

Connect360: God or Wealth?

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- *Lesson 7 in the Connect360 unit "Kingdom Power: The Sermon on the Mount" focuses on Matthew 6:19-24.*

In Matthew 6:19-20, Jesus used a form of the same word as both a verb "store" and noun "treasures." Do not treasure for yourselves treasures on earth. Both verbs are in the present tense, indicating continuous action and are imperative commands. First it is stated negatively, "Do not store treasures on earth." Then it is used positively, "But store for yourselves treasures in heaven."

What was Jesus saying when he commanded us not to store treasures on earth? Are material things unimportant? Should we not buy houses, land, clothes or other life necessities? At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of building a house on a solid foundation. In Matthew 25, Jesus praised those who share food and clothing to those who are in need. When we feed the hungry, we are feeding Christ.

God created us as finite creatures living in a physical world that requires food, clothing and shelter. God expects us to provide for our families. The Apostle Paul wrote work is ordained by God and a parent who fails to provide for his own family is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8). Yet, in the very next chapter he instructed Timothy: "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:9-11).

Jesus' emphasis is not on having possessions but on treasuring them. God did not give us this command to restrict us or to use this as some kind of test of allegiance. As God of all eternity, God recognizes the impermanence of physical possessions and the destruction that comes to those who spend their lives focusing on acquiring them. A sign of wealth for first century folks was clothing. Jesus addressed the obvious. How foolish it is to put your trust in something even a moth can destroy or a thief can steal.

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