

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Lesson Guide
October 26, 2014
“What do we actually own?”

Memory Verse: *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Matthew 6:24*

Today we’re going to be discussing the topic of ownership. What is your most favorite possession. There’s no judgment: it could be a car, or a gun, or a house, or a phone or computer or anything at all that is a non-living, possession. (i.e. not kids or pets).

Where did it come from? Who owned it before? Was it inherited? Was it store-bought or hand-made? What’s it made of? ALL things have natural origins and are made of elements from God’s creation. It’s important to know that man can’t really create anything from “nothing” and that all the wonderful things that we build and create come from God, originally.)

What do you do to protect your favorite possession? (Do you put it in a safe, or keep it on your person? Do you pay insurance to protect it? Do you spend time fixing and maintaining it?)

We are naturally protective of what’s ours. The logic runs something like this:

“I worked hard for this, so I’m going to do what I want with it!” or “I sacrificed to save up this money, so I’m going to spend it the way I want!” “I spent MY time, working MY job, to make MY money to buy MY stuff... so it is MINE.”

It’s hard to argue with logic like that... except... What if those statements are based on a false premise? What if we don’t own all that we think we do or all the world tells us we do? Wouldn’t that change our priorities? Wouldn’t that make us take a second look at whose resources we’re spending or even wasting on our own selfish desires? Let’s take a look at what we, as humans and Christians, actually own.

1. God owns all the **stuff**.

Psalm 24:1

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

What do you encounter in your everyday life? Do you work with tools and machines? Those are made of wood and metal, mostly. Do you work with computers? Metals and plastics. Plastics come from oil and petroleum by-products, which comes from the earth. Carpet is a big thing around here; do you work with carpet? Most carpets are different types of polymers (nylon, polyester, etc.) or very rarely it’s made of woven wool which comes from sheep.

The point is, as we saw with our favorite possessions, all things originate from the Earth. There is not one thing made by man that was not harvested and shaped in one fashion or another from

God's creation. In short, God owns it all. When Psalm 24:1 says "everything" that actually comes from a Hebrew word that means... guess what?... "EVERYTHING." It's not just being poetic. It's repeating the truth that is recorded in the Bible, time and again. God doesn't leave any room for error or quivocation. He owns it all. Period. Here's just a few other verses for confirmation:

Exodus 19:5: "All the earth is Mine."

Deuteronomy 10:14: "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it."

Job 41:11: "Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine."

2. God owns all the money.

Haggai 2:8

'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty.

Okay, so God owns everything. But what about money? I work hard for my money, and isn't it just a concept. A dollar is only worth what someone will trade for it, right? That's why inflation happens and prices keep going up, right? We're not on the gold standard anymore, so technically, it's not really a physical thing, but just represents how much buying power I have because of what I do for a living, right? Sorry, we can't get away that easily.

In the Old Testament and most of world history, precious metals represented the things that men have valued most: wealth and power. In this passage in Haggai, God isn't just saying that He owns the precious metals of gold and silver; He's saying that he owns all that they represent, namely, power, prestige and wealth. Reading the context of that verse shows it plainly. In verse 7, God says He will "shake the nations; and they will come with the wealth of nations and I will fill this house with glory". He then says that the silver and gold are His. Why? Because He's letting Judah know that it doesn't matter if other countries have more power or money than them. God Himself is going to contend with the other nations and they will have no choice but to give up their power and riches to Jerusalem. The gold and silver are arbitrary; if anyone has power, it's because God LETS them have power for the time being. Sound familiar? In John 19:11, Jesus is faced with Pontius Pilate, the most powerful man in Judea, and Jesus tells him "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above." So believe it, God owns everything, including money and the power it represents.

3. God owns your talent.

Deut 8:17-18

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. Case in point: Here in Deuteronomy, He identifies human nature for the Israelites. God lets them know that one day, when they've enjoyed His blessings for a while and they've gotten through surviving in the Promised Land, and when they start to stock pile their blessings and create wealth and begin to take enjoyment from it, they will

soon begin to be tempted to think that they did it all themselves. They did the work right? It was the “power and strength of [their] hands” that did the farming and harvesting and buying and selling that made them rich. God says “You may...” say these things to yourself, propping up your ego and becoming selfish and greedy, “BUT remember...” God owns it all, and that includes not only the materials of creation, and not only the money and power, but also they talents and health and work that allowed you to amass any wealth at all, and He is providing that to keep up His end of the covenant He made with your ancestors: not because you’re super special and definitely NOT because you earned it.

This hits home, right? It’s the same for us. We have access to God’s power and riches in Christ Jesus. Through Jesus. Because of Jesus. We can’t earn it. We couldn’t work long enough, or hard enough, or pray enough, or sing pretty enough, or help others enough to make God love us. God had to come to us as a sinless man, and sacrifice Himself to redeem us. Which leads to our final point...

4. God owns **you**.

1 Cor 6:19-20

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

God owns everything on Earth. God owns all money, power and wealth of any kind. God owns our talents, our strength, our work and the resulting prosperity. Finally, God owns us. Physically. It only makes sense, right? Our bodies are gifts from God. They’re made out of water, skin and muscle and all the chemicals that make them up. All stuff that God created in the beginning. The atoms that make up the air we breathe and the food we eat and add to our bodies might be some of the ones that made Abraham Lincoln, or even Abraham from the book of Genesis. Matter and energy are neither created nor destroyed by us or anything in God’s creation. God alone reserves that power for Himself because He made it, didn’t He? He owns it, so He does as He pleases with it.

The parts of us that aren’t physical, our minds and souls, they are created by God as well. Just because we can’t see them or know what they’re made out of doesn’t make them any less real. The Bible says then that our body (all of it) is a temple of the Holy Spirit. “You are not your own” Paul says. Don’t you know that? Apparently we don’t, or at least we don’t act like it. We have been bought with a price. Jesus’ life. His death, burial and resurrection have made atonement between us and God. “Don’t you know that?” says Paul. You don’t belong to yourself anymore. You never really did. You were dead and now you are alive in Christ. God owns you. Our flesh still balks at this, maybe you even feel weird or negatively about it when you hear that God owns you. But take it as a comfort. You are safer than you’ve ever been mentally, physically and spiritually when you are in the ownership of God. If He doesn’t allow the matter and energy He created to be destroyed, don’t you know He’ll take good care of you, who’re worth so much more?

Finally: Here recently, a mother gave her son a \$20 bill for a field trip. She told him to only spend \$10 and to bring her the change. The little boy did as he was told, but his mother forgot to ask him for the change that evening, and the boy forgot all about it. Later the next week, the boy found the money in his book bag. \$10 was a fortune to him, so he began to spend it daily on ice cream. By the time his parents remembered to ask for the change, not much was left of the money. The parents didn't get bent out of shape, or shout and scold angrily, but they did let him know that his behavior had made it hard for them to trust him with money in the future.

God is our Father and He owns everything. The things He allows us to own are really His, even our own lives and abilities. If we understand this, we must be careful to use what He has given us in ways that please Him. This is called stewardship. We are stewards of God's creation. We should care for everything from the Orphans to the Environment, from homeless people to homeless animals. Our priorities should also reflect God's. God gave Himself for us, so we should expend our resources to help other people. One of the chief ways we can do this is through giving financially and serving at our local church. There's really no substitute for supporting God's people and ministry through the church families that God has made us a part of. The sooner we realize that we need to spend our money, time and resources (all of which belong to God, remember) in way that are pleasing to God, the sooner God will be able to trust us more and more. The more and more we spend on ourselves (like the little boy in the story) the less God can trust us with His blessings. That's not to say that God will disown us or quit providing for us, but that we can't count on thriving and prospering in this world and the world to come without submitting to God, our Father and master, and His priorities for our lives!

Take Home

1. Everything belongs to God; we're only stewards, for good or bad.
2. Do our priorities flow from our Master and His desires?
3. Continue to be conscious of your spending habits: what you spend your money and time on, how much of it do you spend for God and His kingdom and how much on selfish things?
4. You don't have to report to anybody but God about this. Talk to Him and ask Him to show you what He would have you do with your money. Ask Him to lead you and give you peace in the decision.