

Command #9: Store up treasures in heaven.

Matthew 6:19-24 // Jerry Barber & Greg Singerle

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Condensed Version

Read Matthew 6:19-24 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. In Matthew 6:19, what is Jesus condemning?
2. Compare and contrast the use of "store up" in verse 19 with how it is used in verse 20.
3. According to verse 24, how can money hinder our discipleship?
4. Read Philippians 2:6-8: What do you admire about Jesus in terms of how he gave?

Study (answers follow below)

1. Meditate on Matthew 6:19-24 and make several observations about the passage.
2. Why do people accumulate too much treasure on earth?
3. Why does God provide money for Christians, according to Scripture?
4. In Matthew 6:19, what is Jesus condemning?
5. Compare and contrast the use of "store up" in verse 19 with how it is used in verse 20.
6. Summarize the principle taught in verse 21.

7. Two background issues can help one understand verses 22-23:
 - a. The ancients considered the eyes as the windows through which light entered the body-
-if they were in good condition, the entire body was lit up and received the benefits of light; if they were bad, it was plunged into darkness which breeds disease.
 - b. "Evil eye" was a Jewish metaphor for a grudging or jealous spirit; therefore, its opposite, a "single/good/sound eye" could refer to a generous spirit.

Now summarize the teaching of verses 22-23.

8. According to verse 24, how can money hinder our discipleship?

Answers:

1. (many answers possible here)
2. Security, personal worth, power, independence, pleasure.
3. (1) To care appropriately for your family, (2) to help those who are in need, especially believers, and (3) to support God's work in spreading the gospel at home and around the world
4. Not having, but hoarding, "storing up"
5. In verse 19, it refers to using your possessions to store up treasures for yourself, whereas in verse 20 it encourages us to use our possessions to make eternal investments in God's work.
6. Whatever people treasure becomes the guiding principle of their lives. We give loyalty to whatever is ultimately significant to us (cf. Grant Osborne, *Matthew, Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, 243).
7. Anyone who is set on storing up treasures on earth is unwilling to share his possessions with others, and this grudging spirit makes that person blind to what is really important.
8. Wealth can be idolatry (greed is, according to Colossians 3:5), and believers are called to focus our lives on God, nothing else. God is our true master, but money is a master too, and you have to decide whom you are going to serve, because you cannot serve both.

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Worship

The truth that follows is very challenging. The hope is that it will also be revealing and, therefore, freeing (John 8:32). From God's revealing my (Greg) being deceived in this area, and from having been a part of several churches, I believe that one of the greatest deceptions in the American church is believing the lie that we can indeed serve two masters. If someone asked you to determine what master you serve by recording where you devote your time during the week, who would your master be? If someone asked you to determine what master you serve by recording where you spend your money, who would your master be? These are challenging questions for us, but they reveal the heart – even when we do not like what it reveals. But the key ingredient of genuine spiritual growth is need. Effort is not the key to spiritual growth but rather a hindrance. We are sanctified in the same manner as we are saved: our true self is exposed resulting in need. That need is then fulfilled in Christ. God's word is the critical component by which we are made aware of our needs as our true self is exposed (Hebrews 4:12).

Does the call to be a disciple of Christ, our Master, really require forsaking all? That is what Jesus said (Matthew 16:24). And from observing those people for whom these details have been recorded for us in Scripture, the answer demonstrated by their actions in following Christ is also clearly "Yes:" Peter, Andrew, James and John (Luke 5:8-11); Matthew (Matthew 9:9); and Paul (Philippians 3:4-10). These people all left everything – their jobs, their families, their houses, etc. – to follow Christ (Matthew 19:27-29). Jesus Himself left everything in His service to the Father (Philippians 2:6-8, 1 Corinthians 8:9). Christ is very clear when He states that not only is it not possible to serve two masters, but also that He will not share this position with another. It is possible to follow only one master: Him or self.

As with following all His commands, we are to emulate Christ (1 John 2:6). We are also to discern those who truly follow Christ and emulate them as well (Philippians 3:17-19). Look over the Scriptures above, focusing on Jesus in Philippians 2:6-8 and Paul in Philippians 3:4-10, as we observe some details about what it means to serve one master and, more importantly, the price required in so doing.

Questions:

1. How did Paul see himself before his conversion to Christ?
2. Did Paul understand his old master (self) as in any way compatible with his new Master, (Christ)?
3. What did Paul sacrifice so he could serve his one Master?
4. What did Christ give up? (Unlike us, Jesus never served the wrong master but He obviously did sacrifice!)
5. What one event in Christ's life on earth best showed that He followed only one Master?
6. What do you admire about Christ when you think of what He gave up for you?

Answers:

1. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin – a tribe that prided themselves in producing Israel's first king, Saul. As we see here, Paul was obviously prideful as well. He was a Pharisee, or a member of the strictest sect of the Jews, another source of pride. He was extremely zealous for the traditions handed down from his

forefathers and considered himself to have been completely righteous under the law. From Acts 22:3, we know that Paul was educated by Gamaliel, the leading rabbi of his time and a grandson of Hillel – possibly the most respected rabbi in all of Jewish history. Paul states in Galatians 1:14 that he was advancing beyond his peers, which meant he would likely become a ruling member of the Sanhedrin. To put it in modern terms, Paul had his ticket punched and was on the fast-track to a very successful life.

2. No. Consistent with what Christ taught that no one can serve two masters, Paul realized that everything in His past was useless and had to be forsaken to follow Christ. He counted everything as loss in order to gain Christ.
3. Paul gave up everything, including his job, his wealth (and/or promise of future wealth), social standing, the respect of his peers and people, acceptance by his peers and people, his education, his power and influence, what he truly believed God had called him to do (persecuting the church), his basis for understanding God, all the traditions of his fathers, his (supposed) identification and standing before God, and the guarantee of a very good and comfortable life.
4. Christ gave up everything as well. It is difficult to understand what God has given up because we have not (yet) seen Christ in His glory. But He gave up praise and glory for mockery and rejection; a king's crown for a crown of thorns; His righteousness for our sins; perfect fellowship with the Father for being forsaken by the Father; a perfect, painless heavenly body for a pain-racked body nailed to the cross; and a glorious life for a criminal's death.
5. When Jesus in the garden asked if the cup could be taken away from Him but laid down His will for that of the Father's.
6. I admire that He came for me. I admire that for joy He endured the cross – the joy of spending eternity with me. (That is not a prideful statement in any way but one of complete awe and humility. The Holy Spirit recorded these things so that we could understand salvation from God's perspective, and it is good to meditate on them. Meditate on the truth that what enabled Christ to endure the cross was the joy of doing God's will and an eternity with you!) I admire that there is nothing He would not give up and nothing He would refuse to do for me – He proved that at the cross.

Obey

1. Evaluate where and how you spend money.
2. Live below your means so you can give and save.
3. Adopt one tangible change that allows you to invest more in God's work.

Train

How to help disciple others:

1. Study Matthew 6:19-24 yourself, ask your disciple(s) to study it, then discuss it and pray about it together.
2. Read and discuss with them one of Randy Alcorn's books: *The Treasure Principle* or *Money, Possessions and Eternity*.
3. Attend Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University with them.
4. Parents: start training your children now—to live below their means, save and give generously.