



JESUS SAID

What good is it
to **GAIN** the whole world
but **LOSE** your soul?

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I used to smoke a lot of marijuana. But the first time I got stoned after becoming a Christian I felt embarrassed in God's presence. I discovered that dope made it hard for me to control silly thoughts and treat God with reverence. It was awkward and I felt ashamed. So I stopped smoking marijuana and haven't touched it since. That was thirty-five years ago.

When I stopped smoking dope I gave up something from this world so I could be sure of having life in the age to come. You might think it was no loss. And besides, Christians should obey the law anyway. Well, to that I say, 'Yes, we should obey the law' (and I would have acted on that I'm sure), but as for 'no loss'? Well, that's simplistic. People smoke dope because they have interesting experiences. I certainly felt a sense of loss in giving it up.

I think I was living out what Jesus meant when he said, "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his soul?"

This world offers all kinds of experiences. Many of them are connected to wealth and power. So was Jesus speaking against money and power? Was he saying only the destitute and feeble can ever know God and win eternal life? No. It's not wrong to own money or possessions nor have power over others. History records many emperors, kings, politicians and public servants who have been devoted to God.

Jesus's point is that there's nothing in this life worth having ... if the having of it... means you can't worship God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. I couldn't do that smoking dope.

This experience of choosing God over something in the world has continued. In the early years of my working life there were situations where I could have cheated and deceived people for financial gain. Indeed, my stubborn refusal was a frustration to an early employer.

As the years have rolled on, the challenges have changed. These days they're more likely to be internal. For example, with a particular decision I need to make sure I'm not putting personal pleasure ahead of the needs of others.

So how is Jesus challenging you? Are you being honest with yourself... and God? Have you prayed? Is there something you need to give up so that you can have God for all eternity? If there is, then take action.

Prayer: Dear God, give me a fierce honesty to make sure nothing in this world keeps me from being with you forever.

Verse: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his soul?" Mark 8:36