

POVERTY,  
RICHES  
*and*  
WEALTH

MOVING FROM A LIFE OF LACK

*into*

TRUE KINGDOM ABUNDANCE

KRIS VALLOTTON



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I dedicate this book to all who find themselves struggling to survive, running against the wind and/or imprisoned by life's circumstances. It's my greatest prayer that those who, like me, were born losers would become the world's earthen treasures and God's heavenly hope.

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## Foreword

**I**n Christian circles, the topic of poverty and wealth is often met with controversy. Many people wonder how their financial situation matters to God, if at all. Know this: God's dream for you is so much bigger than yours. He promises prosperity and good success. Why is this important? Because it does matter to God. He can take you beyond anything you ever imagined, and He can take you places you have only dreamed about.

I find most people are bound by a spirit of limitation. They believe they will never achieve anything. They believe they will never get past their poverty. They believe God blesses only certain people.

The enemy wants nothing more than to keep God's people chained to a spirit of lack and limitation. God wants the opposite. The key to living a prosperous life—and this doesn't apply solely to finances—is to invest our resources, our time and our gifts into others. We are Kingdom investors. We are blessed to bless others. After all, we can't bring anything with us in the end.

A freeing teacher, my friend Kris explores with wisdom and solid biblical foundation in this book how to gain a perspective on Kingdom wealth. We must be grounded in our identity in Christ. We must

*Foreword*

understand God's love for us. We must know the difference between riches and wealth—and believe me, there is a difference.

I am so glad I worship the living God who wants me to prosper. He gave all things to us to enjoy in Christ. The difference between living in prosperity and living in poverty is a choice. Choices have consequences. God told Israel that He set life and death, blessing and cursing, before them. They had to choose life or death (see Deuteronomy 30:19).

It is not by chance that you are blessed. It is by choice. It is God's will to give you prosperity with a purpose, to make you a blessing to others. We are not owners of anything; we are stewards of everything He has given us.

I am confident Kris will inspire you through his words. Walk with him through his own story, and learn how his outlook has been shaped over the years. You will be encouraged that God wants more for you than you may think He does.

Jentezen Franklin, senior pastor, Free Chapel, Gainesville, Georgia

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank Michael Clifford for teaching me about the power-of-possibility thinking. I am grateful to Joe Ritchie for exposing me to the advantages of unorthodox (out-of-the-box) mindsets. I also want to thank Bill Johnson for demonstrating outrageous generosity to me. And finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Kathy, who has shaped our world through her divine stewardship and selfless courage.

# Introduction

## *Attitudes of Nobility*

**M**y father drowned when I was three years old, leaving my mother penniless and with two small children to feed. It was the late 1950s, and the social welfare programs in America provided bare sustenance. We moved into the projects, surrounded by other people who were, for various reasons, stuck in the same system of poverty as we were. I soon learned that there was a kind of camaraderie among poor people, fueled by our strong feelings about our common enemies. We all despised wealthy folks, railed against big business and blamed Uncle Sam for our deprived condition, to name just a few of our targets. We were little, powerless people lost in the sea of humanity, paddling hard but getting nowhere. The winds of financial adversity pounded against our tiny boats, and as if that were not bad enough, wealthy cruise ships passed us in haste, leaving us to contend with their wake. This further reminded us of the inconsiderate ways of the rich and cemented in our minds the stone wall of indifference that divided the “haves” from the “have-nots” of the world.

I was saved at eighteen years old and became part of an amazing church. We were princes in a royal family, or at least that is what I thought. But I soon discovered that God's noble people also despised wealth and actually had the same mentality as the people I grew up with in the projects. Despite the fact that we all yearned for a heavenly Kingdom with gold streets and pearl gates, and that we knew our heavenly Father was rich beyond comprehension, we still gravitated toward poverty like a tick on a dog's behind!

We actually created doctrines to enshrine poverty, as if it were the pinnacle of spiritual enlightenment, the Mount Rushmore of Christianity. We made Jesus poor, forgetting that He was the architect of heaven and Creator of the earth. We viewed His disciples as homeless transients wandering from village to village, spreading the news of sacrifice and piety, and eking out a meager existence from a few coins dropped in the offering by a widow or two.

Paul's exhortation to his beloved Timothy was inscribed in the halls of our conscience, like the thundering voice of God echoing from some holy mountain: "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10). It is not that we did not know there were "others" (other Scriptures, that is); it is just that we whispered them in dark corners, in secret dialogues with only our most trusted friends. Then, every once in a while, it would happen: A close comrade would break ranks with the righteous and set sail into the treacherous waters of wealth or riches. We would watch as his or her soul was carried out to sea, a tiny boat disappearing on the distant horizon, never to return again.

I got married two years after I was saved, and I carried my poverty prejudice with me into my marriage. Kathy and I worked hard and eventually owned nine businesses, several of which were very successful, but I determined that we would never get lost in the sea of

prosperity. We anchored our souls to the shore of sacrifice and stayed there for 22 long years. I also etched these values deep in the hearts of our four kids, instilling in them the noble virtues of sacrifice and piety. I warned them of the dangers of wealth, recounting the stories of those who dared to hoist their anchors and lose sight of the safe shores of poverty and small thinking.

We left the business world and moved out of the mountains to Redding, California, where Kathy and I became pastors at Bethel Church. A few months passed without any significant change in my heart, at least that I was aware of. Then suddenly, it all happened—my poverty spirit crashed on the shores of adversity and my tiny boat of small thinking began to break apart, torn by wave after wave of revelation. The Scriptures that used to be my safety net were now ripping under the weight of exponential increase. I scurried around in a panic, trying desperately to mend my broken nets of poverty, but they simply could not carry the load of prosperity that was being charged to our account.

We were becoming the very ones we had warned people about, and it scared the heck out of me. The “others” (other Scriptures, I mean) that we had uttered in secret with just a few friends, were now being shouted in public from podiums, in classrooms and on our social platforms. It was our coming-out party, but we were not the ones throwing the party. God was! We were being financially blessed to the point that it was becoming ridiculous—even embarrassing—at times.

I really had two primary fears. First, I worried that we would be thought of like the guys who abused the faith message and seemed to measure their spirituality by the stuff they owned. I certainly never measured my spirituality (or anyone else’s, for that matter) by what we owned. The truth be known, I had never had enough to be tempted to do that.

Second, I was concerned that people would think we were mis-managing the money they donated to our ministries and were using it for our personal gain. We had lived very modestly our entire life, primarily because there was no other option. There simply had not been enough money to do much more than meet our very basic needs. Then suddenly, thousands of dollars began pouring in from a number of different sources, from real estate deals to book sales, and from teaching materials to conference offerings. Thousands of dollars found their way into our bank accounts. Soon we were giving away about half our profit, yet there was still enough left over to live in abundance. The whole thing came to a climax in May 2016, when a man I had never met before insisted on paying off our house, to the tune of \$487,000! (I recount that story for you in chapter 6.)

The payoff of our house was the final straw for me. I saw it as a confirming sign from God, and I was compelled to tell the world what the Lord was revealing to us about wealth. I felt like one of the four lepers who discovered a feast in the midst of a severe famine in the city of Samaria. In the middle of feasting at the banquet table left behind by a fleeing enemy, the lepers said to one another, “We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent” (2 Kings 7:9). I knew I had to brave the criticism of those who would question my motives and/or methods and write a book about true Kingdom wealth. I think this revelation is a catalyst to overthrowing the principality called Mammon and establishing a wealth mentality rooted in heavenly wisdom. My primary motive in writing this book is to break the back of poverty and release a spirit of prosperity on the world. When I use the word *prosperity*, I don’t mean the world’s definitions of riches; I mean true Kingdom wealth. Here is a short synopsis of Kingdom wealth:

*God's Definitions of Wealth*

1. Wealth is the ability (resources, strength and wisdom) to create positive outcomes in the midst of lack, poverty and/or emptiness.
2. Wealth is light in the darkness, healing in sickness, prosperity in poverty, wholeness in brokenness, favor in obscurity, love for the unlovely, beauty for ashes and victors among victims.
3. Wealth is a “can-do” attitude, a “more than enough” mindset and a “nothing is impossible” belief system.
4. Wealth is radical generosity, extraordinary compassion, sacrificial giving and profound humility.
5. Wealth is always thankful and never jealous; it does not brag, it celebrates others and it looks to the future.

My prayer is that you would find keys in this manuscript that would unlock your legacy and release prosperity on your children's children. I hope that you will be so transformed by the revelation in this book that it will literally alter the course of your history. May it be on earth as it is in heaven!

## PART ONE

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# The True Meaning of Kingdom Wealth

In the first part of this book, we will discuss the true meaning of Kingdom wealth as we contrast it with poverty and riches. I will prove that there is a power to make wealth and that there is a spirit behind poverty. I will also help you discover how to embrace the abundant life that Jesus promised and how to avoid becoming rich instead of wealthy.

# 1

## The Net Worth of Jesus

In July 2016, I was invited to meet Pope Francis with a small group of pastors at the Vatican in Rome. I was rocked by the invitation; not that I had anything I wanted to say or ask of him, but come on . . . how many people in the world get to have a sit-down meeting with the Pope of the Catholic Church? I was excited and a little nervous. The day before I left, I lay awake most of the night, envisioning what it was going to be like meeting the Pope. I wanted to make a good impression on him; after all, I was a Protestant pastor and he was a Catholic pope. We were, by the nature of our religious affiliations, archenemies for five centuries!

I spent most of the next morning packing, but I could not decide what to wear. I tried on all seven of my suits, fifteen dress shirts and twenty-five ties. I finally narrowed my selection down to two, but I could not make up my mind. Should I wear my three-piece gray pinstripe suit with my black silk shirt and black tie, or should I wear my two-piece black suit with my gray silk shirt and red Garcia tie? I tried both suits on several times, changing the combination of shirt, tie and shoes. I finally decided that I would bring them both

and resolve the issue when I arrived at the Vatican. Of course, each suit required a different pair of shoes, so I polished all four shoes to make sure I was prepared. I was concerned that the suits would be wrinkled when I arrived at my destination, so I packed my portable steamer in my special fold-over suitcase. I also went out and bought two new pairs of socks, one to match each of my suits. I was so ready!

The next morning I got up at 3:00 a.m., put on some comfortable jeans and my Batman shirt and began my two-day journey to the Vatican. I had four connecting flights and several long layovers before I would reach my final destination. But before I could board my fourth flight, the airline announced that the flight was canceled. *What?!* Suddenly, two hundred people rushed the ticket counter and tried to find alternative flights to get to their destinations. United Airlines finally agreed to put me on another airline—a flight that arrived at the Vatican six hours later. Although I would not be getting much sleep before our meeting with Pope Francis, at least I would get there in time. I was a happy camper.

When I finally arrived in Rome, I was completely exhausted. I dragged my tired hiney down two escalators and arrived at the luggage carousel, along with a couple hundred other exhausted passengers. It was 10:00 p.m. in Rome, and I still had to catch a taxi to the Vatican. The luggage took forever to reach the carousel. Finally, the beautiful sound of the buzzer began to blare. Then another half hour passed, leaving three passengers without luggage, and yes, you guessed it: I was one of them.

“Unbelievable!” I said out loud. I made my way to the Black Hole Room . . . the place where airline employees try to solve the mystery of your lost luggage. (I heard a rumor that these employees train by trying to find unmatched socks that emerge from dryers.) Thirty more minutes passed, and it was now my turn at the counter. A frazzled-looking woman in her late forties greeted me in Italian.

“Do you speak English?” I inquired.

“No,” she responded in a thick accent.

*Oh great*, I thought. She handed me a form to fill out, which had some pictures of luggage at the bottom. The entire form was in Italian, so for the next twenty minutes, with sign language that was very similar to hieroglyphics, she guided me in her *very* broken English through the process of completing the form.

I googled a picture of the Pope and told her I was meeting with him at 1:00 p.m. the next day. “I need my clothes,” I kept repeating. “By noon!” I begged.

She gave me a phone number to call and told me to try calling in the morning.

“Unbelievable!” I repeated out loud again. *Before I left home I was so concerned about what suit I should wear, and now I might have to meet the Pope in my crummy Batman shirt and ragged jeans*, I mused. *Yikes!* I arrived at my hotel at 12:30 a.m. and laid my head on my pillow at 1:00 in the morning. I was exhausted, but my mind insisted on playing movies of meeting the Pope. I imagined myself in my old, ragged Batman shirt and tattered jeans, in the midst of pastors dressed in three-piece suits and Pope Francis in his royal robes. *What would the Pope think of my humble attire?* I mused further. *Maybe he would view my unpretentious situation and conclude that a homeless person had somehow slipped into the Vatican.*

The problem was that my then present situation did not actually represent my true economic reality. The fact is, I am not destitute. I own seven expensive suits. Furthermore, I am not homeless. I actually have a big, beautiful house nestled on three acres of oak trees in a gated community. Simply put, I may have looked poor and homeless, but Rome was not my home. Redding, California, is. Measuring my affluence by observing my situation in Rome therefore would have led you to the wrong conclusion about my monetary condition.

## Earth Is Not His Home

Jesus arrived in the flesh on this planet through a woman named Mary. Yet it is important to remember that Jesus did not originate in her womb; she was simply the vehicle that carried Him to earth. She was His plane ride to this dimension. His conception was otherworldly . . . or more accurately, heavenly. Interestingly, look at the phrase the apostle Paul used to describe Jesus' earthly entry: "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). Jesus *found Himself in appearance* as a man—now, that phrase is intriguing in numerous ways! First and foremost, it is essential that we understand that Jesus is not human; He is, in fact, God. I am not sure how He "found Himself" here. Could He possibly have agreed not to remember His true identity when He entered the earth's atmosphere? Did He have to go through the same process of self-discovery as we do to discover His true identity as the Son of God? Some theologians believe that He did, but whatever the case, one thing is for certain: Earth was not His home.

Much like my condition in Rome with my Batman shirt and ragged jeans, if you make the mistake of judging Jesus' net worth by His humble earthly condition, you will misjudge His prosperity and undermine His mission. The apostle Paul put it like this: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Wait! What did Paul say? Jesus was rich, *but then* He became poor so (*the reason He became poor*) we might become rich. That is incredible!

Jesus' home is heaven. Now, I am not sure where heaven is exactly, but the biblical description of it sounds pretty incredible. For instance, the heavenly Jerusalem has streets of pure gold, like trans-

parent glass, with twelve pearl gates. Each of the gates is a single pearl, and the material of the wall is jasper. Furthermore, the entire city is pure gold, like clear glass (see Revelation 21). Jesus left His heavenly home and was born in a manger. It might be obvious, but a manger is a barn where the Israeli shepherds kept their donkeys, sheep and camels. It would have smelled like manure, been infested with flies and been filled with poop. When our Lord's earthly birth is contrasted to His heavenly home, the reality of Jesus' humble state emerges with startling clarity.

I want to point out again that Jesus became poor for a reason. His celestial mission was to make us wealthy. It is the great exchange—beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, hope for the hopeless, healing for sickness, prosperity for poverty. You get the idea: Jesus called it *abundant life*.

### **The Wickedness of Wealth?**

I want us to stop for a moment while I make a few observations about heaven. First of all, if wealth and riches are inherently evil, what are they doing in heaven? Why would God describe heaven so lavishly if wealth were bad, or even bad for you? For example, can you imagine God describing heaven as a place filled with opium fields and heroin factories? No, because drugs speak to us of evil—bad, addictive, destructive substances that ruin people's lives. In other words, we all know that these substances *in themselves* are destructive, so we would never use them to describe a positive condition. On the other hand, wealth cannot be intrinsically evil, or the Bible would not describe heaven as a place full of unimaginable riches. In fact, if heaven is God's goal for us, then wealth must be a piece of our prize!

Our idea of "poor Jesus" is similarly skewed. Although Jesus left heaven, heaven never left Jesus, because Kingdom prosperity always

begins from the inside out. You can put Jesus in a manger, but you can't put a manger in Jesus. Wealth, glory and power seeped out of His pores like sweat on a hardworking man on a hot, humid day.

Here is a case in point: Jesus went to a wedding in a village called Cana. Soon after He arrived, the party was in danger of ending prematurely because they did not buy enough wine to sustain all the guests. Mary, His mother, convinced Him to make more wine for the wedding. Jesus ordered the waiters to fill six stone waterpots with water. The water *instantly* turned to wine (see John 2:1–11). There were no grapes necessary, which means the entire process of growing the vines and picking the grapes was bypassed. Furthermore, the long process of fermenting the wine, which takes years to complete, was also circumvented. When the headwaiter tasted the wine, he was stunned because it was so good.

It is important to remember that Mary is the one who insisted that Jesus make wine. How did Mary know that Jesus could make wine from water? Could she have experienced Jesus making wine at home? My point is that if Jesus could make wine from water in two minutes, then it stands to reason that He may have been living modestly on the outside, but wealth flowed out of His innermost being. Mary and Joseph may have been a middle-class carpenter family, but they might have been drinking wine that reminded them of heaven at home. In fact, the wine was so good that the Bible says that when Jesus made wine, He “manifested His glory.” Now, that is great wine! I guess He was not kidding when He said that He is the vine and we are the branches (see John 15:1–14).

## The Tax Man

One time Jesus and Peter were traveling together without Judas, who carried the money box. When they came to the village of Capernaum,

the tax collector insisted that they both pay a poll tax. Although Jesus felt as though they were being taxed unfairly, He instructed Peter to go down to the sea and catch the first fish that bit his hook. Then he was to look in its mouth for a shekel (a coin) and use the money to pay their tax bill (see Matthew 17:24–27).

Did you catch the full impact of what just happened? Jesus just commanded a fish to produce the money they needed to pay their taxes. Did the fish find the money at the bottom of the sea, from some wrecked merchant ship, or did Jesus supernaturally cause a coin to appear in the fish’s mouth? I have no idea, but I do know this: If Jesus could command one fish to bring Him money, then He certainly could command a school of fish to duplicate that miracle a thousand times if He needed to. I guess my mama was right; money doesn’t grow on trees. But maybe it does grow on seaweed.

Apparently, Jesus took God’s command to “rule over the fish of the sea” seriously (Genesis 1:26), because He became quite famous for impacting the fishing industry. The gospels record Jesus supernaturally chumming the fish into the disciple’s nets on at least two occasions. Take a look at the first one:

When He [Jesus] had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.” When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

Luke 5:4–7

These guys are not fishing recreationally; this is how they make their living. Fishing was a middle-class, feast-or-famine kind of

occupation . . . that is, until Jesus showed up. He quickly transformed a meager living into a prosperous vocation.

Let's look at one more fishing expedition so we understand that the previous story was not an isolated incident. It was the nature of Jesus to behave extravagantly. He never provided just a few more fish . . . heck no!

Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them, "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.

John 21:4-8

Jesus is into the boat-sinking, way-too-many, catch-of-the-year kind of fishing. In America we say time is money, but in the fishing business fish are money. Jesus was not just increasing their catch; He was increasing their cash! It is worth mentioning here that if having a lot of money is a bad thing, then Jesus should have made sure they had minimal catches.

What I am pointing out is that if Jesus can circumvent the process of wealth creation by creating money out of thin air, or by making wine instantaneously from water, or by taking a boy's lunch and multiplying it ten thousand times to feed a crowd that would fill an entire NBA basketball stadium, or by increasing a fisherman's catch by 1,000 percent, then there is *no way* He can ever be called

poor . . . at least by worldly standards. Yes, Jesus became poor when you contrast His heavenly home with His earthly visitation. But Jesus was no homeless transient, traversing the countryside with twelve vagabonds. He actually was a famous traveling rabbi who grew up in a middle-class carpenter's home and had a very well-funded ministry.

### **Funded by the Wealthy**

Although Jesus was born in a manger, His birth was announced with astonishing fanfare. God assigned a star to Jesus that the Magi followed to find the Messiah. The Magi were wise men from the East that later tradition holds to be three kings named Casper, Melchior and Balthazar. These kings brought gold, frankincense and myrrh from their treasures and presented them to Jesus at His birth (see Matthew 2:10–11). It seems to me that if you are a king who has been looking into the heavens for years in anticipation of a star that would direct you to the coming Messiah, then the birth of Christ would be a massive event for you. This is not an average birthday where you bring a token gift . . . no way! This is a historic occasion worthy of a substantial gift. In fact, the Bible says it this way: “Opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts” (verse 11). They did not reach into their moneybags and pull out a few dollars to put into a birthday card; instead, they carried a treasure chest with them because they were presenting Jesus with a large, kingly gift.

Many scholars believe that Jesus had a substantial amount of money from the Magi treasury that launched Him into ministry. Yet traveling for three and a half years with twelve other men had to be pretty expensive. Luke the physician tells us in his gospel how Jesus created financial sustainability in His ministry:

He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

Luke 8:1–3

Jesus had several wealthy friends who helped support His needs and the expenses of His ministry team. Many of His biggest supporters were wealthy women. The life of Mary and Martha, Lazarus's sisters, demonstrates the level of affluence many of Jesus' friends had. Mary poured a vial of perfume—pure nard, in fact—over Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. That single vial was worth as much as a year's wages! Think about it; if you can afford perfume worth an average person's annual salary, it just stands to reason that you are quite wealthy (see John 12:1–9). Although Jesus did spend a lot of time with the poor and the broken, He could also be found hanging out a lot with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They were His best friends and probably His primary financial supporters.

### **Fox Holes and Bird Nests**

Much of the misunderstanding about the status of Jesus' personal financial condition comes from a story told in the gospels of both Matthew and Luke. Jesus was walking down a road with His disciples when a guy yelled out, "I will follow You wherever You go!" (Luke 9:57).

In typical Jesus fashion, He responded, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere

to lay His head” (verse 58). Then Jesus turned to another man and said, “Follow Me.”

The guy wanted to follow Jesus, but he had a practical reason why he could not leave right away. He replied, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father” (verse 59).

Jesus seemed a little miffed at the guy’s response. He demanded, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God” (verse 60).

Some people are convinced that Jesus was telling the first guy that He was homeless and that following Him meant camping out on the ground. This seems like a rational assumption, until we investigate a little further. Consider the story of the Last Supper. Jesus needed a place that would seat thirteen men, not to mention someone to prepare a Passover meal for all of them. By the way, preparing a kosher Passover meal for a group that size is no small feat. Yet Jesus had it all handled:

His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?” And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’” And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there.” The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

Mark 14:12–16

We can deduce from this story (and many others) that the people who were supporting Jesus’ ministry took really good care of Him. It is therefore unlikely that Jesus would have had any problem finding housing for His disciples when they traveled. It is more likely

that His “foxes have holes and birds have nests” comment had more to do with the heart of the person who was inquiring than it did with the accommodations available in that location. Especially since a few seconds later, Jesus turned to another guy and said, “Follow Me.” If Jesus were telling the first guy, “I’m sorry you can’t go with us; I have no accommodations for you,” then why did He invite the other guy to travel with Him? Again, Jesus was not homeless.

### Traveling Light

When Jesus sent His disciples out alone on missionary journeys, He did require them to travel light. He told them, “Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support” (Matthew 10:9–10). His reasoning was that He wanted the local people to house and care for the disciples. He considered their labor (preaching the Gospel, healing the sick and casting out demons) worth paying for.

Jesus went on to say, “Whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city” (verse 11). This is a brilliant strategy in that noble people were required to invest in their own spiritual growth by caring for the practical needs of those who were ministering to them.

Not only were the disciples able to cover ground more quickly with this arrangement, but also the local people were much more likely to value something they had to sacrifice for. Furthermore, the disciples were commissioned to release a supernatural peace on every home they lodged in, so the local townspeople were able to experience the same peace that was on the disciples’ lives (see verses 12–13).

## **Dressed for Success**

Not only was Jesus not homeless; He actually dressed well for His day. If you compared Jesus' clothes to the people of that time, you would have to conclude that He was at least somewhat affluent. Jesus wore a seamless tunic woven in one piece. When He was crucified, the four soldiers who stripped Him cut His outer garments into four pieces so that they each got something. But because His tunic was seamless, it was so valuable that the soldiers gambled for it (see John 19:23–25). Some modern theologians call His seamless tunic the Armani suit of the first century.

Let me be clear: I am not trying to propose that Jesus was a rich tycoon on earth, although He clearly had the means to be one through the supernatural abilities He demonstrated. What I am trying to point out is that Jesus was not poor by any earthly standard. He had everything He needed to take care of His team and cover their travels. He was incredibly generous, He often helped people prosper financially, and He taught more parables about money than about any other subject.

Jesus was very aware that the way people handled money was often a reflection of what was going on in their hearts. For instance, He complimented a widow who gave her last cent in an offering, and He rebuked a young ruler who cared more about riches than he did about his soul. He taught people to invest money rather than bury it, and He explained to us that we have to be faithful with unrighteous wealth before God will give us true riches. We will investigate these subjects further in the chapters ahead, but it should suffice to say here that Jesus was no pauper.

Well, for those of you who are curious about the rest of the story of my trip to Rome: My luggage arrived three hours before our

meeting with the Pope; thus, my reputation was preserved. By the way, I went with the brown two-piece suit with the black shirt and brown striped silk tie. (I packed the brown suit at the last minute in the middle of the night, and it's a good thing I did.)