

PART THREE: MEMBERS ONLY

At one time or another, all of us have based our self esteem on the labels sewn into our clothes. Member's Only. Izod. Abercrombie. Labels identify things—and people. We can choose to base our identity on the labels sewn into our jeans, what kind of car we drive, or where our house is located. But when we allow our stuff to define us, we don't experience the life that God wants us to experience. We don't experience satisfaction. Jesus knew this. That's why so much attention is placed on money and stuff. Jesus talked more about that topic than He did heaven, hell, prayer, or faith combined!

BIG IDEA: Don't let what you don't have rob you of what you do have

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the clothing labels you wanted to wear when you were in High School? When you weren't wearing the newest or the coolest, how did that make you feel?
2. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 12:13-21.*

By this time the crowd, unwieldy and stepping on each other's toes, numbered into the thousands. Someone out of the crowd said, "Teacher, order my brother to give me a fair share of the family inheritance." He replied, "Mister, what makes you think it's any of my business to be a judge or mediator for you?" Speaking to the people, he went on, "Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot." Then he told them this story: "The farm of a certain rich man produced a terrific crop. He talked to himself: 'What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest.' Then he said, 'Here's what I'll do: I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well! You've got it made and can now retire. Take it easy and have the time of your life!' "Just then God showed up and said, 'Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods—who gets it?' "That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God." Luke 12:1, 13-21 (Message)

3. In response to the man barking an order to Jesus, Jesus decides to tell a *parable* (a story with a point). What is this man's problem? His solution? Why is he a fool?
4. In your own words, what is the Big Idea of this parable?
5. Current advertising in our culture is dedicated to making us think Luke 12:15 is wrong. What differences in lifestyle result from believing Jesus verses the advertisements?
6. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 12:22-34.*

He continued this subject with his disciples. "Don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or if the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your inner life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the ravens, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, carefree in the care of God. And you count far more. "Has anyone by fussing before the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? If fussing can't even do that, why fuss at all? Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They don't fuss with their appearance—but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? "What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don't be afraid of missing out. You're my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself. "Be generous. Give to the poor. Get yourselves a bank that can't go bankrupt, a bank in heaven far from bankrobbers, safe from embezzlers, a bank you can bank on. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being." Luke 12:22-34 (Message)

7. How does this relate to Luke 12:13-21? What does Jesus tell the disciples *not* to do? Why? What does Jesus urge them to do instead? Why? What will be the result?

8. What are some of the “treasures” or possessions in your life currently distracting you from focusing on God? What specific things can you do to remove these distractions?
9. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 12:33.*

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10. All of us can use money and stuff to define our worth. What is Jesus’ answer to this dilemma?
11. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 12:34.*

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12. What are some examples in your life of your heart following your stuff?
13. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 16:13.*

“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 16:13 (NLT)

14. How does our stuff compete with our devotion to God?
15. Has there been a time in your life when you decided to put your trust in God rather than in money. If so, what did that experience teach you about God?
16. *With your Bible or Bible App, read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.*

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. 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)

17. When you grow in your relationship with Christ, it often results in becoming unexplainably content with what we have. Are you more content today than you were last year? How has your relationship with Jesus in the last year affected your level of contentment?
18. What does your bank account say about your worship? What does your giving say about your relationship with God? What does your giving say about what you believe about the Bible?

GOING DEEPER

Read Ecclesiastes 5:1-20. This passage explores the futility of wealth and how it does not lead to true happiness.

- How should a person go into the house of God? (5:1)
- How did Solomon encourage us to conduct ourselves in the house of God? (5:2-3)
- What did Solomon say about vows made to God? (5:4-6)
- Why should we stand in awe of God? (5:7)
- What should not surprise us? (5:8-9)
- What grievous evil did Solomon notice? (5:13-17)
- What is good and proper for a person to do? (5:18)
- What sort of experience did Solomon describe as a gift from God? (5:19)
- What does this verse say happens to the person who has wealth and possessions? (5:20)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

What is one thing you can change today in your life that will help shift your focus away from money and possessions and back towards God? What can you do this week to accept and better appreciate the things God has given to you?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:34