

God's Stewards

STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Discuss stuff students identify with.
- *Optional:* Answer questions about the value of having things.
 - ☐ (Optional) “Enough Stuff” from *Blueprint*

STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Complete a Bible study.
- *Optional:* Consider other questions about Jesus’ parables.
 - ☐ Bibles
 - ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*
 - ☐ Paper, pencils or pens, whiteboard and markers

STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Identify possessions that hinder us.
 - ☐ “Luke 12:30-31” from *Blueprint*
 - ☐ Paper
 - ☐ Whiteboard and markers
 - ☐ Masking tape

STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Students will compare and evaluate their wants and needs together.
 - ☒ 8 ½ x 11” colorful sheets of paper (See directions provided in Step 4, one per student)
 - ☐ Journals (from last week)
 - ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*

Memory Verse

“For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

—Luke 12:30-31

Bible Basis:

Respect for the material property of others (Exod. 20:15, 17) and a responsible attitude toward one’s own possessions (Luke 12:13-21).

Bible Truth:

God’s people are to develop attitudes toward possessions that are pleasing to Him.

Lesson Aim:

That your students develop a responsible Christian attitude toward acquiring and using material possessions.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

God commands His people not to steal or covet (that is, to desire with greedy motivation) anything belonging to another person. In the Old Testament, theft wasn’t ordinarily punishable by death. However, Exodus 22:1-5 shows that a thief was required to make restitution—at least double that which was stolen.

The tenth commandment, “You shall not covet,” is different from the others in that it deals with a state of mind. It shows that wrong ideas precede wrong actions; however, an attitude of respect toward another person’s property reflects a responsible attitude toward one’s own possessions.

The commandment about coveting was particularly needed by the Israelites, who apparently felt that wealth was one indication of moral worth and favor in God’s eyes. In very general terms, the Hebrew people felt that right living promoted prosperity.

Since the idea of wealth as an indication of moral worth was a part of the disciples’ background, it is easy to see why they were so surprised at Jesus’ teaching about material possessions.

In Luke 12:13-21, the Lord uses an illustration about a man who stores up earthly treasures in barns. He warns

Continued on next page

☒ indicates items you will need to prepare before class

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE —cont'd

of the difference between being rich in earthly possessions and “rich toward God” (vs. 21). Unlike pagans, believers can trust God to meet their deeper needs, and can spend their energies on seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness because this treasure will always be with them.

The Bible recognizes that certain dangers are inherent in material wealth. Both Testaments condemn the rich who are selfish and have lost their sense of dependence upon God. Scripture teaches that property is a trust from God and must be used in the service of Christ and of others.

TIPS

CLASSROOM

Many people in our culture, whether wealthy or just getting by, define themselves by what they do or don’t have. Your students are particularly vulnerable to this lie. Many teenagers really believe they are more worthwhile if they have certain clothes or a car.

Take the opportunity of this lesson to say out loud that this is a lie. In fact, the point of Jesus’ passage is that often having the best things can get in the way of our relationship with God. Possessions can be dangerous.

On the other hand, try to stress that having money isn’t a sin or a crime. If God allows us to acquire possessions, we should enjoy them as gifts from Him and use them responsibly.

Your challenge with your students will be to keep them between these two falsehoods. Try to help them see that what we have isn’t nearly as important as learning to be content with what we have. Contentment involves trusting that God will give us what we need when we need it.

Understanding Your Students

One of the unfortunate realities of our day is that a teen’s worth is often based on what he or she does or doesn’t have. At an age when fitting in and belonging to a group is all-important, a young person feels tremendous pressure to keep up with the Joneses. What reporters are calling “crimes of fashion” (crimes that target one for the

clothes he or she is wearing) attest to the negative programming of our youth.

These are symptoms of a culture that is materialistic to the core. Young people (and adults) need to hear and see that there is a better way to live.



PRESESSION ACTIVITY

Objective: To encourage students to start thinking about respecting others and their possessions.

- ☐ Cardboard box
- ☐ Blindfold

You’ll need a cardboard box and a blindfold for this activity. As students arrive, ask them to remove their shoes and place them in a box in the center of the room. One by one, have students randomly pull out two shoes from the box. They may not choose their own shoes. Have students put on the shoes, walk around for a minute or two, and then return the shoes to their owners.

Students will probably laugh at curious combinations or admire another’s choice. Informally talk about what the old saying means to “walk in someone else’s shoes.” Ask students how this saying applies to borrowing and caring for each other’s possessions.

STEP 1

Life Need
(5–10 minutes)

Lesson Aim:

That your students develop a responsible Christian attitude toward acquiring and using material possessions.

Objective: Your teens will point out what stuff they identify themselves with.

Maybe it's a unique backpack or a worn-out baseball cap. It might be a personalized cell phone or a decaled laptop. We all have things that are uniquely ours. We've personalized them and made them an extension of ourselves.

- ▶ **What's something you own that everyone recognizes is part of your unique stuff?**
- ▶ **How hard would it be for you to go without that particular possession?**
- ▶ **What's cool about owning stuff?** (*Stuff entertains and gives people a sense of accomplishment. Having things can be fun and sometimes makes life easier.*)
- ▶ **What's not cool about owning stuff?** (*Things are expensive to buy and maintain. Having lots of things can be time consuming. The more you have, the more you want; it's hard to stay satisfied.*)
- ▶ **What might stuff say about a person?** (*The stuff a person owns tells others what that person likes. Stuff shows others the amount of money a person may or may not have. Some people define themselves by the stuff they have.*)
- ▶ **What did you do this past week to get an item—or stuff? What was it? How did you go after it? Were you successful?**
- ▶ **Was the result satisfying to you?**
- ▶ **What did you do this past week to go after God?** (*This might leave your students thinking and not generate many responses. That's okay. Just let them sit in silence, thinking for about 10 seconds before moving on.*)
- ▶ **How might someone go after God? Why might someone even want God?**
- ▶ **What did you want more this past week: God or stuff? How much time and energy did you spend going after God versus going after stuff?**

We think that because our stuff is inanimate, it is powerless. But it's not! Our stuff is very powerful: it communicates things about us and can control our time, energy, and thoughts if we let it. Billions are spent by companies every year to get us to buy their stuff so they can make more money to sell more stuff to more people.

God wants us to put Him first. It is hard for us to put God before our things sometimes, but when we do so it shows our faith. Let's find out what help Scripture has for us in doing this.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- "Enough Stuff" from *Blueprint*

Have students read "Enough Stuff?" on pages 22-23 of *Blueprint* and discuss:

- ▶ **Do you agree with any of these students? Which ones and why?**
- ▶ **How important is money in your world?**
- ▶ **When thinking about your life vocation, how large a part does the salary scale play in your decision?**

Ask several students to share. Encourage your students to see beyond temporal rewards to more lasting ones.



STEP 2

Bible Learning

(15–20 minutes)

Bible Basis:

Respect for the material property of others (Exod. 20:15, 17) and a responsible attitude toward one's own possessions (Luke 12:13–21).

Objective: That your students complete a Bible study to understand God's perspective on possessions.

Materials:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ Whiteboard and marker

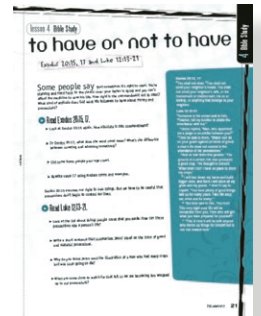
God doesn't want us to let things replace Him in our lives. Neither does He expect us to live without resources. Have students turn to the Bible study on page 21 of *Blueprint*. Call on someone to read the introduction as well as the suggested Scripture.

■ FROM *Blueprint*—To Have or Not to Have?

Some people say that sometimes it's alright to steal. You're starving and need food. Or the classic case: your father is dying and you can't afford the medicine to save his life. How rigid is the commandment not to steal? What kind of attitude does God want His followers to have about money and possessions?

Read Exodus 20:15, 17.

- ▶ Look at Exodus 20:15 again. How absolute is this commandment? *(Allow students to give their opinions. Ideally they should see that in God's perfect plan, hunger and illness did not exist. Adam sinned and God's ideal for humanity was spoiled. We now live in an imperfect world. In unusual situations like those raised in the introduction, people may decide to break one of God's laws. But this does not mean the commandment is no longer absolute.)*



Because God is a loving Father as well as King, we can be sure He is aware of the circumstances in which we act and will judge accordingly. Keep in mind these are extreme situations. Don't allow students to rationalize breaking God's law on the basis of uncommon circumstances.

- ▶ In Exodus 20:17, what does the word "covet" mean? What's the difference between coveting and admiring something? *(Coveting is stronger than admiring. It's an intense, consuming desire. To admire is to share a person's pleasure in an object.)*
- ▶ List some items people your age covet. *(Ask students to call out some of the things they listed, and make one general list on the whiteboard.)*
- ▶ Rewrite verse 17 using modern terms and examples. *(For example: Don't burn yourself up with desire for your friends' stuff. Admire their cars, electronics, or clothes, but don't spend time thinking about how to make them yours.)*

Exodus 20:15 assumes our right to own things. But we have to be careful that possessions don't begin to control our lives. Read Luke 12:13–21.

- ▶ Look at the list you made in question three. How can these possessions rule a person's life? *(Encourage students to give specific answers. For example, if you became consumed with owning great-looking clothes, you'd spend more money on clothes than anything else. You might begin judging people on the basis of their clothes. It's hard to get a lot of enjoyment out of owning things that start to rule your life.)*
- ▶ Write a short sentence that summarizes Jesus' stand on the issue of greed and material possessions. *(For example: Don't worry, Christian. God is in*

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:15, 17

¹⁵"You shall not steal. . . ¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Luke 12:13-21

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

¹⁴Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you?" ¹⁵Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

¹⁶And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

¹⁸"Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."'

²⁰But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

²¹"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

control and you can trust Him to provide what you need.)

- ▶ Why do you think Jesus used the illustration of a man who had many crops, but was soon going to die? *(Jesus wanted everyone to understand that material possessions are not as valuable as spiritual riches. Greed won't get you anywhere.)*

- ▶ It isn't wrong to put up barns and plan for greater harvests. Where did the rich man make his mistake? *(He was guilty of greed, making his wealth his god.)*

- ▶ In addition to new barns, what other plans should the rich man have made? *(He should have been improving his relationship with God, laying up for himself heavenly treasures. For example, he could have given money to the poor or helped train unskilled people in successful farming.)*

- ▶ What are some clues to watch for that tell us we are becoming too wrapped up in our possessions? *(Spending a lot of time working for possessions that we really don't need. Allowing our belongings to control our time and energies. Being willing to do just about anything to get a particular thing.)*

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you have time, consider the following passages:
Matthew 25:14-30

- ▶ What does this parable have to do with today's Bible study? *(This parable emphasizes the importance of using opportunities, abilities, and possessions wisely.)*
- ▶ Why do you think Jesus is so tough on the "one-talent" man? *(He didn't do anything with what God gave him. Jesus wanted His listeners to understand that God expects people to do their best with the resources He provides.)*
- ▶ According to this parable, what is our responsibility toward things God gives us? *(We must wisely use what God gives us; we must not be wasteful or irresponsible. We also need to develop our talents and abilities to make them more useful.)*

STEP 3

Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)



Objective: That your students identify things that hinder them from developing a Christian attitude toward possessions.

Materials:

- ☐ “Luke 12:30-31” from *Blueprint*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers
- ☒ Masking tape



Turn to the Memory Verse poster “Luke 12:30-31” found on page 24 of *Blueprint*. Take a moment to consider your stuff, and write down on a piece of paper things you have wanted lately. Regroup and discuss:

- ▶ **Did I really need this item?** (*Answers may include: sometimes “yes,” other times, “no.” That is OK.*)
- ▶ **If “yes,” why did I think I needed it?** (*Answers will vary.*)
- ▶ **How can seeking God first help with this struggle or wanting too much stuff?** (*Viewing our lives in light of God will help with our perspective. “Could the money be better spent?” is a good question to ask.*)

Next choose a volunteer to list on a board stuff that teens might have in their wallets or purses (a pen, a dollar bill, etc.) Next make two even teams. Have each team wrap a chair in masking tape, sticky side out. When the volunteer yells, “go,” each team has three minutes to find, within their team, the items listed on the board. The found items then need to be stuck on the team’s chair. The team with the most objects stuck on their chair wins. Discuss:

- ▶ **Why do we carry stuff around with us?** (*It’s easy to accumulate stuff. A pack of gum here, chapstick there. Things in and of themselves aren’t bad, but we need to be careful to be good stewards of our money.*)
- ▶ **What kinds of things do we carry with us to remind of us God?** (*For example, a cross, ring, bookmark, memorized Scripture.*)

This activity is designed to get your students thinking about why they have so much stuff. Use these ideas to transition to the next step on evaluating our wants and needs.

STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

God's people are to develop attitudes toward possessions that are pleasing to Him.

Objective: Your teens will compare and evaluate their wants and needs together.

Materials:

- ☑ 8 ½ x 11" colorful sheets of paper with the following written: my cell phone; my best friend; my favorite pair of jeans; my king-sized bed; my great reputation; my straight A's; my new car; my used tissue; my ratty sweatshirt; my cell phone with a broken screen (Make enough so that every student has one. Make an even mix of "good" things and "bad" things.)
- ☐ Journals (from last week)
- ☐ Copies of *Blueprint*

Play a game similar to White Elephant. Place all the sheets face down and let a student choose one, then share with the class what it is. The next student can either choose a face-down sheet or "steal" the first student's item. An item can only be stolen twice. Play until every student has chosen a piece of paper.

- ▶ How did it feel to have your item taken from you?
- ▶ If you were left with something not so great, how did you feel about the others who had an awesome item like a new car?
- ▶ This was just a fun game, but let's pretend it was real. What if someone took your best friend away, or stole your cell phone and left you with a broken screen cell phone instead? What would you do? Or what would you want to do?

The Bible says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exod. 20:17).

- ▶ **What does it mean to covet?** Allow students time to respond, then offer the following: The word *covet* literally means "to pant after." You want something that someone else has so bad that you think about it, you look at it, you dream about it, and you might even make a bold move to take it away. Coveting doesn't have to be just about stuff. It can be about deeper issues. Maybe your family life is tough, while it seems like everyone else has the perfect family. Or you have to study four hours for a test while the guy next to you didn't even crack a book open.
- ▶ **How can this affect your faith life?** Allow students time to respond, then offer the following: Maybe the hard thing to do is to take your eyes off of what you don't have and refocus on what you do have. "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). Being content doesn't mean giving up. It's trusting that there's one thing that can never be taken away from you, and that is Jesus Christ. It's being satisfied with His love for you. And it's understanding that Jesus cares about your needs.

Have students who like to mark in their Bibles underline Hebrews 13:5 and circle the words "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Close by asking your teens to seek God first in their lives this week. Encourage them to journal in their notebook at home as they complete the Daily Faith devos on page 22 of *Blueprint*. This will be your last week asking students to journal; however, continue to encourage them to work through the Daily Faith devos each week. Invite students to share their journal entries from the past week. Dismiss your teens with the following prayer. **Father, thank You for all the good gifts you've given to us. Help us to enjoy these gifts. Please teach us what our needs really are. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

