

RANDY ALCORN

the TREASURE PRINCIPLE

DISCOVERING THE SECRET
of JOYFUL GIVING



the TREASURE PRINCIPLE

RANDY ALCORN

Learning Activities and Leader Guide
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week 1

Investing in Eternity

Hidden Treasure

day 1



A first-century Hebrew walks alone on a hot afternoon, staff in hand. His shoulders are stooped, sandals covered with dirt, tunic stained with sweat. But he doesn't stop to rest. He has pressing business in the city.

He veers off the road into a field, seeking a shortcut. The owner won't mind. Travelers are permitted this courtesy. To keep his balance in the uneven field, the man thrusts his staff into the dirt. Thunk! The staff strikes something hard.

He stops, wipes his brow, and pokes again. Thunk! *Something's under there, and it's not a rock*, he says to himself.

The traveler can't afford to linger, but his curiosity won't let him go. He jabs at the ground. Something reflects a sliver of sunlight. He drops to his knees and starts digging.

Five minutes later he's uncovered it—a case fringed in gold. By the looks of it, the chest has been there for decades. Heart racing, he pries off the rusty lock and opens the lid.

Gold coins! Jewelry! Precious stones of every color! A treasure more valuable than anything he's ever imagined.

Hands shaking, the traveler inspects the coins, issued in

Rome more than 70 years ago. Surely the current landowner has no clue that the treasure is here.

What do you think the traveler will do?

- Grab the chest and get out of there!
- Bury the chest, but mark the spot.
- Take the contents and bury an empty chest.
- Walk away and get no further involved.

The traveler closes the lid, buries the chest, and marks the spot. He turns around, heading home—only now he’s skipping like a little boy, smiling broadly. As he races home, he thinks: *What an unbelievable find! I must have that treasure! But I can't just take it—that would be stealing. Whoever owns the field owns what's in it. But how can I afford to buy it? I'll sell my farm ... and crops ... all my tools ... my prize oxen. If I sell everything, that should be enough.*

From the moment of his discovery, the traveler’s life changes. The treasure captures his imagination and becomes the stuff of his dreams. It’s his reference point, his new center of gravity. With every step he has this treasure in mind.

Jesus captured this story in a single verse.

Underline what Jesus compared the treasure to.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE TREASURE, BURIED IN A FIELD, THAT A MAN FOUND AND REBURIED. THEN IN HIS JOY HE GOES AND SELLS EVERYTHING HE HAS AND BUYS THAT FIELD. *MATTHEW 13:44*

The parable of hidden treasure is one of many references Jesus made to the kingdom of heaven. It’s also one of His many references to money and possessions. In fact, 15 percent of everything Christ said relates to this topic—more than all of His combined teachings on heaven and hell.

Why do you think Jesus taught so much about money and material possessions?

Jesus emphasized money and possessions because He saw a fundamental connection between our spiritual lives and how we think about and handle money. We may try to divorce our faith and our finances, but God sees them as inseparable.

Years ago I came to this realization while reading Luke 3. John the Baptist was preaching to crowds of people who had gathered to hear him and be baptized.

Stop and read Luke 3:1-15 in your Bible.

Three different groups asked John what they should do to bear the fruit of repentance. When John told them to “‘produce fruit consistent with repentance’” (v. 8), each group asked him a very similar question.

What question did the crowds ask?

John’s response is found in verse 11: “‘The one who has two shirts must share with someone who has none, and the one who has food must do the same.’” This probably wasn’t the answer they expected. They probably felt confused and frustrated.

A second group asked John the same question.

Who was this group? _____

Write the word added to its question: _____

This group recognized John as a teacher. He answered, “‘Don’t collect any more than what you have been authorized’” (v. 13). Do you think they were satisfied with his answer?

What did they do?

- Scripture doesn't say.
- They left grumbling.

A third group, soldiers, asked John the same question.

How did John answer them in verse 14?

Each group had asked what it should do to demonstrate the fruit of spiritual transformation “‘consistent with repentance’” (v. 8). Yet each of John’s answers related to money and possessions. With remarkable spiritual discernment John pinpointed the specific need that was keeping each group from truly repenting and turning to God.

Draw lines between the columns to connect John’s answer to each group’s need.

Crowds	“ ‘Don’t take money from anyone by force or false accusation; be satisfied with your wages.’ ”
Tax collectors	“ ‘The one who has two shirts must share with someone who has none, and the one who has food must do the same.’ ”
Soldiers	“ ‘Don’t collect any more than what you have been authorized.’ ”

No wonder some in the crowd thought John was the Messiah. He spoke directly to their hearts!

After reading these verses, I realized that our approach to money and possessions isn’t just important. It’s central to our

spiritual lives. It's of such high priority to God that John the Baptist couldn't talk about spirituality without talking about how to handle money and possessions.

The connection between money and our spiritual lives is equally important for believers today. Gaining the kingdom of God is like discovering hidden treasure. Over the next four weeks you'll study Scriptures that teach you how to use money and possessions to invest in God's kingdom. You'll discover the infinite value of heavenly treasures over earthly ones and biblical keys for collecting treasures in heaven. And you'll get a glimpse of the joy that comes from investing in God's kingdom. The biblical principles I will share changed my life. I pray that they will do the same for you.

THE DAY IN REVIEW

Review today's lesson.

What was the most important concept you read today?

How will this truth challenge you to be like Christ?

Pray, asking God to use this study to help you value His kingdom as a priceless treasure and learn ways to invest in His kingdom. Write your prayer below.
