

WEEK 2

Finding God on the Bottom Shelf

Matthew 5:1–12

1 CONNECT

Ask each person to share what brings him or her the most happiness.

Background: Compare and contrast this list of Beatitudes to the version Luke gives (6:20–26). You will quickly note that Luke's list is shorter, that Luke's Beatitudes sometimes appear more literal (Luke quoted Jesus speaking of the "poor," not "the poor in spirit"), and that Luke's list includes a complementary list of four "woes."

Did Jesus give two different lists on two occasions? That is possible. More than likely, Luke offered the Beatitudes in a form closer to the words Jesus spoke, while Matthew slightly expanded some of them in his attempt to more accurately convey Jesus' meaning. For example, while Jesus did feel a special concern for those who were physically poor or hungry, He did not necessarily give His kingdom to all people who were poor or hungry. He did, however, frequently offer rich rewards to those who felt their spiritual poverty or spiritual hunger.

In any case, note the countercultural tone of Jesus' teachings in the Beatitudes, whether in the first century or the twenty-first. Sane people rarely speak of the good fortune of people who are poor, grieving, or hungry, no matter what form those usually pitiable conditions take.

Do the rewards Jesus promised in the Beatitudes come in the present or in the future? Clearly they come in both.

Observe: Discuss the following questions with your group. When have you felt the most helpless, either physically or financially? As you reflect on that experience, how is it similar to your spiritual journey?

5:1 *crowds . . . disciples.* The debate continues as to whether Jesus spoke the Sermon on the Mount to a large crowd or to a smaller group of disciples. This verse seems to support the small group theory. But 7:28 notes, at the end of the sermon, the crowd's amazement. Most likely Jesus allowed the crowds to "overhear" words He intended primarily for those who already followed Him.

5:1 *sat down.* In this ancient culture, listeners traditionally stood while the speaker sat. Compare Luke 5:20, where Jesus sat down before He spoke to a group in a synagogue.

5:3 *Blessed.* Single English words do not adequately carry the weight of the Greek word behind *blessed*. Some have paraphrased the thought with the single word *happy*. A person who senses God's blessing likely feels happy, but this word is a bit superficial. Better translations might be "Oh how fortunate" or "Oh the bliss of." The Greek word goes beyond how the blessed person feels to describe his or her true condition. Irrespective of how the "blessed" person feels, God truly places that person in a better condition.

On a related note, you might wonder about the origin of the word *beatitude*, a word used to describe all eight of these sayings. It relates to the Latin verb "to bless." The root of that Latin verb is "bea."

5:3 *the poor in spirit.* Those who freely admit their spiritual poverty and their spiritual need.

5:3 *the kingdom of heaven.* (See also v. 10.) One phrase Jesus used to describe the new life He offered. (See 4:18 and ch. 13.) The other three Gospels quote Jesus speaking of the "kingdom of God." The two phrases have identical meaning.

RELATE

1. This calls for a personal response. Some students may say that they would like to have heard Jesus speak the Sermon on the Mount; others may say they would have liked to see a particular miracle, or perhaps listen to Jesus teach His disciples during the forty days after His resurrection.
2. To be poor in spirit means to be completely free from any sort of personal pride that would take credit away from God. In one sense, the absence of pride is the very definition of humility.

2 OBSERVE

Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14 and James 4:7–10. Discuss how these texts compare to Jesus' statement here in Matthew 5.

5:4 *those who mourn.* Those who take seriously their spiritual poverty; those who feel great pain over their need.

5:4 *be comforted.* Jesus loved to speak of reversal. (See, for example, 19:30 and 20:16—"The last will be first and the first last.") He came to turn lots of things upside down.

RELATE

3. This calls for a personal response. People may bring up the death of a parent, the loss of a friend, any number of things.
4. People grieve in many different ways. Some people make it through the process well, others hang on to the bitterness associated with certain losses their entire lives.

Observe: Ask the group to quickly list five marks of a “meek” person. In other words, how can we recognize true humility and controlled strength?

5:5 *the meek*. Often translated “the humble.” This beatitude speaks of those who, upon receiving criticism, can say, “Yes, you are right. I am spiritually poor.”

5:5 *inherit the earth*. Those who have nothing left to protect, who are humble enough not to worry about protecting even their reputations, will gain everything.

RELATE

5. The world usually equate meekness with weakness, with people who allow others to walk all over them.
6. Biblical meekness was demonstrated by Jesus, as one who had infinite power, but only used it for the good of others, and kept it under control when He would have used it to rescue himself.

Observe: In his book, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, John Wesley wrote, “None feel their need of Christ like [those who have been entirely sanctified]; none so entirely depend upon him.” Ask your group if they agree and to explain why.

5:6 *those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*. Here Jesus spoke of those who are desperate (as truly thirsty people are desperate) to have their spiritual needs met. Righteousness is not merely an external conformity to laws. Later in this same chapter, Jesus reminded His followers that their righteousness should exceed that of the Pharisees, those who kept the law perfectly (5:20). How could Jesus’ followers be more righteous than that? By allowing Him to transform them on the inside, so that, for example, they avoided not only killing but internal anger (5:21–22).

5:6 *be filled*. Jesus satisfies those who seek Him. In order to remain satisfied, they must maintain their hunger.

RELATE

7. Hunger signals might be a slight discomfort in the abdominal areas, growling, etc. Thirst signals include a dry mouth, and an intense desire for water.
8. Those who hunger for righteousness want to act and think like Christ in their everyday lives. They feel deep satisfaction when they show kindness and compassion in the name of Jesus.

3 OBSERVE

Have your group compare this beatitude from Matthew 5:7 with Matthew 6:12, 14–15 and 18:21–35. How does each passage build on the previous one?

5:7 *the merciful.* The merciful person looks upon other less-than-perfect individuals with patience. A person who realizes his or her own spiritual poverty can more easily put up with the spiritual weakness of others.

RELATE

9. Jesus made it clear that only those who show mercy will receive it. Many people who are harsh toward others find it difficult to give themselves grace—many of them deny that there's anything wrong with them at all.
10. Some people go through some complex mental gymnastics to justify their actions. So, in their minds, if they had a good reason for what they did, then mercy is unnecessary.

Observe: Ask your group to list the ways they have seen God this last week.

5:8 *the pure in heart.* The idea of purity includes at least two concepts: freedom from uncleanness and freedom from alloy. A white carpet is pure when it has no specks of dirt on it. An ingot of gold is pure when it has no copper, iron, or other less-precious metals in it. Persons are pure when they are free from uncleanness, from sin, and when they are *fully* dedicated to God. Those who, with God's help, live the first five Beatitudes are those whom God makes pure.

RELATE

11. Those who are pure in heart have nothing to hide. If they've sinned, then they confess and acknowledge the wrongdoing, so it doesn't really matter who finds out what happened. Those with dross in their hearts are constantly trying to cover up what is true, and what they did.

12. Only the pure in heart can stand in the presence of God because God has cleansed their hearts. Those who stand before God with a stained heart will only continue to justify themselves and their sinful actions.

4 OBSERVE

James 3:13–18 contrasts two kinds of wisdom and the results of following each. Read these verses and ask your group to point out why peacemakers reap a blessing.

5:9 *the peacemakers.* Those who promote harmony among human beings as well as open interaction between human beings and God. Those, who with God's help, live the first six Beatitudes are those who lead others toward peace by their presence, words, and actions.

5:9 *called sons of God.* Peacemakers live as their Father lives.

RELATE

13. This calls for a deeply-personal response. Ongoing conflicts really drain the energy from people.
14. The best first step in mediation is to ask both parties if they'd like help resolving their problem. If one or both refuse, then mediation is impossible. If both seem willing, then perhaps there is some hope.

Observe: Hebrews 11:38 says “the world was not worthy” of the Old Testament saints, who were martyred, mistreated, and persecuted. Briefly discuss the possible reasons God's persecuted people are considered to be so special.

5:10 *are persecuted.* That this condition should finish the list (and be amplified in 5:11–12) seems unfair. Why do good people receive persecution? We may not understand, but we need look no further than Jesus to see the perfect example.

RELATE

15. Many Christians are quietly persecuted today by being excluded from social circles and networks that might otherwise help them. They are often victims of political deals that are easily denied when confronted.
16. The best way to respond to a false accusation is to go to the source and ask the person to justify what he or she said. If the accusation is public, then perhaps a public response is warranted.

Even so, Jesus warned us that false accusation is a part of the disciples' life, and any response may not be effective.

5 *RELATE*

... to life.

The Beatitudes reveal the awesome change God wants to make in our lives. Willpower and hard work cannot produce these qualities in our lives. We need to do two things. The first is to allow the Holy Spirit to search us and to reveal anything that falls short of the life Jesus described. The second is to share this life-changing message with those who have not received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Give all the people in the group a 3 x 5 card and ask them to write down the name of at least one person who needs to hear the good news. Encourage them to pray for this person every day during this study of Matthew.

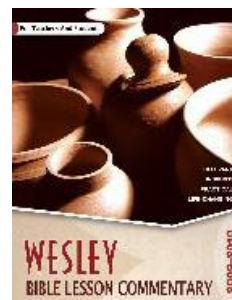
Bonus Interactive Learning Idea from Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary

TRY THIS ON YOUR OWN: LOOK FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

Spend some time on your own rereading the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:1–12) in several different Bible translations. First, read it in your own Bible. If you do not have other translations available to you, go online and use Bible Gateway (<http://www.biblegateway.com>) to read it in a few more translations. For example, read it in a formal rendering (such as the King James Version); a direct translation (such as Young's Literal Translation); a contemporary translation (such as the New Living Translation); and a modern-day paraphrase (such as *The Message*). If you can, print out all the translations so you can compare them side by side.

After you've read them all, consider which words and phrases most stand out to you. How do these different angles on the text change your perspective? How does this harmony of translations help you understand more about what the ideas in the passage mean?

—from the [Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary, 2009–2010](#), a year's worth of studies in Jeremiah-Daniel; [Matthew](#); James; and Samuel/Kings/Chronicles



GO DEEPER, GO BROADER

[Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary](#) contains much more valuable contents that correlate directly with what you're studying on these very pages. Give your Bible study a boost with practical helps for each lesson:

- Easy-to-read, insightful Bible commentary.
- Sidebars, charts, maps, and graphics.
- Interactive learning ideas for groups, individuals, and families.
- Reproducible activity pages.
- Small group discussion guide as an alternative teaching plan.
- Scriptures printed in the NIV.

WEEK 3

Avoiding Spiritual Pride

Matthew 6:1–18

1 CONNECT

Begin by asking your group members to report on their praying for those who need to hear about Jesus. Then discuss the following questions. What are the most common religious activities? How important is it for a Christian to give to the needy, fast, and pray? Why? Do Christians do these things to draw closer to God or because they are close to Him?

Background: Jesus had just instructed His followers to focus on internal righteousness (5:21–48). For example, He taught, “Don’t merely avoid the act of adultery; avoid lustful thoughts” (5:27–28). But that didn’t rule out the value of external acts. No, in this next block, Jesus focused on the value of several visible acts—giving, praying, and fasting—done with the right motive. The opening verse (6:1) summarizes what Jesus said throughout the entire block.

How do rewards (which are earned) and grace (which can only be freely given) fit together in God’s system? On the one hand, there’s no doubt that God gives salvation and heaven only through grace. (Jesus was speaking here primarily to His followers [see 5:13–14], so 6:1–18 does not speak of people gaining heaven or hell merely on the basis of their deeds.) But on the other hand, some Christians, in the name of grace, would push reward out of the picture. And yet Jesus spoke often of rewards for His people. Clearly the receiving rewards from God can be a spiritually authentic motive (see Matt. 5:12; 10:42; 25:21, 23, 28, 34–36).

2 OBSERVE

Divide your group into two and assign each one of these questions. After they’ve had about eight minutes to discuss, ask for a report from each group. What are the benefits of doing “your acts of righteousness” publicly? What are the dangers of doing “your acts of righteousness” publicly?

6:1 *acts of righteousness*. See Background.

RELATE

1. Some people show off in church today by being very vocal about how much they give, or boasting about all their areas of service.
2. Some believe that heavenly rewards will be based on faithfulness, or the depth of love behind our good works. Others think that God will reward each believer based upon the degree to which He trusts that individual.

3 OBSERVE

Have your group consider the following questions? What three acts of righteousness does Jesus mention in these verses? What does “when you give . . . pray . . . fast” imply about these activities? Did Jesus expect His disciples to do them? Explain. List the qualities of giving, praying, and fasting Jesus demands from us. What motive is the foundation for these qualities?

6:2 *give to the needy.* For first-century Jews, giving was a central to the righteous life. William Barclay quoted this ancient Jewish saying, “Greater is he who gives alms than he who offers all sacrifices.” (See Deut. 15:11.)

6:2 *trumpets.* Jesus was using hyperbole, a form of speech where He purposely used exaggeration in a way that everyone would have recognized. The hypocrites did not literally blow trumpets to announce their giving, but they might as well have. (Remember that, in these days, no one could quietly give gifts by check. Coins of gold, silver, or cheaper metals would have been the only means of making donations.) The hypocrites somehow made sure that everyone could see the value of their gifts. Compare Luke 21:1, which describes Jesus watching rich people putting obviously large gifts into the temple treasury.

6:2 *hypocrites.* The Greek word behind *hypocrite* was the word used to describe an actor.

6:3 *your left hand . . . your right hand.* Again here, we see Jesus using hyperbole. What Jesus was commanding would literally be impossible. Jesus was saying that you, the giver, should give gifts in a manner where you hardly know what *you* are doing, not to mention all the others you might like to impress.

Note: the *precisely* repeated pattern in the three paragraphs (6:2–4, 5–14, 16–18): “When you [perform some ‘act of righteousness’], do not [do it for merely for public approval]. I tell you the truth, they [those who did ‘acts of righteousness’ for public approval] have received their reward in

full. But when you [perform an 'act of righteousness,' don't be obvious about what you are doing. If you do this], your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

6:6 *go into your room.* Did Jesus forbid the practice of public prayer? If so, then most pastors and many Christians disobey every week. No, again He hoped His followers would see the vivid contrast between those who pray for (or to) their audience and those who pray to God himself. At the same time, Jesus was showing the value of private prayer, conversing with God when no one else sees or knows what you are doing.

6:7 *babbling.* Pagan worshipers often feel they can control the actions of their god by reciting the right combinations of words, as if they were putting a spell on their god. Jesus pointed out the foolishness of thinking this way about the true God. He already knows our needs. He already loves us and has promised to meet our needs. Why then do we pray? The model prayer that follows reminds us that we pray first to worship God. Yet in that same prayer, Jesus reminded us that God also wishes us to bring our requests before Him. Why? For our own benefit. When we bring our needs before God, we reduce our worrying. But also in some way we may never understand, our praying frees the all-powerful, all-loving God to do that which He already could and wanted to do.

6:9, 11–12 *our.* Jesus intended us to pray with and for each other.

6:9 *name.* Jesus spoke of much more than treating God's name with respect. In ancient Jewish culture, far more than in ours, the name represented the person who bore it.

6:10 *on earth as it is in heaven.* This phrase likely refers to all three preceding lines. In heaven, God's children honor Him. Heaven is God's kingdom, where nothing but His will is done.

6:13 *lead us not into temptation.* Does God tempt us to sin? No (James 1:13). These words likely carry the meaning, "Do not allow me to be tempted beyond what I can bear." In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul promised that God will answer that prayer.

6:14 *if you forgive . . . your heavenly Father will also forgive.* Do these words indicate that a person *earns* forgiveness by forgiving? No. But these words do say that those who do not forgive have likely not opened themselves to receiving true forgiveness.

6:16 *When you fast.* Here Jesus assumed that His followers fasted, just as they gave and prayed.

6:16 *look somber.* Fasting causes physical discomfort. A person who is fasting can, despite hunger, look cheerful (so that no one else knows what he or she is doing), or the person can find visible or verbal ways of letting others know the good thing he or she is doing.

6:17 *put oil on your head.* A daily practice for people in that culture.

RELATE

3. Giving to needy families anonymously, sending notes of encouragement, giving gifts of cash in envelopes, etc.
4. Some Christians love to pray with others, while some Christians like praying alone, in quiet places where they will not be disturbed.

4 OBSERVE

Have your group read through Matthew 6:1–18 silently twice. Ask them to consider, “What eternal principle and promises does Jesus give us?” After they’ve had time to read and reflect, ask volunteers to share their insights.

RELATE

5. Being in the spotlight can be seductive because all eyes are on you. People in the spotlight tend to be “exalted” in the eyes of others, so that can be alluring too.
6. Work done for God behind the scenes is never done for public credit, and God loves it when His people simply serve Him out of pure motives.

5 RELATE

... to life.

Ask your group to fast and to pray for the person that they want to hear the good news. Encourage them to think of a way to help that person this week.

Bonus Interactive Learning Idea from Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary

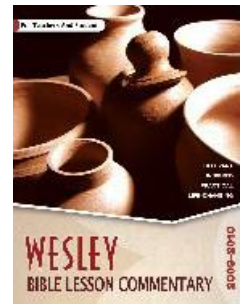
WITH YOUR FAMILY: TOP SECRET MISSION!

Perform a top-secret service project as a family. First, read Matthew 6:1–4 together and briefly discuss the idea that we don't give to others in order to show off. Talk about how secret giving is really special because only God knows about it.

Make a big deal about your project being top secret—you can even ham it up by dressing like spies or humming the theme song of a spy movie like *Mission Impossible*. Begin by going to a grocery store together and spending a set amount of money purchasing nonperishable food items for a local food pantry. For example, you may want to decide together how to spend twenty dollars on food. Or you may invite family members to spend five dollars apiece, each selecting the food items they'd most like to give.

Once you've purchased your items, hop in the getaway car (your family vehicle) and drive to your destination. When you get there, challenge the family to attempt to sneakily drop off your donation—without being seen! (It may be wise to call the food pantry ahead of time so they don't become suspicious when a minivan pulls up and children run inside acting like spies!) Remind everyone that you will not be taking credit for doing this good deed, even from each other.

—from the [Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary 2009–2010](#), a year's worth of studies in Jeremiah-Daniel; [Matthew](#); James; and Samuel/Kings/Chronicles



GO DEEPER, GO BROADER

[Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary](#) contains much more valuable contents that correlate directly with what you're studying on these very pages. Give your Bible study a boost with practical helps for each lesson:

- Easy-to-read, insightful Bible commentary.
- Sidebars, charts, maps, and graphics.
- Interactive learning ideas for groups, individuals, and families.
- Reproducible activity pages.
- Small group discussion guide as an alternative teaching plan.
- Scriptures printed in the NIV.

WEEK 4

First Things First

Matthew 6:19–34

1 CONNECT

Read the Dietrich Bonhoeffer quote and ask your group members to react to it. Ask them to consider how this might be illustrated in the context of Christmas consumerism in our culture, contrasted with the true meaning and purpose of Christmas. Discuss why it is that we can be so easily enamored with the world's material gifts over God's spiritual gifts.

Background: This passage, like so much of the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is built on contrasts: two places to store treasure, good eyes and bad eyes, two masters to serve, a worrying lifestyle or a trusting lifestyle.

See parallel statements in Luke 12:33–34; 11:34–35; 16:13; 12:22–31.

2 OBSERVE

Use a chart to compare the two views of possessions Jesus exposes. Column 1 would be labeled “Earthly Treasures.” Column 2 would be “Heavenly Treasures.” What are the qualities of each of these treasures? What are the results of focusing on each? Is it possible to center our lives on both? Why or why not? (Larger groups could be divided into two groups, one for each view, to report back to the whole group.)

6:19–20 *treasures on earth . . . treasures in heaven.* This paragraph follows neatly from the preceding block, where Christ had contrasted earthly and heavenly rewards.

6:19 *moth and rust . . . thieves.* Earthly treasures are always vulnerable—at risk to animals, to the treasure's own inherent decay, and to humans. The next verse shows the absolute safety of heavenly treasures.

6:20 *store . . . treasures in heaven.* God transforms us so that we can live in loving obedience. That transformation is itself an eternal treasure. Also, through our obedience to Jesus' directions, we minister to others in a way that leads them toward becoming part of the eternal treasure of heaven.

6:21 *heart.* The very core of a person's being.

6:22 *eye.* The eye is one of the crucial gates by which we absorb that which makes us what we are. Are our eyes focused on heavenly treasure or earthly treasure, on God's kingdom or our own?

6:23 *darkness.* The eye focused solely on the material goods of this world becomes blind to the light of God's world. (See 2 Cor. 4:4, 6.)

6:24 *serve two masters.* We all know people who work two jobs, who have at least two bosses. However, Jesus here points to the impossibility of a slave having two owners. No person can give his or her total loyalty to two masters.

6:24 *You cannot serve both God and Money.* Was Jesus advising His followers against trying to serve both God and money? No. He said that no one *could* serve both. At the same time, Jesus never said that wealth made it impossible for a person to receive salvation. But He did say that wealth would make that process difficult. The person with money finds it difficult not to depend on money. You cannot depend on your money and depend on God at the same time.

RELATE

1. People place their security in: relationships, jobs, degrees, political alliances, bank accounts, etc.
2. God calls us to be responsible stewards of everything that He gives to us. This includes paying our bills and giving generously to His work.

3 OBSERVE

Lead your group through a direct Bible study of Matthew 6:25–34 by asking the following questions: What does Jesus command us not to worry about? What three areas of life does He point out? List the questions Jesus uses in these verses. What is Jesus teaching with each of the questions? What should our focus be? Why should we worry only about today?

6:25 *do not worry.* The beautiful word-pictures that start here build to a climax at verse 33, which begins with "But." In forbidding anxiety, Jesus was not commanding us to give up all appropriate concern for the future. Remember, for example, the way Jesus laughed at the man who

started to build a tower without adequate review of his resources (Luke 14:28). In 6:25–34, Jesus set out a lengthy contrast between the person whose primary concern is meeting his or her own material needs and the person whose mind focuses on God's concerns.

6:26 *Look at the birds of the air.* Jesus, the disciples, and the crowds are out on a hillside. Jesus, quite literally, I'm sure, pointed with His finger at birds and flowers the people could see. As He did so, He used one of His favorite forms of comparison—"How much more . . ." (see 7:11 for another example). If God cares for the birds and the flowers, how much more will He care for you, His children?

6:26 *they do not sow or reap.* Was Jesus suggesting that we give up work? No. He was merely spelling out the contrast between the birds that do not worry about the future and the people who so often do. Luke tied these paragraphs to the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16–21). That silly man focused merely on gathering more for himself. Because he depended on himself, God condemned him. "That is how it will be for anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

6:27 *Who . . . by worrying.* Nothing has changed. Worrying—trying mentally to control the uncontrollable—accomplished nothing then, nor does it today.

6:28 *clothes.* Remember that here Jesus was instructing His followers not to worry about the very basics—food and clothing. If Jesus discouraged worrying about the basics, what would He say about Christians' anxiety over what are truly luxuries?

6:29 *Solomon.* Jesus compared the simple flowers to the wealthiest Old Testament person He could think of. The flowers, who do not worry about their appearance, win that beauty contest.

6:30 *you of little faith.* A phrase Jesus used often to describe His followers, when they failed to believe that He could care for them (see 8:26; 14:31; 16:8).

6:31 *do not worry.* Were all these words merely picture language about not worrying too much? On at least one occasion, Jesus sent the Twelve out two by two, instructing them not to take money or extra clothing (10:9–10).

6:32 *the pagans.* People who don't depend on God. They may need to worry, but the children of the "heavenly Father" do not.

6:33 *seek first.* Jesus reached the climax of His thought. What should His followers worry about? God's kingdom and righteousness. Ironically, God's children should concern themselves with those very things that don't require worry. God freely offers His kingdom to those who cannot earn it (5:3). God gives His righteousness to those who hunger for it (5:6). It is silly to worry about

earning a gift. But to those who focus their attention on receiving the primary gifts that God wants to give, God also gives the secondary gifts (“all these things”—the food and clothing of 6:25–32).

6:34 *Each day has enough trouble of its own.* You work on focusing on God today; He will work on caring for you tomorrow.

RELATE

3. Answers might include the economy crashing, losing one's job, child getting sick and dying, spouse leaving, cancer, heart attack, Alzheimer's, their own death.
4. Worrying does not change how anything turns out. If anything, it can make things worse.
5. This calls for a personal response.

Close with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help each person set the proper priorities and attitudes toward possessions.

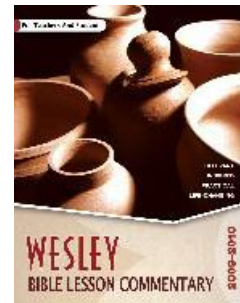
Bonus Interactive Learning Idea from Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary

TAKING IT TO THE STREET: WHY DO WE BUY?

Go to a local mall or shopping center as a group to do some people-watching. First, split into pairs and walk through the mall, paying close attention to two things: the feelings and behaviors you observe in the shoppers at the mall; and the advertisements, displays, or other avenues stores use to try to lure you inside.

After a set time, meet back together at the food court and share your observations over dinner. As you eat, take some time to talk about some of the deeper human issues revealed in our culture's obsession with shopping and buying. You could talk about questions like these:

- Which ads or displays struck you as the most obnoxious?
- Which were most appealing? Why?
- In your experience, does buying make you feel good? Does it make you feel deeply satisfied? Why or why not?
- What do ads and the idea of shopping promise to people? Are those promises fulfilled? Why or why not?



—from the [Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary 2009–2010](#), a year's worth of studies in Jeremiah-Daniel; [Matthew](#); James; and Samuel/Kings/Chronicles

GO DEEPER, GO BROADER

[Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary](#) contains much more valuable contents that correlate directly with what you're studying on these very pages. Give your Bible study a boost with practical helps for each lesson:

- Easy-to-read, insightful Bible commentary.
- Sidebars, charts, maps, and graphics.
- Interactive learning ideas for groups, individuals, and families.
- Reproducible activity pages.
- Small group discussion guide as an alternative teaching plan.
- Scriptures printed in the NIV.