

How to Buy Friends

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A COMMENDABLE CRIME

In Luke, we read one of Jesus' stranger parables, strange because it ends with Jesus commending a man who cheated his boss out of \$20,000.

There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ²So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' ³The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg-- ⁴I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' ⁵So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' ⁷Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' ⁸The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. - Luke 16:1-8 NIV

This manager is doing a lousy job, maybe embezzling. He gets his pink slip, but before goes, he bribes these guys by fiddling with the books and reducing their debts.

- The boss catches him and says, "That was pretty clever."
- Jesus end by saying, "Go and do likewise." !?!

You know that bank robber who got away? People of the light should be more like him!

Q: Why does Jesus hold this guy up as an example?

A: Because there is something commendable about what he did.

- Even in his deceitfulness, there is something for us to learn.

Sometimes it's the Scriptures that make the least sense that we need to pay the closest attention to. They may be strange they're something we've never thought of.

- They're new territory.

This passage certainly is new territory: Jesus is teaching us how to buy friends.

- He is teaching us the eternal value of money
- He is showing us how to make money last forever.

THE VALUE OF MONEY

The value of money does not lie in the things it can buy. Things are not necessarily good or bad, but they are temporary, passing.

- I was so excited to get my new laptop computer.
- How does God view my excitement?
- He must see it as I see Grace's excitement over a washcloth.

It's not bad, but its value falls so short of the gifts I want to give her. The laptop's value falls far short of His real gifts.

- Grace still enjoys her washcloth as much as I enjoy my laptop.

Money has influence that is out of proportion to its purchasing power. We use it to buy power, security, or acceptance.

- When we use it for power, for security, or for acceptance, money no longer serves us, we serve it.

Jesus was using this parable to teach us the real value of money. It is impossible to understand the parable without looking at what he said after it.

- Jesus teaches us three ways that money can have eternal value.

1. Money is valuable because it tests our priorities.

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. – Luke 16:13 NASB

MAMMON

Q: What is the difference between mammon and money?

We got the word English “mammon” directly from Jesus’ teachings in this passage. It is a very negative Aramaic word for money, filthy lucre.

- Mammon may have been the name of a pagan god of money.
- Mammon is a rival god – we either serve it or serve God.

Mammon is an unusual word; the only time it occurs in the Bible is in this teaching. Jesus uses it because He wants to impress on us the danger of money.

- Few things can pull us away from God like money.

...the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. – 1 Timothy 6:10 NIV

There’s two things about money that will reveal if we are serving God or mammon, because these two things test our priorities:

- The compromises we make to get money.
- The purchases we make once we have it.

Take out a bill and look at it. How many times do you think it has been used to do harm? How many times to do good?

- What is it going to be used on next?
2. Money is valuable because it teaches us to be trustworthy.

In that same passage, Jesus said:

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? – Luke 16:10-11 NIV

Jesus is making two important points:

- 1) Worldly wealth is not real riches.
- 2) Money prepares us for real riches – it is the “very little.”

- When you see money you see this [dollar bill].
- This is what God sees [Monopoly money].

Money isn't real riches, but it is important. It teaches us how to use real treasure.

- How we treat money shows God if He can trust us with things of real value.
3. Money is valuable because it can be invested eternally.

The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. – Luke 16:8 NIV

Jesus used the manager as an example because he was shrewd with money. Being shrewd is a good thing. It means to be wise, to look ahead, invest for the future.

- The manager was shrewd because he bought friends.
- But he was unwise because he chose a short-term investment.
- We are called to make eternal investments with our money.

There are two key ways we can invest our money eternally. The first one is obvious:

- 1) Support the work of the kingdom – at home and abroad through tithes, offering, and missions.

The second pushes into new territory:

- 2) Buy friends.

I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. – Luke 16:9 NIV

Money can be wrongly used for power, security, or acceptance. But when we use money to convey God's love to another human being, we are making an eternal investment.

When I was 14, I had a Christian leader buy me a Coke that cost 50¢ in worldly wealth. I remember holding it and thinking how much value it had, what that act meant to me.

- Can you remember a time when some gave you something that had great value to you, regardless of the cost?

Buying friends is not currying favor for your own benefit. It's not haphazardly giving all your money away.

- Buying friends is intentionally spending money on others in a way that shows them God's love.

[Invite ushers forward] I want to give you a gift; I want to give you all \$20. (Don't report to Parker Brother or Secret Service)

In the back, we have a special treat for sale: carrot cake made fresh for you, delicious, moist. It only costs \$20 a piece, \$20 Josh dollars.

- You can only buy a piece for someone else.

The point is this: We should spend our money wisely, looking for ways to impact others for the kingdom of God. When we do this, they will welcome us when we get to heaven.

Say this with me:

- You can't it with you, but you can send it on ahead.