

Closer to God: The Real Reason for Lent

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of March 20th

MAR 20TH SERMON SUMMARY

CLOSER TO GOD: GREED (LUKE 12:16-21; also 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19)

Jesus warns us to be on guard against greed, materialism, and the love of money and things. He tells this story to illustrate the heart of greed. 3 characteristics of greedy people:

- 1. Greedy people believe their wealth is their own (v.17-19).** They fail to acknowledge God's role in giving us abilities, resources and opportunities, and God's right to control how we use it.
- 2. Greedy people trust in wealth for their future (v.20-21).** While it's good to save and plan, having more money guarantees us nothing - only God never fails.
- 3. Greedy people don't share what they have.** They don't ask: *why do I have so much?*

How can we break the cycle of greed? 1 Timothy 6:17-19 gives special instructions for rich:

1. Trust in God's rich provision: remember past provision, and be thankful.
2. Be generous: it shows us we have enough, and there is more to life than what we have.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION: Share one way God has provided for you in the last few weeks.

II. THINK AND REFLECT.

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19 (below), in which Paul advises a young pastor about the rich.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8** But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. **9** Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. **10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs

17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope

in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. **18** Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. **19** In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1. What do you think are the main ideas or key words in these verses?

2. Describe the attitude, lifestyle, and problems (if any) of the following groups of people. Explain and give examples of each, if you can.
 - a. those who are content, v. 6-8

 - b. those who want to get rich, v. 9

 - c. those who love money, v. 10

 - d. those who are rich, v. 17-19

- 3a. Which of these groups (in #2) would you consider “greedy”? Why?
 - b. How do you think they view God?

 - c. How does their greed draw them away from God?

- 4a. According to these verses, is it okay for Christians to be rich? Explain.
 - b. By the world’s standards, most Americans are rich. Do you consider yourself rich? Why?

 - c. How should rich Christians be different from other rich people?

5. What are some ways to be generous? See v. 18 (above) and add your own ideas.
 - b. For most people, it feels good to be generous. Why do you think it feels so good?

III. PERSONAL APPLICATION (Choose 1 of the following if time is limited)

6. How does your view of money and things impact you and your relationship with God?

7. Examine your heart regarding greed and generosity. Think about the following questions and share as much as you are comfortable sharing.

- Do you tend to think “I earned this, it’s mine, I can do what I want with it”? Or do you usually ask God what He wants you to do with the money you have?
- Do you trust in wealth, or in God, for your future? Does having enough make you feel secure, or not having enough make you feel insecure?
- Do you marvel at why you have so much and why you are so blessed, and seek God’s leading to share your money?
- How do you want to grow less greedy and/or more generous?

8. How is God speaking to you through this discussion or Sunday’s message?

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