

Let Go of Your Stuff

Once you have stuff, (possessions, money, income, houses, cars...), it is really difficult to go back.

Once you are comfortable with a certain standard of living it becomes very hard to give it up.

One day a rich young man came to Yeshua to ask what he needed to do to inherit eternal life.

Yeshua told him to keep the commandments.

The man said that he had kept all those since he was young.

Yeshua said, "In that case, now all you need to do is sell everything you have and give the money to the poor and you will be done."

The young man went away very sad. (He was rich).

We don't read about whether he actually did sell everything. But the impression I get is that he thought that was too much for him to handle, and he couldn't bring himself to do it.

But so what... that was him. How does that affect us?

Yeshua told him to keep the commandments. But he was a Jew. Jews have to do that.

We're Christians. We don't. Yeshua already did all that for us. The Law is complete for us. It no longer applies to us. We are free from it.

So do we need to do the rest of it either?

By the way, I think it's interesting that in the Bible he is called a young man. Yet to justify himself he says he has kept the commandments since his youth. I would be more impressed if an old man said that. But it's more than I can claim for myself, so I probably should just let that slide...

So whether Yeshua was impressed or not... he said he needed more. Keeping the commandments wasn't enough. "Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor."... Interesting! Not, to the church. But to the poor...

And then... "come and follow me"... Sell your possessions and follow me.

Yeshua didn't tell everyone he met to sell their possessions. But it seems that he knew that for this guy his heart was on his possessions. Not on God. Even his original question,.. "How can I inherit eternal life."... What's in it for me? What can I get? How can I get what I want?

Shouldn't our question be "How can I please God?" (Regardless of what **we** get out of it).

This guy's heart was on himself, and more importantly on his possessions. And that was stopping him from following Yeshua. That was stopping him from serving God. It was keeping him from eternal life.

Now, there are several people in the Bible with whom God was very happy, and yet who were very wealthy. Solomon and Abraham just for starters. Both very wealthy people. Both loved by God. And I'm pretty confident, both with eternal life.

So having wealth isn't the issue. It's your attitude to it.

A few years ago my wife and I were discussing how we had too much stuff. As we talked about it and prayed about it, the idea came to us to give some away. So we decided that every day for a year we would give away something that we owned. For free, to someone we knew who needed it. It was so much fun.

People would come over for dinner and of course, over dinner they would talk about what was happening in their lives, and we would be looking for hints on what we could give them as a gift when they were leaving...

We had a big box in one room and we would regularly add things to the box that we either didn't use much, or we felt we should really give away, and then we would start listening out for who we could give the new things to.

We loosened our grip on "stuff".

But the more we did that, the more we realised that it was the stuff that had a grip on us, not us that had a grip on the stuff.

Our stuff, our possessions, our money, our lifestyle, had us in it's grip and it didn't want to let us go.

But the more we gave away, the looser that grip became.

A couple of years later we had to move interstate, so we gave away almost everything we owned and then bought replacements only as they were needed in our new home.

But about a year after we moved to our new home in the country, there was a huge bush fire which tore through the area we lived in, devastating property and destroying houses. When we saw the fire coming over the hills, we left our home behind us and drove off with a laptop computer and some paint brushes. (Our tools of trade, in case we couldn't get back for a few days). Somehow it just didn't occur to us that we might lose everything. We just thought God was going to keep it safe.

A few hours later one of our friends rang to say that she had just heard that our house was completely destroyed. Oddly, my wife and I both had the same reaction to this news that all our "stuff" was gone... "Cool, now we can move anywhere!".

The next day we were finally able to return to what was left after the fire. It was quite a surprise to see the house still standing. Completely untouched by the fire. The fire had destroyed almost 25 of the 30 acre property, but it had gone around the house and joined back together on the other side. Leaving the house and garden looking as good as ever. (And all our things untouched - which in the case of family photos, and things with sentimental value, was a great comfort).

So it was definitely a good feeling that everything was OK, but we were both surprised by how totally fine we were when we thought it was all gone. We really didn't care. It was a good feeling to know that our stuff no longer had a hold on us.

Pray about how tightly your stuff has hold of you.