



Emmanuel College

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

‘The one who dies with the most toys wins’?

By

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Emmanuel College
The University of Queensland
Enriching lives since 1911

Emmanuel College is Australia's ninth, and with St John's College, The University of Queensland's first residential college to gain affiliation. It was founded by the Presbyterian Church of Queensland in 1911 with the first students taking up residence in Wickham Terrace in 1912. As the Presbyterian Church moved towards partnership with other religious denominations during the 1970s, Emmanuel College also came under the auspices of the Uniting Church. Upon its inauguration, Emmanuel College was an all male residence but this changed in 1975 when women were admitted as collegians. Now, the College numbers around 340 students with half our population being female.

Further change was experienced by the College when it moved in 1955 from its original site in Wickham Terrace to its present location on the main university campus in St Lucia.

Since 1911, Emmanuel has stood for excellence in all round education and has had seven Rhodes Scholars during its history. Its graduates have gone on to make a major contribution to Australia in many areas, including as doctors, scientists, teachers, engineers, lawyers and judges, politicians, ambassadors and diplomats, and church leaders.

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Bachelor of Arts in politics and biblical studies and Diploma in Public Administration (The University of Queensland), Scholar in Theology (Australian College of Theology), Master of Theology in Biblical Theology, (SE Asian Graduate School of Theology), Doctorate of Philosophy, Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University, Sydney.

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Former Positions:

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‘The one who dies with the most toys wins’? (Mark 10:17-31)

He was rich, he was young, he was powerful. He was a ruler, he held a position of responsibility. You may say he was ‘great’. It may be your aspiration now while still young and an undergraduate to become rich and very successful in your chosen career. The earlier in life you can do that, the better you may feel. After all, money gives you purchasing power and property - nothing quite like personal prosperity. Is that why you have come here?

A young friend whom I have known since he was a small boy, secured a job in the city of London after graduating from University. He worked for Morgan Stanley and did so for long, long hours, working late into the night. He travelled regularly to Europe and the US clinching deals for the firm. Come the end of each year he was on high alert. In addition to a handsome salary he would collect his end-of-year bonus. On one occasion he shared with me the amount. It was huge. Before he was 30 he was a wealthy young man in a senior position.

He told me of a popular saying among the financial whiz kids in the city of London - ‘he who dies with the most toys wins’. Here was a competition to become filthy rich - acquire, acquire, acquire so the person who has the most toys when he is on his deathbed wins the race. I question that.

Your net worth and Wall Street

Jennifer Openshaw in her book, *What is your Net Worth?* argues that your self worth is your net worth. Who you really are, your identity as a person, is based on the abundance of the things you possess. I saw my young friend in England in December, 2009. He had been without a job for almost a year and prospects were not good with the financial tsunami which crossed the Atlantic Ocean from Wall Street. No toys in 2009.

In the movie “Wall Street” (1987), a man called Gekko makes a memorable speech that resonated for two decades as a value system. He addresses shareholders of the Teldar Paper Company, “The point is, ladies and gentlemen, that greed - for the lack of a better word - is good. Greed is right, greed works, greed clarifies, cuts through, captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed in all its forms - greed for life, for money, for love, for knowledge - has marked the upward move of mankind. And greed - you mark my words - will not only save Teldon Paper but that other malfunctioning corporation called the USA.”

The core value for Mr Gekko was ‘greed is good’, the same one that Alan Greenspan implicitly endorsed while 13th Chairman of the Federal Reserve of

the US from 1987-2006. I wonder now after October 2008 how the public feels about large salaries and bonuses for bankers. Their values shape them.

Your core values now in 2010 will shape your future, your choices, and the worth you place on yourself. I am interested to learn of the value system that propels people because they are indicators of the future contours of their lives.

Let's go back to our rich young ruler to see his core values. He knelt down before Jesus - rich young executives don't do that, by the way. We learn about his value system. Jesus, in fact, questioned him directly about his core values. Jesus asked him if he respected life and those who gave him life (mother and father). Did he continue to honour them? And not just because his father was his banker for his first century tertiary education. Did he respect the lives of others, holding them to be sacred and therefore never to be taken wilfully or inadvertently by the way he drove his chariot? Was this core value sacred?

Tiger Woods' tale

Did he respect his life's partner - not cheating on her? Yes, he was faithful. The Sydney based paper, *The Sun Herald*, today has as its headlines, "The King of Swings 13 Minute Tale of Sin". It is about the press conference the disgraced golfer, Tiger Woods, called. He could not say what the rich young ruler said. Tiger said, "I felt that I had worked hard my entire life and deserved to enjoy all the temptations around me. Thanks to money and fame I did not have to go far to find them." But he went on. "I know people want to find out how I could be so selfish. People want to know how I could have done those things to my wife Elin and to my children. I have made you question who I am and how I could have done those things."

What makes Tiger tick? His values. It was what made the rich young ruler tick - his core values. The rich young ruler did not steal - not another man's wife, nor his possessions. His core values prevented him from doing so. Jesus checked him out about truth-telling, and assassination of another's reputation he had not done. He had not defrauded or cheated in his business, he was a direct person to deal with. 'His word was his bond.' London became the financial capital of the world because an Englishman's word was his bond. A business deal could once be sealed on a handshake - but not any more.

Jesus was going through the core value system of the great words (commandments) from God. The rich young ruler was quite a guy. Not many would have ticked the boxes he did. From his youth he had learned the great words or core foundational values. He must have been puzzled at first and then

reflected on the commandment Jesus left out. Jesus was a fantastic teacher and interacted with people so he could meet their needs.

In the end greed is not good

The commandment Jesus did not directly name was the 10th - "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, his ox or ass - workhorse or transport or anything that is his." But Jesus knew how to test him because he knew his problem - and the way forward. We are told that this rich young ruler had great possessions. It could also be accurately said that great possessions had him. Here was his addiction. Here was the box he could not tick - "I have not coveted."

That is why in his case, only his case, in all the teaching of Jesus someone was told to "cash in all your possessions, give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven - and come follow me".

"Hey," the young man thought. "Is he serious? Everybody is greedy for other people's intellectual gifts, or jobs, houses or women. Do I hear right? Give to the poor. No way, Jose, you don't catch me!"

But he had been caught. Things mattered more to him than people. He had lots, yet wanted more. Like any addiction, feeding it makes it worse, not better. Radical action was needed to kill the addiction. His core value system had this one devastating negative value and that was undoing him as a person seeking eternal life. We read "Jesus looking at him, loved him." He wanted to meet this person's deepest need and give him as a gift what he really needed - eternal life.

"Help! I am scared of death." The one who dies with the most toys is terrified. He cannot take them with him. At an early age he had conquered so much but in the end he was conquered by his possessions. He thought that he could now do 'the eternal life' requirement. Jesus' teaching was that rescue from addiction and rescue from death come from above. It cannot be earned but to lay hold of it one must surrender the addictions. What must *I* do? No, (v. 27) God rescues and you must face yourself if you want eternal life.

Our University anthem which we will sing at the end of this convocation also looks down the passage of time - not just the present pressing moment of lectures and the joys of under-graduate life.

After youthful joys are fled,
Comes old age, with painful tread,
Then - the grave lies waiting!

It repeats, "Then the grave lies waiting." Our value system must not put possessions before our relationships. People matter more than things, or even success.

The rich young ruler's core values were largely good ones but his one addiction undid him. At the end as he faced the grave, how would it be for him? He refused to give up what he could not keep and lost that which he could have had with certainty forever. It was a tragic decision on his part.

You have three years to learn an enormous amount about your chosen field. You could go on to make it in your profession. You could become wealthy.

But if you have inconsistent core values - unwilling to face an addiction or addictions and the search to become the greatest, how will it be?

The toys are there - lots and lots as 'the grave lies waiting' - but of what use will they be?

The opposite could be the case and I warmly, very warmly, commend to you the person and the teaching of Jesus. He offers new beginnings, a full life.

Tim's tremendous case

In conclusion here is a true story of my friend Tim.

A young man had finished his degree. He asked if he might come to Cambridge and for me to be his tutor for a year. The reason? He was going into business and, having completed his MBA, felt unprepared for what lay ahead. Another friend who lectured for the MBA at the Judge Institute in Cambridge told me there were grave deficiencies in that course. It had a narrow and distorted view of humanity, was self-serving, non-relational, amoral and did not touch core values.

For a year, Tim and I met at least once a week in a long one-to-one tutorial. We studied Jesus' teaching on money and relationships; we looked at the core values Jesus presented and compared them with those that Tim held. It was a great time. At the end he decided to go into the family firm, a multi-million dollar business and bank his father had established and built up in the US. By 36 Tim was a multi-millionaire, but his wife and young family always came first - there was no money addiction. He is a great person to know.

Last year at 38 a major cancer was discovered. He was unphased by it all. He was not fearful. Jesus had removed the fear even if the grave lay waiting for him

now. Fully recovered, we met in Sydney last November. He showed me his scar (in public!) - an uninhibited USA boy. He knew that even though he had walked through the valley of the shadow of death, he feared no evil - unlike the rich young ruler. His life reflects his core values.

You will have in one sense failed as a member of Emmanuel even if you get a 1st for your degree if you leave this place without having examined yourself carefully, your values and your relationships - they are all predictable indicators of how it will be out there 'after youthful joys are fled' and when 'the grave lies waiting'.

If you exploit others now, sexually or in any other ways, you will not have good secure relationships now or in the future. If you cheat (plagiarising) now, you will be untrustworthy then. If you are tight-fisted now, you will have no beneficial relationships. It is all so predictable. Now is the critical time while you are here at College to do what my friend Tim did - explore core values.

Mark 10:17-31

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions - and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”



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