

The Good Life

1. Warm-up question: A couple weeks ago, someone who lives in Los Angeles won the \$1 billion Powerball jackpot. If you won the lottery, what's something you've always wanted, but could never afford, that you'd buy?

2. One day thousands of people gathered to hear Jesus speak. There was a buzz of anticipation as everyone wondered what he would say. Then he began. He told them that every word we ever speak will live on forever (Luke 12:3), he reassured them that God cares about them so much that every hair on their head is numbered (Luke 12:7), and he encouraged them to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide their life (Luke 12:11). But then someone in the crowd interrupted and blurted out, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me!" That interruption prompted Jesus to tell a parable. Read Luke 12:1, 13-21, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Even as Jesus spoke, the man who interrupted him couldn't stop obsessing over how he was going to get his money from his father's inheritance. Have you ever found yourself obsessing over money and finances? Why is it so easy to get trapped in those thoughts and worries?
 - b. Before telling his parable, Jesus' responded to the man who interrupted him by saying, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" What do you make of Jesus' words? What point was he trying to make?
 - c. Was the farmer in Jesus' parable wrong to want to expand the capacity of his business by building new barns? If so, why? If not, what was his big mistake?
 - d. At the outset of his parable, Jesus says, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." Luke 12:15. Put this verse in your own words. What's Jesus saying?
 - e. At the end of his parable, Jesus adds, "So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God." Luke 12:21. Is it wrong to store up treasures for ourselves? Why or why not?
 - f. What do you think it means to be "rich toward God"?

3. The phrase "rich toward God" is pregnant with meaning. Apparently God wants all of us to be rich, but not in the way we typically define the term. Jeff pointed us to several Bible verses that can help discover what it means to live into the richness God wants for us.
 - a. I Corinthians 13:1 says, "If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." In other words, in

God's eyes, the key to living a deeply meaningful life is to love well. This coincides with the results of an epic century-long longitudinal study on human happiness conducted at Harvard University. Until recently, the study was led by Dr. George Vaillant. When asked what he learned about human happiness from the epic study, Vaillant replied, "The only thing that really matters in life are your relationships with other people." Do you believe quality loving relationships are the ultimate secret to happiness in life? Why or why not?

- b. Describe a deep love relationship you've had in your life with someone. How much meaning and happiness did/does that relationship bring into your life?
 - c. If loving others lies at the core of human happiness, that means we are called to a life of service. There's a stark contrast between a life preoccupied with "storing up treasures for ourselves" (Lk. 12:21) versus a life preoccupied with serving others. Jesus once said, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28. When Mr. Rogers died, his family found a handwritten reminder in his wallet that said, "Life is for service." Do you buy that? Why would a life of serving others be more rewarding than a life of storing up treasures for ourselves?
 - d. Describe a time in your life that brought you deep meaning and joy. What was it about that time that brought such joy? Were love and service at the core?
 - e. Take a look at the graph on p. 3 called "The Good Life: Competing Paradigms." Think about a time when you were more focused on the left side of the graph than the right side. How did that phase of your life feel at the time? How do you feel about that phase now looking back?
4. If loving relationships are the ultimate key to happiness and meaning, our relationship with God becomes essential. Psalm 16:11 says, "You, O God, will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forever more." How would you describe the quality of your relationship with God at this point in time? Does your relationship with God feel personal and fill you with joy? Are there changes you'd like to make in how you're relating to God?
 5. The prophet Isaiah says, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?" Isaiah 55:1. What does it mean to "buy wine and milk without money"? What does it mean to "spend money for that which is not bread"?
 6. At this time in your life, what percentage of your time and energy would you say you are devoting to the left side of the "Competing Paradigms" graph and what percentage to the right side. Does that feel like a good balance to you? If not, what would you like to change?

Luke 12:1, 13-21

1 Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered in thousands, so that they trampled on one another, Jesus began to speak. . . . [But as he spoke . . . ,]

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' ¹⁴But he said to him, 'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?' ¹⁵And he said to them, 'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.' ¹⁶Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. ¹⁷And he thought to himself, "What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" ¹⁸Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ²⁰But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" ²¹So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

The Good Life: Competing Paradigms (Luke 12:13-21)

Storing Up Treasures for Self

Success
Prestige
House
Vehicles
Clothes
Toys
Travel
Entertainment
Fine Food

Love
Relationships W/ Others
Relationship W/ God
Service
Purpose
Simple Pleasures
Beautiful Experiences

Being Rich Toward God