lifegroup

resource guide

for the week of 25 November

Poverty and affluence alike test the soul— albeit from opposite ends of the spectrum. We may cry out amidst poverty, “My God why have you forgotten me?” But God may cry out to us amidst our affluence, “My child, why have you forgotten me?” Both sift the soul looking for responsive obedience, sincere gratitude, and a confident trust in the promises of God…

It came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely… So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, “How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your father has given you? (Joshua 17.13; 18.3)

Aphorisms abound. “Don’t grow weary in well-doing…” “Good things come to those who wait…” In Joshua’s case it had taken 45 years to fulfill Gods promise that the family of Israel would possess the land God had sworn to Moses. At the seasoned age of 85, Joshua begins to divide up the Promised Land among the 12 tribes so they might possess their possession. He recognizes that there are still hostile tribal remnants that need to be defeated. However, he also understands that they pose no strategic threat to the distribution of the land according to God’s promise to His people.

Yet among the tedious real-estate records describing the divisions of land (Joshua 13.1-22.9) Joshua issues a prophetic challenge to the nation: “How long will you fail to take possession of your possession?” They had failed to take complete hold of the land that God had given them although their land stretched out before them.

Had God lost His power?

Had God reneged on His promises in any way?

Was He unwilling to keep His Word?

Had He laid aside His commands issued for their safety, security, and success?

Had He excused Himself from the scene?

Why, then, did they not confidently move forward?

The bottom line answer is that they grew complacent. “Enough already… we’ve won… we’re here… we’re strong… let’s be practical…” And so they, who had been slaves, enslaved a people because they wanted peace and prosperity. For the sake of ease and money they deliberately chose not to “possess their tomorrows” and instead enslaved themselves and others in the sinful patterns of their “yesterdays” (slavery in Egypt).

Dear ones, there is a challenging Kingdom warning here for God’s beloved. It is possible for us to enter our possession without possessing it for our own because we choose to stray from the lifeline of God’s promises. At issue is not the security of our salvation in Christ but the actualization of the powerful promises of God, within the life and community of a believer. These promises can shape our destiny if we will surrender ourselves to them and live consistently by them.

In Christ we have been promised more than land— we have been promised a Kingdom. Yet, like our ancestors, we make our peace with what is unclean in our land because we desire peace, ease, comfort, and greater wealth. Jesus cautioned that some of God’s beloved would bring “no fruit to maturity” because they are choked with worries, riches, and the pleasures of this life (Luke 8.14).

Israel’s failure to temporarily eschew peace and prosperity in order to hold fast to God’s promises sowed the seeds for future compromise, heartache, loss, grief, and division. Their families for generations to come lived under God’s love amidst the conflicting circumstances that their forebears created for them.

Be strong and courageous— do not fear! Cleanse your land of “Canaanites” and do not make peace with sin in your borders. Then you will enter /and/ possess the Kingdom God has bequeathed to you.

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

What is one of your earliest memories of being jealous?

Getting to know one another…

Reading Scripture together…

Exodus 20.17; 1Timothy 6.6-19… Covetous or Content?

*Exodus 20.17: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*

1 Timothy 6.6-19:  *But godliness with contentment is great gain. \*7\* For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. \*8\* But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. \*9\* Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. \*10\* For 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.*

*11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. \*12\* Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. \*13\* In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you \*14\* to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, \*15\* which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, \*16\* who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.*

*17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. \*18\* Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. \*19\* In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life*.

What? (does the Bible say?)

And so we come to the last word, the grand finale: You shall not covet. That's it? Somehow this command seems out of place. Does coveting even belong on the same list with idolatry, murder, theft and adultery? After all, it is simply a "thought crime." It inflicts no damage on others. Or does it? The tenth and final commandment, moving from action to thought, suggests new possibilities. It foreshadows a new law, one which will concern itself less with the hands than with the heart.

Why do you think this commandment is last?

What positive value does the 10th commandment reflect/promote?

How would you define "godliness with contentment"? Does this describe you? Why or why not?

Now what? (how will I think?)

Why is “coveting” a sin against our neighbor as well as a sin against God?

What is the difference between coveting and innocent desire? When is the desire for more money sinful or unhealthy? When is it right for you to want more money or something else?

How can we learn to be content with what we have? Is this difficult for you? Why or why not?

How can we command those who are rich not to put their hope in their riches? How wealthy do you have to be before this command applies to you?

What do you rely on money to do for you, and what do you rely on God for? Do you think you have the balance right? Explain.

So what? (what difference does it make?)

What can you do to store up treasure in heaven?

What practical steps can you take to cultivate contentment?

What would you stop doing if it were not for the love of money?

How can you more actively strive toward godliness with contentment in your present situation? How can your LifeGroup encourage you?

My prayer needs (write down in advance)

Which of the 10 Commandments did you find most challenging?

Praying for my group…