



Discipleship 101 New Believer Lesson #13 Treasuring What Matters Most

Based on the Book,
The Divine Conspiracy,
by Dallas Willard



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Introduction:

We can treasure God, or we can treasure the stuff of this world. Jesus invites us to make a decision, each and every day, to treasure what matters most.
Dallas Willard – *The Divine Conspiracy*

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)
The Bible term “heart” is best understood if we simply say “me.” It is the central citadel of a man’s personality. The heart is the altar of which the physical body is the outer court, and whatever is offered on the altar of the heart will tell ultimately through the extremities of the body. “Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

What do we brood on most, the blessings of God or God Himself? When we no longer seek God for His blessings, we have time to seek Him for Himself.
Oswald Chambers – *Our Lord on How to Think*

Treasuring God:

[“Where you treasure is, there your heart will be also”](#) – What do you treasure most?
Apprentices of Jesus treasure wisely, rightly, and well.

Jesus warns his apprentices in [Matthew chapter 6](#) of two desires that compete with and hinder the one true desire of living in constant interaction with God, and healthy growth in the kingdom:

- 1 – The desire to have the approval of others, and . . .
- 2 – The desire to find security in material wealth.

Humans are treasuring creatures. There are things, different for each of us, which we treasure jealously, even fiercely. If we didn’t do this, we wouldn’t be truly human. We naturally find comfort in surrounding ourselves with valued things, and what we value determines our identity. When we treasure our Savior, people can tell, and when we don’t treasure him, because our behavior doesn’t add up, they can really tell!



What is God like to you? Is he great, good, and awesome? What do you think about God? Are you afraid of him, or do you feel comfortable approaching him? Do others who know you fairly well know you feel this way?

When Moses brought the Israelites before God at Mt. Sinai, [the people were terrified of God and refused to come near](#), even though Moses invited them. Contrast that behavior with what the New Testament invites us into - [Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God . . . let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.](#)

The acid test for any theology is this: Is the God presented one that can be loved – heart, soul, mind, and strength? If the thoughtful, honest answer is, “*Not really*,” then we need to look elsewhere or deeper. It does not really matter how sophisticated intellectually or doctrinally our approach is if it fails to portray a God filled with incredible love, a God that is radiant, happy, friendly, accessible and totally competent before ordinary people. If our portrayal fails in this, because we have not treasured him appropriately, we do God’s kingdom and humanity a terrible disservice. We apprentices are, after all, known as [ambassadors](#) and [reconcilers](#). Both expressions involve communicating God’s thoughts, wishes, and ideas to the world around us, to those who don’t yet know him as they should. We must winsomely communicate who he is to others, and a great part of that communication is non-verbal. People watch how we behave, know what we profess, and perceive any discrepant behavior.

An Audience of One:

Before we can properly communicate our loving God to others, we need to understand who our real audience is – Jesus. In the Sermon on the Hill, he gives us the key:

“Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you don't make a performance out of it. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won't be applauding.” [Matthew 6:1](#) The Message

When Christ is our audience, we care little about the opinions of others, and ironically, they see us in the very best light possible. In the Sermon on the Hill in [Matthew 6:1-18](#), Jesus deals with this issue of his apprentices maintaining appearances, putting on a pretense for the public. In these verses, Jesus warns his audience about these false, self-serving, outward theatrics in several areas: Acts of charity, prayer, and fasting.

These acts themselves are actually very good things to do as an apprentice of Jesus, but if the motivation is not the goodness of the doing, but rather, the being seen and being lifted up in the opinion of others, then it’s just prideful – it is sin. Jesus isn’t saying you must hide these events in secrecy ([verse 3](#), [verse 6](#), and [verse 18](#)), thus creating a “*thou shalt not*” command. He is simply warning you to guard your heart in terms of motivations, and so eliminate from your nature the warning of [Lesson #12](#). You must trust Jesus enough to nurture in yourself a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Doing your good deeds in secret means that the opinion of others is not important to you – the opinion of God is. Jesus is teaching us as apprentices of his in the first part of Matthew chapter 6 to wean ourselves from the need to have human approval. This **discipline** of secrecy will help us break the grip human opinions have on us. A **discipline** is an activity we control that enables us to do what we cannot control by direct effort. A **disciple** of Jesus regularly practices **discipline** in his/her life.



How do you feel about doing good things for God that others may never see? Are you OK with that, or is it troubling that you will only be seen “in secret” by God?

In [Matthew 6:1-18](#), Jesus’ first two “assignments” involve [giving](#) and [prayer](#). He wants us to participate in them with the heart of a disciple, because **how we do** at giving and prayer tell much about **how we are thinking** about the kingdom of God. So many churches and Christian teachings about finances place this lesson far along in a believer’s curriculum, but in the Sermon on the Hill, Jesus lays it out at the beginning; there is great meaning in his priority. Martin Luther is credited with saying, “*There are three conversions necessary for a person to be wholly converted – conversion of the mind, conversion of the heart, and conversion of the purse.*” It seems Jesus agrees with this thought as well.

He is watching to see if we understand that everything we have is really his, and that he has a great deal more than we do – he has everything we need. Thinking along these lines, thinking with a biblical worldview, gives an apprentice great freedom in deciding how to best use his money, time, and resources.

What Is Your True Resource?:

Consider the [twenty-third psalm](#), and the audacity of saying, “*I shall not want.*” You are really saying, “*I shall lack nothing because of the goodness of God.*” Think of the disciples sent out by Jesus ([Luke 9:1-6](#)) where he told them to take no money, no extra clothes, and no food. They were to rely on God’s provision for everything. Complete trust in the kingdom of God to supply everything you need is the point of a mature apprentice of Jesus. And the fact that God will supply everything you need is, again, the goodness of God on display.



How far do you have to go to feel comfortable resting solely on God’s provision in your life? Are there other apprentices of the Lord whom you look to in this regard as truly resting on the complete provision of the kingdom of heaven?

Read the [twenty-third Psalm](#) to gain a greater understanding of the goodness of God.

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.*
- 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.*
- 3 He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.*
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.*
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever.*

In the valley where death is hanging over your head, the secret treasure we possess that takes away all our fears, doubts, and worry is that **he is with you**. That is the treasure of limitless value – God’s presence and God’s goodness.

Here, today, right now in the kingdom of God, my enemy is right there with me, but I have an abundance of food and no upset stomach, even in the midst of threats. Being filled with God’s goodness, I might even offer my enemy a bite to eat!

A Word About Fasting:

Jesus knows that when we learn to fast “in secret” for purposes of disciplining our bodies to seek his kingdom first, we also learn to draw upon the resources of the invisible yet powerfully-present kingdom of heaven to sustain us. [When Jesus fasted in the wilderness](#) for forty days, his reply to Satan in the midst of temptation was profound. Jesus said, “**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**” That very same word of God still sustains us in so many ways:

“This Son (Jesus) perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says - powerful words!” [Hebrews 1:3](#)

“I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.” [Psalm 3:5](#)

“Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul.” [Psalm 54:4](#)

God is the energy that keeps everything going:

“He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together.” [Colossians 1:17](#)

This God-energy exists and can be drawn upon in the close-at-hand kingdom of heaven. God invented energy, he understands its uses and our need of it, and can provide mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical energy for all our needs. When we fast, not to be seen, but to see him, he rewards us with a closeness that we simply can't experience any other way. His word (the Greek word *rhema* in Matthew 4:4) is simply his spoken word, but recall from [Lesson #1](#), his spoken word created the entire universe *ex nihilo* - out of nothing; this *rhema* power will easily sustain you as you fast.

The Treasure Is Here & Now:

I can remember thinking the treasure of heaven as something available only in the great “by-and-by.” Like life insurance, it was only good after death had occurred. There is some truth to gaining something greater in heaven than we have on earth. Peter tells us that we have, “[an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.](#)” Moreover, Paul states emphatically that, “[to live is Christ, and to die is gain.](#)”

All this is true, yet the treasure of heaven is also very much available to us now, and apprentices of Jesus have an account to draw upon – today! Eternity, for a child of God, a child of the king, begins today, and so do its benefits. Storing up the treasure of eternity is the very best investment you can make. As I said at the beginning of this lesson, apprentices of Jesus treasure wisely, rightly, and well. In closing I now add that they treasure starting today!

See you in Lesson #14!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]