

# **BaptistWay Bible Series for Feb. 12: Don't put anything else on God's throne**

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## **BaptistWay Bible Series for Feb. 12**

### **Don't put anything else on God's throne**

- Luke 18:18-30

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During the Christmas holiday, our small group from church was exploring ways we can stay focused on Jesus during the Christmas season. This shouldn't be such a task, but it becomes easy to get distracted with how much money we spend and so on. We often are so dependent on money to live and in the holidays that we lose the spirit of giving.

Our group understood that we, like others, easily hold onto material things like priceless treasures. We realized that each of us must work on not letting even the best of intentions distract us from the kingdom of God in our lives—no matter what day of the year it is. For the kingdom of God cannot be obtained through gifts, acts of kindness or even the best of intentions.



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The rich ruler in Luke 18:18-30 was having trouble seeing past his distractions, too. He was looking for a way to have the kingdom of God along with the assurance of his worldly treasures. He wanted to somehow know for sure that he had security in eternal life.

But Jesus gave the rich ruler the one task that required him to do something he could not do. Jesus required him to get rid of all his wealth. “Who then can be saved,” the bystanders asked. “No one can, by his or her own achievements,” Jesus answered.

Salvation cannot be earned but only given as a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Jesus doesn’t ask all his followers to sell everything they have, although that may be his will for some. Jesus called the man to give up the very thing that gave him power and security in life. What God promised the rich ruler was power, comfort and security, unlike he ever had. If he would give up his own worldly treasure, he would find the “true treasure” in Jesus Christ.

Money is not the only possession it is easy to replace God with, but it seems to be the most common. According to Jesus’ example of a camel passing through the eye of a needle, it seems to be the hardest thing to give up for God because it represents power, authority and success in each of our

lives. We need money. Our lives depend on it, don't they?

It often is difficult for any person with money, especially people who have lots of it, to see their need for God, for they are powerless to save themselves from eternal separation from him. People who are rich in money, success, talent and wisdom, sometimes see no need for him because they are rich in everything the world says is needed. So why do we need God?

Peter spoke up, on behalf of the other disciples, to give examples of how they had left their homes, their jobs and all they knew to be "life," for the sake of following Jesus. Jesus responded by assuring them again that the point of following him was the ability to know more about and experience more of God.

Any Christian who gives up something to follow Jesus will find better reward in both this life and the eternal life to come. In other words, any Christian who chooses to follow God will find no greater reward in the world than he/she will find in the kingdom of God. Jesus never promised that investing your life in following him would be easy or even bring material reward, which is why following him—for the rich ruler and wealthy people today—is so hard.

God did promise, though, an abundance of rewards for following him that would far outweigh any material award we can imagine.

The truth is, until you experience what it is like to give up those things you put in place of God, you will never experience what is like to be satisfied in the kingdom of God. We must ask God what he wants us to give up and then do it when he shows us.

But what is it that he wants us to give up? It will probably be different for each of us. However, we do know that Jesus calls all of us to completely give up anything that has become more important to us than God. These

are the “everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” we are called in Hebrews 12:1 to throw off.

We should not worry about what we have given up and sacrificed. Rather, we should reflect on what we have gained from the sacrifice and show gratitude to God for it. God offers us everything of eternal importance.

As my pastor has said a hundred times, “you can’t outgive God!” Jesus, in Matthew 6:33, calls us to look first for the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness. May those be the most important things in our lives.

### **Discussion questions**

- Is anything more valuable to you than money? What is it?
- What should you do with that in order to put God first in your life?
- How is putting God’s kingdom first shown in your life?

