

Lesson 1: Where's Your Treasure?

What we want students to learn: That Jesus said it's impossible to both love our stuff and truly love God.

What we want students to do with what they've learned: To grasp that their stuff is fleeting; only the impact they have for God will go with them to heaven.

Scripture Focus: Matthew 6:19-24

Overview: Our culture puts a tremendous value on having stuff. And not just on having stuff, but being emotionally attached to our stuff. This message is played out in so many different aspects of our lives. We're told a certain car will make us happy. A certain brand will make us cool. A certain gadget will make us fulfilled. And so many of us buy into these messages wholeheartedly. Especially our teenagers. In this first lesson, you'll help your students learn exactly what Jesus said about the emotional importance we attach to our stuff. You'll begin to lay the foundation for your study of stuff by teaching your students that loving God and loving our stuff are two incompatible concepts.

Teacher Prep Video

The *Jesus And Stuff* Teacher Prep Videos are short videos designed to help you grasp the main points of the lessons as you prepare to teach.

To access your "Jesus And Stuff Lesson 1 Teacher Prep Video," click on the URL below.

- <https://youthministry360.com/jesus-and-stuff-teacher-prep>

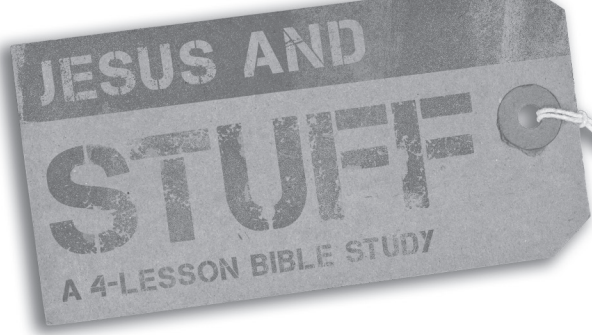
Bible Background

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide some context for the Scripture you'll be studying. The Details gives you background info for each book, The Setting informs you what's happening in and around the passage, and The Main Point gives you an overview of how the passage will be used in the lesson.

- **What do we mean by "context"?** In every ym360 Bible study lesson, you'll notice we make a point to encourage you to provide the context for the passages you study. By "context" we mean at the very least helping students know who wrote the book, when it was written, and why it was written.
- **What's The Big Deal?** When we teach the Bible without giving context, students don't get a "big picture" understanding of the story of the Bible. But this view is vital to grasping the story of God's plan of redemption for humankind. As you teach, use the Bible Background to help summarize the context.

The Details

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's gospel being written in the late 50's or 60's AD, though there are some who think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.
- **Purpose:** Matthew was writing to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.



The Setting

Matthew 6 comes in the beginning of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount serves as a sort of in-depth picture of the moral expectations of God's children. Jesus spent the Sermon on the Mount contrasting the current, religious understanding of faith practiced by the Jews of His day, with God's definition of what it means to be a child of God. It would have been revolutionary teaching to His first century audience.

The Main Point

The main point of the lesson will be made by focusing on verses 6:21 and 6:24. Both of these verses combine to lay the theological foundation for how we, as Christ-followers, are to view our stuff. In verse 21, Jesus makes a very important statement: if we love our stuff (earthly possessions), our heart will be on earthly pursuits and not godly things. Jesus provides the reason for this in verse 24 when He says that it is literally impossible for us to love God and to love money. For our purposes, it's helpful not to think of money here in a literal sense, but as representative of possessions in general. Through this lesson, you'll help your students begin to re-think how they view their stuff and what importance it has on their lives.

Lesson Plan

The Lesson Plan contains three elements: An introductory activity called The Lead In; the Bible study section called The Main Event; an application-focused segment called The Last Word.

The Lead In

- **Goal:** To help students begin thinking about competing interests and how impossible it is to be on both sides.
- **Set-Up:** All you'll need is a dry-erase board, or some other way to make a list, and something to write with.

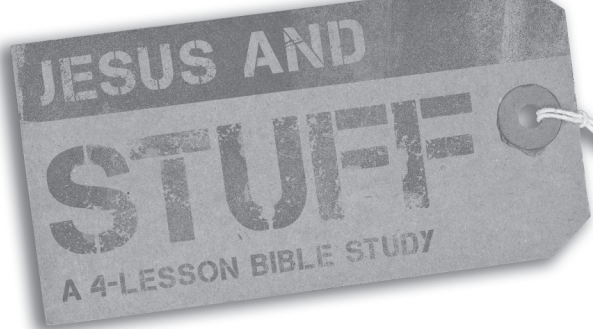
BEGIN by explaining to students that you're going to be starting a four-week study on what Jesus has to say about our stuff. But before you really jump into it, explain that you're going to be doing a little exercise to get everyone thinking in the right direction.

THEN, lead students to begin brainstorming a list of things that are completely opposed to one another. For example, you might start your list with "dogs and cats." The list could include sports teams, foods, people groups, fashion, and so on. Work with your students to build this list until they run out of ideas.

NEXT, have them vote as a class to pick the three groups that are most decidedly opposed to one another, the groups whose two sides simply would never get along. Circle these groups.

THEN, lead students in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **What is it about these opposing groups that make them so incompatible with one another?**
 - o Answers will vary based on the groups you've chosen.
- **What are the odds that someone could be a fan or a member of both opposing groups? For instance, why wouldn't someone be a fan of both the Red Sox and Yankees? Or why wouldn't someone be shy and super outgoing?**



- o Answers will vary, and students may have a hard time determining the answer. They may say something like, “You just can’t be a fan of both.”
- **Choose one of the pairs you’ve circled and ask students what would happen (or how others would react) if a person found themselves loving both pairs of opposite groups.**
 - o Answers will vary.

FINALLY, transition to the Main Event by saying something like this:

- **This lesson is the first on a four-lesson look at what Jesus had to say about our stuff. In today’s lesson, we’re going to see where Jesus picks up the very same thread we started here, namely, the idea that there are often groups of things where we can’t have an allegiance to both pairs. We have to choose. And Jesus challenges us to choose well. Let’s see exactly what He’s talking about.**

The Main Event

- **Goal:** To help students understand that it’s impossible to both love our stuff and truly love God.
- **Set Up:** None needed.

FIRST, before you get started, have students turn to Matthew 6 while you provide them with the background of the passage. Reference some of the information in the Details and Setting section of the Bible Background. When you’ve helped them know a little bit of the context for this passage, read or have a student read Matthew 6:19-24. Then, lead students in a discussion. Ask something like:

- **Let’s focus on verses 19-21. What exactly is Jesus talking about in verse 19? Treasure? Thieves? Sounds like the plot to a Pirate movie. What’s Jesus trying to say here?**
 - o Answer: When Jesus says “treasure,” He’s talking about our material things. Our money. Our stuff. The things we surround ourselves with.
- **And the whole “moth and rust” bit . . . What’s Jesus mean by that?**
 - o Answer: Jesus is setting up a comparison of earthly stuff that is physical and can therefore break, get old, or get stolen, and heavenly things, which we’ll get to in a minute.
- **Let’s modernize this idea of treasure for a second. When you think about your stuff, what comes to mind? What are some of your favorite possessions?**
 - o Answers will vary. Allow students to share as they will.

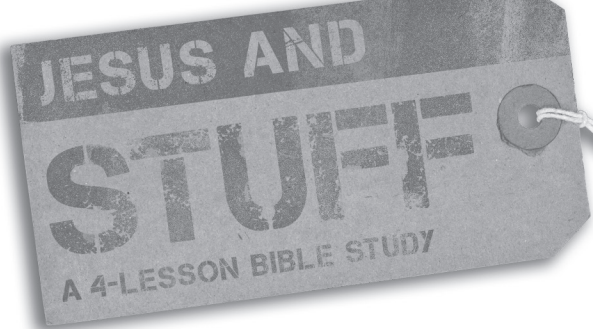
THEN, explain that in verse 20, Jesus makes the jump to a different kind of treasure. Ask something like:

- **How does Jesus describe the kind of treasure that is stored in heaven?**
 - o Answer: It’s a kind of treasure that can’t be destroyed by time and it can’t be taken from us.

Take a moment and help students understand this idea of heavenly treasure. Say something like:

- **So, this is a little tricky. Jesus doesn’t really give us an example here of what this heavenly treasure is. But He does in other places. Throughout Matthew chapter 5, and elsewhere in both the Old and New Testaments, Jesus refers to earthly actions or attitudes that have eternal significance. These include being kind and compassionate to others, experiencing persecution for Jesus’ sake, leading others to Christ, and so on. Jesus is comparing our efforts to collect stuff on this earth with our efforts to live godly lives. And in verse 21, He makes it clear which one is the better choice.**

Have students look at verse 21. Have a student summarize what he or she thinks Jesus is saying here. Make sure students realize that Jesus is talking about the value or significance we place on the pursuit of these two different things. Explain that we can give our energy and time to pursuing the collection of stuff, or we can put our energy and time into using our lives to make an impact for God’s Kingdom.



NEXT, have students look at verses 22-24. Ask something like:

- **In Jewish literature, the eye represented a sort of window to being able to judge a person's intentions. Keep in mind Jesus is talking about the pursuit of stuff versus the pursuit of godliness. Knowing this, what do you think Jesus is trying to say in verses 22-23?**
 - Answer: If our intentions are noble and right and godly, our lives will be fruitful for God and His Kingdom. But if our intentions are self-serving and materialistic, we'll pursue things that are all about us.
- **Verse 24 is kind of the kicker here in this passage. Jesus uses the word money to represent all material things. These verses more or less sums up Jesus' teaching here on stuff and our attitude toward it. How do Jesus' words here relate to the activity we did at the beginning?**
 - Answer: Just as you can't be a fan of two arch rivals, or be on both sides of competing interests, you can't love your stuff (money) and God.
- **How does this sit with you? What's your reaction to it?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **Is Jesus saying that money and wealth are bad?**
 - Answer: You'll explore this in greater detail in the upcoming lessons. But the simple answer is no.
- **What is Jesus addressing here?**
 - Answer: Jesus is speaking to people's attitudes. He is in essence, tying His teaching back to verse 21. Jesus is addressing the heart. Our heart doesn't have room for the love of God and the love of money. We have to choose one or the other.

FINALLY, explain that this is a sort of introduction to the topic of what Jesus said about our stuff. Explain that you're going to wrap up this lesson by looking at how you can apply these truths to your life.

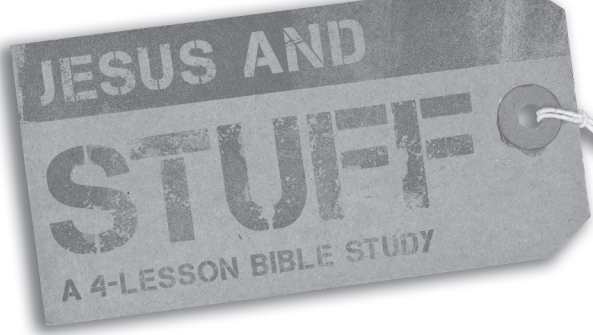
If there are no further questions or comments, transition to the Last Word.

The Last Word

- **Goal:** To help students grasp that their stuff is fleeting; only the impact they have for God will go with them to heaven.
- **Set-Up:** You'll need to arrange a way to show the images on the "Last Word" Activity Sheet (located in your Lesson 1 Folder). If you want to make a really awesome point, find an old electronic, such as a TV or smart phone, and arrange to smash it in your class. One of the best ways to do this in a way that is relatively safe and pretty contained is to place the object in a wastebasket, cover with a towel (to keep glass from flying), and smash it with a hammer (dropping a weight on it is a nice effect as well).

BEGIN by displaying the "Last Word" Activity Sheet, one page at a time. As you display each page, something similar to the following (or, if you've decided to smash an electronic device, say the following as you're setting up, then smash the device as the climax):

- **We surround ourselves with so much stuff, don't we? We have so many things. And we may act like they aren't important, but when we have to do without them, we kind of freak out. If we're honest, most of us put a little too much value on our things. And some of us put too much value on pursuing MORE things. The problem with this? Jesus says that none of this lasts. Phones, and TVs, and cars, and computers break. Clothes wear out. And if we're giving our hearts toward getting more of this stuff, we're chasing a dream that will only ever leave us empty.**



THEN, ask students to think of some of the good things they've done in the name of Christ over the last months and years. (This could include praying for someone, forgiving someone, volunteering to help someone in need, going on a mission trip, etc.) As they think of these things, have them call them out.

FINALLY, when it seems like students have finished listing things, remind them that these are the things that matter. These are the things that Jesus wants them to pursue with their heart and their strength. Encourage them as they go through out the week, to be more aware of what brings them joy, how they spend their time and energy, and what their attitude is toward their stuff. You'll be really digging deeper in the following lessons, so encourage them to get ready.

If there are no more questions or thoughts, close in prayer.

- **Don't forget to distribute the devotions to your students this week. If you're printing them, have them available for students as you wrap up class. If you're texting a link, posting them on Facebook, or some other means of electronic distribution, make sure you inform students of when they will be receiving them.**
- **Use the Social Media guide to stay in touch with students via text or Twitter, and to encourage them to follow through with reading their devotions and with being mindful of the choices they make during the week.**

We Want To Hear From You . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well you want to share?
- Something that didn't work you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns, at feedback@youthministry360.com.