it might be interesting or beneficial for us to look at a Bible passage that kind of helps put things into perspective.

**Matthew 19:16-22 states, “16 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life? 17 ‘Why do you ask me about what is good?’ Jesus replied. ‘There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.’ 18 ‘Which ones?’ the man inquired. Jesus replied, ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ 20 ‘All these I have kept,’ the young man said. ‘What do I still lack?’ 21 Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.”**

In order to follow God the way we should, the way He desires us to, we need to be able to get to a place where we are willing to do anything He asks us to do. We need to be willing to go where He tells us to go, do what He tells us to do, and give up or let go of anything He might ask us to give up or let go of.

The young man in this passage had the appearance of being someone who was closely following God. By his own admission, he was following the commandments that Jesus told him to follow. I find it interesting that Jesus didn't deny that this man was following the commandments that Jesus mentioned.

However, just like the rest of us, God had wired this young man with a conscience and he knew in his own heart that, in reality, he hadn't really been serving God with his whole heart. He hadn't really gotten to the place of being totally "sold out" for God. That's why he asked Jesus "What do I still lack?"

At that point, Jesus was able to reveal what was really keeping this young man from totally serving God – his wealth. Unfortunately, this passage reveals that the young man was ultimately unwilling to give up what was really the most important thing in his life in order to have a right relationship with God, and that was his wealth. At the end of the day, when it was all said and done, money and possessions were really who he was serving.

I believe that this passage can serve as a valuable lesson to each one of us. Just like the young man in this passage, we can go through life and have all of the appearances of following God and still not be 100 percent committed to Him or even be on a path that will ultimately lead us to spending eternity in communion with Him.

**1 Samuel 16:7 says, "7 But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"**

God knows what's really going on in our heart. He knows if we are fully committed to Him or if we have allowed something into our life that we are placing a higher value on than Him. There are so many things that can keep us from being totally committed to Him and can keep us from experiencing His best in our lives: money, jobs, relationships with other people, education, entertainment, and sometimes even church.

For the young man who had an encounter with Jesus that day, it was his wealth. For you and I, it might be that same thing or something totally

different. The important thing isn't what might be keeping us from experiencing God's best. The important thing we all need to do is to be willing to periodically go before our Lord to ask Him to reveal to us if there is anything in our life that is standing between us and Him, or His will for us.

We need to make sure that if God reveals that there is something in our life that is more important than Him that, unlike the young man we read about this morning, we need to be willing to have a true change of heart in any area God reveals to us.

May God help us to be imitators of Christ so we can experience His best for us, and so that we can be living examples for others to follow.