

Jacob's Well



Lesson Title: Loss and Grief—Setting Ourselves up for Grief



Key Concept: In a broken world, loss and grief are inevitable. What we value can be a source of grief at its loss, even if it will be replaced by something better.



Scriptures:

²¹“If you wish to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²²But when the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he was very rich.
(Matthew 19:21–22 *New English Translation*)

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.
(Matthew 6:33 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Genesis 13:2, 5–6; 24:35; 26:12; Numbers 32:1; Job 1:3, 10; 1 Kings 7:51; 10:26; 2 Chronicles 17:5; 32:27–29; Ecclesiastes 2:7–9; Hebrews 11:26; Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Timothy 6:10; 1 Samuel 2:7; Psalm 112:1–3; Proverbs 3:9–10; 10:22; Deuteronomy 6:10–12; Ezekiel 33:31; Psalm 17:14; Proverbs 23:5; Matthew 6:24; 13:22; Luke 12:15; 2 Corinthians 7:8–10; Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:9–10, 17; 2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15



Lesson Thoughts:

The rich young ruler set himself up to experience what he perceived as loss, no matter which decision he made. It is impossible to have two things if they are mutually exclusive. We cannot serve both God and mammon (money).

It is evident that God is not opposed to his people having wealth. Job, Abraham, David, Solomon, and others were noted in Scripture as wealthy without being rebuked for it. God is indeed the source of riches. Wealth is not evil in itself, but it can bring to light an inappropriate response within us. Money is not evil, but the love of it is (1 Timothy 6:10). Jesus loved the young man and allowed him the

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opportunity to gain imperishable riches by showing him *his* path into the kingdom. Note that the Commandments Jesus first mentioned didn't include the primacy of God, the prohibition of idolatry, or the restraint of covetousness. The young ruler had a grasp of the commands that controlled actions, but failed in obedience to those that restricted ungodly motives and desires.

This ruler thought he wanted eternal life, but when Jesus presented him with his own route to this goal, he may have esteemed it too much to pay. His individualized sacrifice was not required of the general population. But to him, it represented things possibly more valuable than the currently intangible goal which had originally brought him to Jesus.

This story leaves us without a clear resolution. We know he went away grieving on account of his riches. He may have been sorrowful about not being able to have eternal life because he would not let go of his present ease. He may have sorrowed because in choosing eternal life he was going to lose his worldly comfort. In this he may have been like Abraham on the way to Mount Moriah, grieved at the impending loss of Isaac, yet trusting enough to follow through.

What we value in this world can be a source of grief at its loss, even if it will be replaced by something better. That same valued thing can result in grief if we retain it and thereby lose something of greater value. The very fact of having something valuable and the comfort of familiarity set us up to be vulnerable to the possibility of loss and its attendant grief. Holding too tightly can be painful.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) If being wealthy is wrong, why does God us give us the ability to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18)?
- 2) What do Jesus' comments to his disciples suggest about what the young ruler's decision may have been?
- 3) How appropriate is it to grieve the loss of something that was harmful?
- 4) What else might be an individual sacrifice needed to follow the Master?

Next Lesson: Dreams

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) In a study of the context Scriptures, what contrasts do you find between the acceptable and unacceptable relations to wealth?

- 2) In view of the unclear ending to this story, what might have been the result of each of the possible endings suggested in this lesson?

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Notes and Reflections, cont.