

The Windows

Roger Hertzler

In the months since *Through the Eye of a Needle* was first offered for sale, the response has been tremendous. Many people have written to me from many different places and backgrounds, and most have expressed appreciation for the book and its message.

In spite of the encouragement, however, I sense that struggles and questions still remain. Honest-hearted people wonder how the doctrine of nonaccumulation really ought to apply to them. What exactly are they to do with Luke 12:33, a verse they had never really noticed before? What about this asset I own, this situation I am facing, or this opportunity that has presented itself?

Although I can sympathize with those of you who are facing these struggles (I have faced many of them myself), I do not pretend to be able to answer all of these questions for you. I would, however, like to share with you a brief illustration which may help you answer these questions yourself, and answer them in a way that reflects the very heartbeat of God.

This illustration is a picture of two men who have both become convicted about Jesus' teaching on economics. Perhaps they have read the book *Through the Eye of a Needle*. Or perhaps, better yet, they have simply picked up their Bibles and read Luke 12:33. Either way, both of them are convinced that the doctrine of nonaccumulation is a true doctrine. Both of them are sure that Jesus' command to "sell and give" is meant to be taken literally. And both of them head for home with a firm determination to be obedient, somehow, to the commands of Christ in the area of economics.

Each of these men owns a home situated along the shore of a great ocean. Both of these houses are built with just two windows in them. One of the windows overlooks the ocean. The other window goes down into the basement where the homeowner has all his earthly possessions stored.

The first man goes immediately to the window looking down into the basement containing his possessions. After pasting his nose to the glass for some time, he reaches down, grabs a handful of money, and announces to his wife. "Honey, I think that we have too many possessions. Please take this money and give it away."

"OK." says his wife. "Where do you want me to send it?"

"Oh, I don't care," the man responds. "Just go get rid of it somewhere."

He returns to the basement window, and after some more contemplation, decides that they still have too many assets. He reaches down, grabs another handful of money, and instructs his wife to give that away, too. Where? "I don't care. Just send it away so that it's not in our basement anymore."

He returns to the basement window and repeats the process several more times. Finally he goes to bed, but he cannot sleep. The first hour he lies awake worrying that he still has too much wealth, and that he ought to give away more of it. The next hour he worries that he has given away too much of his money, and that he shouldn't be taking Christ's commands quite so literally. "After all, what will happen to me if I get sick? Or old? Or tired of working?"

The second man also goes home after reading Luke 12:33, also determined to put it into practice. Instead of going to the basement window to look at his possessions, however, he goes to the ocean-view window and picks up a pair of binoculars. As he peers out across the ocean he suddenly calls out to his wife, "Honey, look at all the people in this country who are starving! Quick, let's send them some money for food." His wife reaches into the basement and gives him a handful of cash, which he quickly sends across the ocean.

He shifts his gaze a little to the right. "And over in this country are people without adequate clothes, or shelter, or medicine! Let's send them as much as we can right away. And over here are some pastors who need Bibles, and here are some missionaries who need tracts, and over in this country we can support a native pastor as he preaches God's Word to an unreached tribe! Wow, what wonderful opportunities! Quick, hand me some more money to send."

This continues all afternoon, until his wife finally announces, "There isn't any more money."

With his eyes still glued to the binoculars, he responds urgently, "Then sell something! Let's get the money wherever we can! There are still so many opportunities, and if we wait we might miss them forever!"

This man goes to bed that night as happy and excited as he has ever been. His mind is full of thoughts of people who have food in their stomachs, clothes on their backs, a Bible in their hands, and Jesus in their hearts, all because he was willing to give! He

can't wait to get up the next morning, go to work, earn more money, and do it all over again.

After you've read this illustration, here is my question for you. When you first learned of the doctrine of nonaccumulation, did your mind go to the basement window, or did it go to the ocean window?

Both men in the above example, in a sense, were obedient to the commandment of Christ. Both responses proved, in a sense, that they were taking Christ seriously. But based on my own personal experience, I can assure you that your journey through the eye of a needle will be far more enjoyable, and probably more successful, if you fix your gaze on the ocean window rather than on the basement window.

How can you do this? What are some practical steps you can take to tear your gaze away from the basement window and put it on the ocean window?

I will give you just one: subscribe to the newsletters of a variety of organizations that are feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick, distributing Christian literature, and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Spend a lot of time reading these newsletters and praying over them. As you do, you will be amazed at the wonderful opportunities you have available to lay up treasure in Heaven. And as your attention is drawn toward Christ and the needs in His body, you will find that "the things of earth will grow strangely dim" and your affections will be set more and more on those things which are above.

"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields . . ." John 4:35