



BECAUSE PEOPLE MATTER

REACH+EQUIP+GO

“BIGGER BARN SYNDROME”

For use the week of November 13, 2011

Read to the group (5 minutes)

“Felton Bernard, 34, was indicted on charges of murdering four people because he was angry that his grandmother left her house to her children instead of him. Dead are two of Bernard's uncles, an aunt and her live-in friend. The two uncles were shot to death in the disputed house in eastern New Orleans. The aunt and her live-in friend were shot hours later in a FEMA trailer blocks away. One uncle identified his nephew as the killer before dying three weeks later, police said. Police said Bernard was furious that he hadn't inherited the home from the grandmother who raised him.”

Most of us enjoy possessions in life. Some of us really hope for and even crave certain possessions. Almost all of us are disturbed to know that a person would kill others...over possessions.

CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER (10-20 minutes)

Answer and discuss one of these questions:

1. Distribute index cards and pens. Ask each person to write their top 3 most valuable possessions. No names! Collect, shuffle and redistribute the cards. Ask each person in turn to read the items on her/his card. As a group, try to identify who wrote that card. When finished, discuss your findings. What surprised you? What got you to thinking?
2. When have you seen someone really invest in a particular possession? What sacrifices did that person make? What benefits did it seem that person received? What frustrations did you observe?

STUDYING THE SCRIPTURE (20-30 minutes)

This parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a wise and happy man.

¹³ *Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”* ¹⁴ *Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or an arbiter between you?”*

¹⁵ *Then He said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”* ¹⁶ *And He told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He 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.*

¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."²⁰ But 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." (Luke 12:13-21)

- What is the conflict Jesus is asked to work with? (verse 13)
- What clues are provided about the conflict? (verses 14-15)
- A parable is a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson. Who is in this parable? (verses 16-20)
- What words describe the rich man's situation, attitudes and goals?
- Where do you see his situation, attitudes and goals today?
- What title does God give this man? (verse 20) Using a Bible concordance (often found in the back of a study Bible) or online concordance tool (biblegateway.com for example), look at other people given this same title. Here are some starters:

Psalm 14:1-3

Isaiah 32:5-6

1 Timothy 6:8-10

- What situations, attitudes and goals mark foolish people and foolish behavior?
- What is the contrast in activity and priority in verse 21?

GROWING TOGETHER (10-15 minutes)

- Parables are nice to read and often easy to agree with until it's time to do a self-examination. After all, most of us haven't recently built bigger barns. But Jesus makes clear that the tension in this parable is part of life. What attitudes, goals and priorities lead a person to being "rich toward God"? (verse 21)
- Develop an inventory list that describes a life rich toward God. How would you evaluate your church from that list? How would you evaluate your personal life from that list?
- Select one item from that list that you will commit to praying about and asking God to help you grow in this week.
- As a group, pray for your individual commits. Ask God to work specifically with each of you to become rich toward God.