

The Treasure Principle -- Devotions for ages 9 and up

WEEK 1: "Buried Treasure"

DAY 1: "Buried Treasure"

Read: Matthew 13:44-46 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1096)

Read: The Treasure Principle, p. 6 to top of p. 8

Reflect: What would you get excited about if you found it? What do you think about finding when you think of finding treasure?

Are you this excited about "finding" Jesus and having eternal life in heaven?

Dig: These two stories from Matthew 13 show that the two men were willing to give up all they had to get the one most important treasure. Even though they had many earthly things they had not found happiness. They were willing to sell all they had to purchase the treasure for the one and the pearl for the other. What brought them true happiness?

Did the man think twice about selling everything he had to buy the field? Did he say, "I know where the treasure is and I'll come back for it someday, but first I want to enjoy what I have"? What did he do instead?

List at least two things you think Jesus was trying to teach us about the kingdom of heaven by telling these two stories.

The first part of Job 1:21 reads, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart." We can't take material things with us when we die.

In Mark 8:34-36 Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" What do these words of Jesus have to do with the stories in Matthew 13:44-46?

Apply: What is most important in your life? What takes up most of your time? What will you have to give up in order to treasure God's kingdom? Television? Video games? Computer? Friends? Your toys? Certain clothes?

Take a good look into your heart and ask yourself if there are things you have not been willing to 'give up' in order to gain the kingdom of heaven.

For younger children, ages 5-9, and their families . . .

Read: Matthew 13:44-46 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1096)

Activity: Look through your things. Are there toys you could get rid of? Just as giving food or clothes to people is like giving it to Jesus. You could give away some of your toys too, even ones that may be important to you.

Dig: Why were the men in the stories in Matthew 13:44-46 so happy? They didn't even have to think about selling all their things to get the big treasure did they? Both men knew they had found something very special and priceless. Because they knew what they had found was of special value, they were willing to sell everything they had for it. What things could you give away (or sell and give the money away) for the kingdom of God?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me be a giving type of person. Help me not treasure things more than you. Bring to my mind any things that I should get rid of to help me become closer to you. Amen.

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DAY 2: "The Money Connection"

Read: Luke 3:7-18 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1056-1057)
Read: The Treasure Principle, p. 8 to top of p. 11

Reflect: To many people in the world, money is the most important thing in their lives. Is this true for most Christians? How about you?

Dig: In these verses in Luke 3, what are the 3 groups of people that John the Baptist was speaking to? What did he tell each of them to do?

Sometimes people make money an idol (something that they worship). They can't get enough of it-- sometimes even doing dishonest things to get it. Zacchaeus was like this. Read the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-9 (FiCB, p. 1185). What was Zacchaeus like before he met Jesus? What do you think was the most important thing to him?

Zacchaeus seemed to change after he met Jesus. How was that obvious from what he decided to do with his money?

Apply: Is money or stuff too important to you?

Do you think about your stuff more than you think about God? If you do it is an idol.

Are TV ads all about us getting more stuff?

Are there things in your life that are more important than God?

For younger children, ages 5-9, and their families . . .
Read: Luke 19:1-9 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1185)

Dig: Before Zacchaeus met Jesus, Zacchaeus was a stingy man. He loved his money. And he even cheated people so he could get more. Did people like Zacchaeus before he met Jesus?

When Jesus gave Zacchaeus a new heart, he no longer wanted everything for himself but wanted to share his money with people who needed it.

Activity: How much do you love the things that you call your own? Would you be willing to get rid of old toys to make room for the new ones you will get on Christmas or your birthday? Pick out some of your toys that you would like to give away to someone who doesn't have any toys.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, please help me not to be so selfish. Help me to be willing to give to others. Please give me a happy heart when I give away things to people you love. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

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WEEK 1: "Buried Treasure"
DAY 3: "Smart or Stupid?"

Read: Matthew 6:19-21 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1083)
Read: The Treasure Principle, top of p. 11 to bottom of p. 14

Reflect: Would you be willing to give up a pinch of cotton candy for a new bike? The cotton candy would taste very good for a few seconds. A new bike would last a much longer time. Things we have on earth don't last, they break, wear out, or get lost. Treasures we store up in heaven will last forever!

Dig: Why does Jesus tell us not to store up treasures on earth?

Where does Jesus tell us to store up treasures?

What kinds of things last a long time on earth? How long do they last? What eventually happens to them?

What kinds of things last forever?

How are earthly treasures different from heavenly treasures?

Apply: What is your heart treasuring? (Hint: what do you think about most of the time?)

Will these things bring you rewards in heaven or are they only for on earth where they will get broken, lost, stolen, or destroyed?

How can you change your heart to do the work that will give you treasures in heaven?

For younger children, ages 5-9, and their families . . .

Read: Matthew 6:19-21(Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1083)

Activity: Talk about some things you have had that got broken or lost or just got worn out.

Think of things that can't break or get lost or stolen.

Dig: Read: Proverbs 19:17 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 713)

What can we be rewarded for according to this verse? What kind of reward will this be? Who will give out the rewards?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me treasure you most of all, in my heart. Clean out the junk standing in the way of this and forgive me for making things that won't last more important than you. Amen.

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WEEK 1: "Buried Treasure"

DAY 4: "A Treasure Mentality"

Read: Philippians 3:7-11 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1368)

Read: The Treasure Principle, p. 15 to middle of p. 17

Reflect: Paul talks about losing everything to follow Christ. He refers to everything as garbage compared to knowing Jesus and becoming more like him. What might be standing in your way of knowing Jesus better?

Do you have some garbage to dump in order to follow Jesus? What kind of garbage?

Dig: Read Luke 12:33-34 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1175). What do these verses tell us to do?

Verse 34 talks about our heart. What happens to our heart when we look to build up treasures in heaven?

What person does Paul treasure?

What place does Paul treasure?

What possessions does Paul treasure?

Apply: What should you be doing to follow Jesus and become more like him?

Jesus was a servant. What are some practical ways you can serve Jesus by serving others?

For younger children, ages 5-9, and their families . . .

Read: Luke 12:33-34 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1175)

Activity: Make a list of people that could use your help. (For example: an elderly neighbor, your mom, brother or sister.)

Think of ways to do little jobs for them or spend time with them.

Dig: How do we build up treasure in heaven? Have you ever heard someone say "It is more blessed to give than receive"?

Is this true? Where do you think this saying came from?

Were you ever so excited to give someone something at Christmas that you didn't think about what you might get? It feels good to give things to people, especially people that truly can't afford to go out and buy things. Jesus says when we do it for others we are doing it for him. Isn't that exciting? What would you like to do for Jesus?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, Please give me a servant's heart. Help me cheerfully give my time and serve you by serving others. Amen.

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WEEK 1: "Buried Treasure"
DAY 5: Lectio Divina

Using the lectio divina process (described below), meditate on this Bible verse:
"For where your treasure is there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21 (Freedom in Christ Bible, p. 1083)

To help yourself meditate on this verse:

- Find a quiet, comfortable spot to sit where you won't be disturbed
- Take a moment to pray the prayer of protection (in bold) below
- Close your eyes and be still in God's presence for a moment
- Slowly read the scripture aloud
- Read it again, emphasizing the first word as you read out loud
- Next time, emphasize the second word
- Keep going, emphasizing each word in turn . . . take time for God's words to sink in
- Take time to answer some of these questions: Which reading gave you new thoughts? What did it make you think? What does this verse mean for you in your life now? Does it tell me that I need to change anything in my life -- my attitudes, my actions, my thoughts?
- Take time to pray and confess any sins that may have been shown to you. Ask Jesus to help you have victory in this area. Thank Jesus for anything he revealed to you. Ask him to make it real in your life today.

Dear Heavenly Father, I know you are in this room with me and in my life. I want to know your Word better and have a closer relationship to you. I ask for your complete protection and for your guidance as I meditate and pray now. In the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command Satan and all evil spirits to flee. I bind their power in Jesus' name. I ask, Father, that you close my ears and heart to any deceptions that Satan would try to plant in my mind. I want to hear only your voice, Heavenly Father. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and lead me into all truth. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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A Word about Meditation in General

Lectio divina is a form of contemplative prayer and meditation on Scripture. It's different from other forms of meditation that people today practice. We need to understand that many kinds of meditation (such as Transcendental Meditation) can allow the enemy, Satan, to get a foothold in our lives. Just because we are learning here a specific type of meditation doesn't mean that any kind of meditation is OK to practice. We need to be careful.

Lectio Divina -- Background

Lectio divina [LEK sio di VEE na] is an old form of prayer that early Christians used. Through lectio divina, which means "sacred reading," we take time to read God's holy Word over and over again until we memorize it and allow it to sink deep into our heart and mind. The early Christians believed that as they read the Word in this manner, they would hear from God -- hear him speak to their heart through his inspired Word.

In our busy society today, we like to do everything fast. It takes discipline for us to slow down and devote time to meditate on God's word and to pray. If you want to develop a deeper prayer life and have a more intimate relationship with your blessed Savior, Jesus, then you will do well to use lectio divina as part of your weekly devotional time.