

“The Heart Test”—The Blessed Life (2 of 4)

EKG Test: James & Chuck Video

We’re in a series called, “**The Blessed Life**,” and last week we took “*The Priority Test*,” and asked the question, “*Who’s on first?*” Who’s first in your life? You or God?

You see, God wants our “*First*” and God wants our “*Best*.” When we give God the *First* and the *Best* of what we have, we’re *Blessed*.

To be *Blessed* means to be on the *receiving* end of God’s good life for us. Those blessings are both tangible and intangible. My family and I made a choice long ago to put God first in the area of our finances and He has blessed us beyond measure. We’re living ***The Blessed Life!***

However, if we don’t give God our “*First*” or our “*Best*”—if we choose to rob God of what is rightfully his—we’re stepping outside of God’s perfect plan for our lives and we’ll end up Cursed.

To be *Cursed* means to *step out* of God’s plan for your life and try to live life by your own rules—especially when it comes to money and possessions. The end result is pain and bondage—a cursed life. Many Christians I see today live this way. They step outside of God’s will in the area of money and possessions. Why do they do this? They take their eyes off of God and put it on this world and all that it offers us. We choose this world over God’s world.

Today we’re going to pick up that theme with another test—“**The Heart Test**” as we ask, “*Who do you love?*” “*Who get’s top billing in your heart?*”

Last week we opened up the O.T. to see what it had to say about our money and possessions.

Today we’re going to the N.T. to see what it has to say about our money and possessions.

Let’s jump right in and ask this question. . . What Did Jesus Say About Money?

In a nutshell, this is Jesus’ message: “*You can’t take it with you, but you can send it on ahead!*”

Look at his Sermon on the Mount: “*Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*” Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT) Did you catch it? Jesus didn’t say, “*Where your heart is, there your treasure is.*” No, Jesus knew that attached to our treasure is a rope that pulls our heart along. Jesus just gave “***The Treasure Test!***”

Where is your gaze? Where is your focus? Where is your energy? Where is your time? Wherever it is, that’s your treasure. And if you discover where your treasure is, you don’t even have to ask about your heart—it’s right there! ***Our treasure is tethered to our heart!***

Sometimes people get upset when we talk about money. Do you know why? Because our money tells us where our heart really is! *Who likes to be confronted with the truth of our heart?*

Look what Jesus says a few verses later: “*No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.* Did you catch it? What? With Jesus it’s an *either/or*, not a *both/and!!!*

“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God

above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” Matthew 6:24-33 (NLT)

Let’s look at another passage: *“Then someone called from the crowd, ‘Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father’s estate with me.’*

‘Jesus replied, ‘Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?’ Then he said, ‘Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.’

“Then he told them a story: ‘A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all my crops.’ Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I’ll sit back and say to myself, ‘My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!’” (Sounds like a good money manager, BUT!)

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?’ (I do a lot of funerals, but I’ve never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul! After the multi-billionaire, Howard Hughes, died, someone asked his lawyer this question: “How much did he leave?” The answer? “All of it!”)

“Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God.” Luke 12:13-21 (NLT)
(Would God consider you a fool?)

Let’s keep going: *“If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people’s things, why should you be trusted with things of your own?”*

“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” Luke 16:10-13 (NLT)

With Jesus, **“Trust is a must!”** It’s all about Trust. How much can God trust you?

*Our second question today. . . **What Did the Apostle Paul Say About Money?***

*“Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. (Now, even though it sounds like he’s talking about farming, he’s really talking about money here. Paul is saying that there is a “The Law of the Harvest.” The “Law of the Harvest” says, “What you sow is what you reap, and if you sow a lot, you get a lot, and if you sow a little, you get a little.” It’s just what every farmer knows. I think you know it too. If you sow *gossip*, you get back a lot of discord in your friendships. If you sow *rebellion*, you get back broken relationships. If you’re a farmer and you sow seeds, you’re going to get a crop. If you so a lot of seeds, you’ll get a large crop. If you sow only a few seeds, you’ll get only a small crop.) “You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’*

ILLUS: Flowers for MEL (You can give without loving, but you can’t love without giving!)

If you’re married raise your hand. Now, is it enough to look at your spouse and say, “*I love you?*” No! That’s good. That’s nice. That’s romantic. But your spouse wants you to back it up.

If you’re married you should be “*Saying it.*” But you’re better not stop there! You’d better “*Show it!*” It’s the same with God. Some of you are good at “*saying it,*” but bad at “*showing it.*”

•So you say, “I love you God!” And what does God say back? “Show me the money!” That’s right!

“And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 (NLT)

Who ever heard of a farmer who had a bucket of seed and who said, “*You know, I’ve got all this seed, and I’m a little bit afraid to sow the seed, because then I won’t have the seed anymore. And then what’ll happen if I need this seed?*” You don’t hear that because the farmer knows that “*If I want a crop, I’ve got to sow my seed.*” It doesn’t benefit the farmer to hoard the seed. And neither does it do any good to say, “*Oh God, please give me a crop but I don’t want to sow any seed. And God, I’m just trusting you to get involved. I want to walk out there one day and I want to see corn, God, but I want to hold on to my seed because I might need my seed.*” The Law of the Harvest applies to your giving. How Blessed do you want to be? *Me? I want God’s Blessings in my life!*

Money is God’s litmus test of love. (It’s when you put your money where your mouth is!)

Money in, and of, itself isn't bad. Maybe you've been blessed with a lot of money. That's a great thing—as long as you understand why God has allowed you to have it.

Paul wrote: *"Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content."*

"But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. (It's natural to want it and want it now; it's also a sign of immaturity. If you can't pay cash, you can't afford it—and you probably don't really need it! Don't get caught in the trap of debt!) For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:6-10 (NLT) (I've seen it again and again!)

More of Paul's words to us: *"Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. (If you were to take an evaluation right now of how all of your money was used in 2007, how much of it would be classified under, "used for good, given to those in need, was shared with others"? That's why God gives us our money in the first place!) By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life."* 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (NLT) Paul is saying the exact thing that Jesus said, *"You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead!"* How do you do this? Use your money for good!

One of the greatest verses in the Bible talks about how much a "giver" God really is: *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."* John 3:16 (NLT)

We serve a God who is defined by generosity. Nothing that we can ever give will compare to his gift to us.

God, at his core, is a giver! God is generous and loves to give us good things. God is not a cosmic ogre who delights in watching us mess up. No! God is Good and God is a Giver!

We, on the other hand, are natural born Takers! We enter this world and at our core reject God and take what is rightfully God's. **GOSPEL** God wants to recreate your heart from that of a "Taker" and make it into a "Giver" so you can be as generous and loving as God, himself.

*So, go ahead, take... **The Heart Test: God vs. Money***

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew 6:24 (NLT)

Which God do you serve? Be honest!

And if you keep doing this year after year where will that lead you? To a life of being BLESSED by God or CURSED by money?