

**Articles and Sermons :: What's the "One Thing?" by K.P. Yohannan**

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Two individuals came to Jesus, each with a deep spiritual problem. One found life, but the other lost it. What went wrong in this counseling session?

The first one was a rich young ruler who approached the Lord with the most burning question of his heart: "... what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18).

He was not seeking a religious debate, as so many others did. He honestly wanted to know. When Jesus listed five of the commandments, the young man replied that he had a perfect record in keeping them all. Christ didn't condemn him for thinking he was flawless before God, but simply responded, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor ... and come, follow Me" (Luke 18:22).

The second man was also rich, but he had gained his wealth by shamelessly defrauding others. Zacchaeus was a well-known crook; when Jesus came to his house, he didn't even try to convince the Lord that he kept a single commandment.

Jesus said nothing to the man about sacrificing anything, selling his house or giving his money away. Amazingly, Zacchaeus made the decision himself to give half of his possessions to the poor and restore four times the amount he stole to everyone he'd cheated.

What was it that compelled Zacchaeus to respond so differently than the rich young ruler?

When Zacchaeus saw Christ, he realized that in Him was "absolutely and completely" everything he would ever need for this life on earth and for all eternity. That's why he said to himself, "If I have Him, the whole universe is mine. I can easily give away my things."

The young ruler saw Jesus only as a poor itinerant teacher living hand-to-mouth. It frightened him to think of parting with his possessions because he couldn't see the vast riches in Christ that would have been his if he'd followed.

Believers very often make the same mistake as the rich young ruler. They want to follow Christ and experience His abundant life, but are afraid to let go of something they have relied on for their security.

I believe the Lord always looks precisely for that one thing we grasp so tightly, unwilling to let go. It could be anything: our strength, our talents and abilities, our education, our skills, our years of Christian experience, the good testimony or reputation we have established, our success in ministry, or our extraordinary discernment and other spiritual gifts.

In the New Testament book of Revelation we encounter a group of people in the church of Laodicea who were convinced that they were rich and lacked nothing. Yet the Lord told them that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Why did the Lord think they lacked everything? It is because they had become self-reliant, which prevented them from experiencing the genuine life of Christ.

As long as we hold on to that one thing in which we trust, we will never be able to surrender fully to Christ. Consequently, there will always be a distance between the Lord and us. Such lack of closeness results in frustration and discouragement on our part. In addition, that one thing will be a constant hindrance for the rivers of living water to flow freely out from us and give life to others.

How do we recognize the "one thing" still lacking in us? We will know it by the discouragement, tension, bitterness, frustration and irritation that fill our hearts, or spill out of our mouths when people misunderstand us or don't treat us as we expected.

You see, when the riches we have in our hearts are truly from the Lord, no raging storm can cause any disturbance. Amy Carmichael once wrote that a cup brimful of sweet water cannot spill "even one drop of bitter water, however suddenly jolted" (from Amy's book *If*).

Just as in the case of the young ruler, the Lord through His grace must open our eyes to see what exactly is lacking in us. Sometimes no amount of preaching or exhortation will accomplish this.

Are we free from self-reliance once we have surrendered that "one thing" to the Lord? Yes—but only as long as we don't pick up something else instead!

The danger of doing this increases as we become stronger through our experience, accomplishments and knowledge. Uzziah became king when he was 16 years old. At that time, he fully relied on the Lord. However when he became older and stronger, he became self-reliant and "...his heart was lifted up, to his destruction" (2 Chronicles 26:16).

I believe the Lord wants us to live in a continual state of emptying ourselves so that we do not rely on anything He has given us.

The life that is full of joy and the unhindered presence of the Lord is the one that experiences continuous brokenness and abandonment of self-reliance.

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