

## Small Group Leaders Notes

### Matthew 6:19-34

#### Context

- **Jesus' disciples are to be distinctive** - Throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has been teaching that to follow him means committing ourselves to live differently from everyone else ( 5:13-16, 5:21-48, 6:1-18). This theme of distinctiveness continues here as Jesus calls us to live lives where we treasure his kingdom more than the material things of this world and where we do not worry about daily provision but instead trust our Heavenly Father to provide.
- **Jesus' disciples are to be kingdom focused** - This theme is one that keeps coming through the sermon. The beatitudes are all kingdom focused (5:3-12) as is the Lord's Prayer (6:9-13.) Here in the second half of chapter 6 we are again being urged to be kingdom focused in what we treasure and prioritise.
- **Jesus' disciples are to be filled with light** - Verses 22 and 23 are not the easiest to understand (see the tricky bit below for some help.) What is noticeable is how Jesus has already used the theme of light back in 5:14-16. Jesus disciples are the light of the world and we are to display this light through our good deeds so that others join us in glorifying our Heavenly Father. Now in 6:22-23 the illustration shifts slightly. Disciples are to be those who are filled with light (v23.) This will obviously be good for the disciple but will inevitably also result in the kind of shining that Jesus commanded us to do in 5:14-16. In other words understanding and putting into practice 6:22-23 will be a big part of us also putting into practice 5:14-16.

#### Structure

- **Total Loyalty to the King (v19-24)**
  - Jesus uses 3 images to make the point;
    - **Treasure (v19-21)** - What we treasure will govern our lives. Our hearts and our lives are to be governed Jesus' kingdom rather than the normal material treasures of this world.
    - **Light (v22-23)** - Where we focus (our eye) will determine the rest of us. If our focus is good (i.e. on the kingdom) then this will mean that the whole of us is filled with good light rather than darkness. Again this is about our total loyalty and focus on the kingdom rather than the normal earthly treasures we pursue.
    - **Masters (v24)** - Again loyalty is at the heart of the illustration. When Jesus speaks of masters he doesn't just mean employers. In the original context he means slave masters. You can work for 2 employers but you can't have two masters.
- **Total Trust in the King (v25-34)**
  - Jesus shifts from treasuring riches to worrying about needs. Both are to be challenged and reshaped when we become disciples of King Jesus. In these verses Jesus use the form of argument 'If God cares for... then how much more will he care for you...' (see v26 and v29-30.) The key to combatting our worries is to focus on our Heavenly Father and how much he loves us!
    - **Summary verse - 'Do not worry...' (v25)**

- ... Don't worry about about food (v26-27)
- ... Don't worry about clothes (v28-30)
- Summary verses - 'Do not worry...' (v31-34) Notice the bookend structure that Jesus uses. This helps to make the big point clear to us. Notice too the parallel with 'do not store up...' in v19. For each negative command ('Do not...') there is a corresponding positive command (see v20 and v33.)

### **Tricky Bits**

#### • **What are treasures in heaven?**

- In a sense we have encountered this question before when we thought about the blessings on the kingdom in 5:3-12 and the rewards of our Heavenly Father in 6:1-18.)
- Here is Don Carson on what Jesus means by treasures in heaven;

*“The treasures in question are things which are the result of the divine approval and which will be lavished upon the disciples in the consummated kingdom. The treasures of the new heaven and the new earth are wonderful beyond our wildest expectation. Sometimes the pages of Scripture give us glimpses couched in glittering metaphor as the resources of language are called up to tell us of things still barely conceivable. At other times Scripture extrapolates the advance tastes we enjoy here, and pictures love undiluted, a way of life utterly sinless, integrity untarnished, work and responsibility without fatigue, deep emotions without tears, worship without restraint or disharmony or sham, and best of all the presence of God in an unqualified and unrestricted and personal way. Such treasures cannot be assailed by corrosion or theft.” (Carson.)*

#### • **How is the eye is the lamp of the body?**

- It seems that the whole person is portrayed as a room of a house. The eye is the lamp/ window providing light for the room. If you've got a a bad/unhealthy lamp then the room will be full of darkness.
- What then does Jesus mean by healthy/unhealthy? In other translations the words are good/bad. The NIV footnote suggests that the words have the sense of generous/stingy. Alternatively the word can mean good in the sense of 'undivided loyalty.' I think that this fits the context best because this is exactly the point that Jesus is making in v19-21 and v24.
- The good/healthy eye therefore is the one that is fixed on God and his kingdom seeking to exclusively serve him and store up treasure in his kingdom. Such a person is then full of light, they see and live clearly and correctly. In contrast the person who is not focused on Jesus and his kingdom may think that they have light but actually they are living their lives in darkness. This is even more tragic when such a person thinks that they are living in the light/ living the way life is to be lived.

#### • **Is it always wrong to worry?**

- Anxiety is a huge issue for many of us today so we need to be careful how we handle these verses. We need to be aware of the pastoral situation of the people in our group to help them apply these verses to their situations.
- There is a sense in which it is right for believers to worry. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul says, “I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” That word 'concern' is sometimes translated 'anxiety/worry.' Clearly in the context of 2 Corinthians 11 Paul's worry for the churches is a good concern. Similarly in

Philippians 2:20 Paul says that “I have no one else like [Timothy], who will show genuine concern (anxiety/worry) for your welfare.” In each case the worries are to do with other people and particularly their spiritual health. Such a concern is held up as a mark of godliness.

- In Matthew 6 Jesus is talking about a different set of worries. These worries are about ourselves not others, and about material needs rather than spiritual matters. Where we are worried about material needs we are to pray about them to God (Philippians 4:6) trusting that he is our Heavenly Father who cares for us (1 Peter 5:6-7.) Here then is the strategy that we need to overcome our worries and concerns. It is the same strategy that Jesus gives us in Matthew 6. Notice how Jesus combats our worries by challenging us to reflect on how much our Heavenly Father loves us (see v26 and v32.) We are to view our worries about our needs in light of how generous and loving our Heavenly Father is.

## **Big Idea Jesus wants our undivided loyalty and complete trust.**

### **Applications**

- **Are we really any different from everyone else?**
  - Jesus asks us some hard questions in this passage. What do we really treasure? Where is our loyalty? What are we working for? What are we chasing after? Can people see that we are part of Jesus’ kingdom? Are our treasures any different to everyone else’s? Who is your master? What would it look like for you to be devoted to Jesus? How would this change your attitude to earthly treasures?
- **Rejoice in the generosity and love of your Heavenly Father**
  - There are some very clear and hard hitting commands in this passage. It would be very easy to just hit people with these commands but this would probably leave people feeling beat up without effecting any real heart change. If we are to truly change what we treasure and entrust our worries to our Heavenly Father then our hearts need to be captivated by how generous and loving our Heavenly Father is and how wonderful and far superior his kingdom is. If your group gets nothing else from the study we want them to go away with a sense that their Heavenly Father loves them and will provide all that they need. We want people to leave with a sense that to prioritise Jesus’ kingdom over everything else is wise.

## Questions

**Starter - When you hear the phrase 'treasures on earth' what sort of things come to mind?**

*You could do this as a brainstorming exercise with a sheet of paper encouraging people to just shout out whatever comes to mind. The aim is just to get people thinking and talking.*

**1. Which of these treasures do you find most enticing?**

*Once we have a list of different things we then want to turn to think personally. There might be general agreement or different people might be more tempted by some than others. That's fine. We simply need to be honest in recognising that we are those who naturally store up treasures on earth. We mustn't approach a passage like this as if we are those who don't struggle in this area.*

**2. Think of someone who knows you well who is not a Christian. What would they say you treasure? Which master would they say you are serving? Why?**

*You could do this question instead of the previous question or you could ask both. The aim here is to help us reflect honestly on the things that we really do treasure. As Christians we would love to think that we're different from everyone else, but how different are we? We're trying to gently and lovingly help one another to see where our treasure and therefore where are hearts really are?*

**3. What reasons does Jesus give for being devoted to God?**

*Here we want to encourage the group to look at v19-24 and draw out what is so great about Jesus and his kingdom. What are the dangers of not being devoted to God as our master? What is so much better about treasure in heaven? What impact does this have on us?*

**4. What do you think it would look like for us to be truly devoted to Jesus? How would it change our day to day life?**

*Try and be as concrete and specific as possible here. How would it affect our shopping habits? Our budgeting? Our priorities on our time? Our dreams and aspirations for our children? Our careers? Our retirements?*

**5. What sort of things do we worry most about? Why?**

*Here our focus shifts to v25-34. People might be a bit slow to open up so you might need to be prepared to get the conversation going. As always try to be as honest and specific as possible. The group need to see you leading in openness and honesty.*

**6. How will this passage help us to combat these worries?**

*Here we want to help one another focus on the loving goodness and care of our Heavenly Father. Spend time reflecting on how much he loves us. How has he demonstrated his love? How valuable are we to God? This is probably the key part of the whole study so make sure you don't rush it.*

**7. What will it look like to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness in these situations?**

*In some ways this is quite similar to question 4. This time take some of the worries that people have expressed and begin to think about what it seeking first God's kingdom and righteousness will look like in these worrying situations. In particular what will it look like to seek first his righteousness? What does righteousness and godliness look like here?*