

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 23 – Materialism – (What’s not to love?)

Bradford Neal
Valley Bible Church
www.valleybible.net

Introduction

We don’t find the word materialism in the bible. However you hear about it a lot in Christian circles. It is a good catch all term for the things we are going to be discussing today.

Define Materialism:

“A tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values”¹

“A preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things”²

What’s the Problem?

¹ Timothy 6:10 *“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.”*

Money is just a material that God has created...it may be seashells, beads, furs, gems, “precious” metals, linen, electronics, you name it...Money is just material things that have been assigned a specific value by man. In and of itself money is neither good or evil it is just is. So money is not the problem because...In and of itself money is morally neutral.

Simply having money, no matter the amount, is never condemned in the Bible. It turns out that it is our view and use of money and possessions that make it good or evil. Money and possessions, just like every other good thing that God has given, sinful man has figured out how to corrupt and pervert.

² Romans 1:28-31 *“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”*

As believers we are still afflicted with, but hopefully actually struggling with, the flesh which retains its taint of sin. Just like all of the other topics we have been addressing, when we are NOT “walking in the spirit” (Eph 5:18) and NOT letting the “word of Christ richly dwell within you” (Col 3:16) we will instead be walking in the flesh and will manifest those things that God has condemned. So in regard to money and possessions the problem comes when we are walking in the flesh and begin demonstrate the attitudes and actions that God has condemned.

How does materialism manifest itself?

Putting your faith and hope in and finding security in material resources.

¹ Google definition, accessed August 17, 2014

² *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, MA: G&C Merriam Co., 1981)

¹Timothy 6:17 *“Instruct those who are rich in this present world **not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.**”* (emphasis mine)

Note that the having of wealth here is not condemned...the wealthy are just are warned not to put their trust or hope in money because it is uncertain...even imaginary.

^{Proverbs 18:10-11} *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe. A rich man’s wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall **in his own imagination.**”* (emphasis mine)

Looking to money and possessions rather than God to provide hope, security, peace and comfort are condemned.

Idolatry

Romans 1:22-23, 25; Galatians 4:8-9

The problem is we worship the stuff rather than the Provider.

Fear/Anxiety/Worry

Hebrews 13:5-6; Philippians 4:6; Matthew 6:25-34

We look to the stuff rather than the Provider for security, peace and comfort.

Being un-charitable and hating to give money away. This may manifest itself in many areas of our lives.

Not caring for God purposes and priorities

^{Malachi 2:8, 10} *“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings...Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”*

Not caring for your family

¹ Timothy 5:8 *“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

also Mark 7:11

Not caring for people...both within and outside of the church

¹ John 3:17 *“But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”*

also Luke 10:29-36

Selfishness

Proverbs 23:6-8; Philippians 2:3

In each of these instances I am of the opinion that at the root of un-charitableness is selfishness

Pursuing the acquisition of money at all cost and boasting about what we have and do.

^{James 4:13-16} *“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” **But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.**”*

¹John 2:15-16 *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and **the boastful pride of life,** is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

Pride

Psalm 10:4

We think we are the ones, who through our own strength, cause the good outcome. We have missed the fact that God not only gives the wealth He is also the one who gives us the power/ability to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Being a hoarder

Luke 12:15-21 *“Then He said to them, ‘Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.’ And He told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’ So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

Greed

Psalm 10:3

Hoarding is just one form of greed. Literally a desire to have more. Often translated covetous. This goes hand in hand with the reasons people are uncharitable, lustful, envious and discontent. It is also listed often with sexual immorality which is just another manifestation of desiring to have more (Romans 1:29; Ephesians 4:19, 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 2 Peter 2:14).

Pursuing self-indulgence and comfort

James 4:1-3 *“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*

Lust/Covet

1 John 2:15-16

Literally a strong desire. Using what we have been given to satisfy our own fleshly desires as opposed to God’s purposes

We love money

1 Tim 6:9-10 *“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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.”*

Hebrews 13:5 *“Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,’”*

Discontent

We are not satisfied with what God has provided. We don’t believe that what we have is sufficient or enough for the situation we are in. If only I had XX amount more I would be happy.

Envy

Feeling displeasure at the advantage or prosperity of another

What is the solution to materialism?

We need to first understand who God is. We need to understand that He is the sovereign creator of the universe and as such OWNS EVERYTHING.

Psalm 24:1-2 *“The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.”*

Haggai 2:8 *“‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares the LORD of hosts.”*

In His sovereignty He may chose to provide a lot or a little in the way of material resources and possessions. But we also need to understand and believe that because He is sovereign He is intimately aware of our situation and has provided exactly what we need for the moment. We also need to understand that because He owns it all He may chose to redistribute His possessions at will (Job 1:21-22).

Second we need to understand who we are. Because God owns everything we OWN NOTHING and so are just managing someone one else’s, in this case God’s, stuff. That makes us stewards. As seen in parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30) stewards owned nothing and often times were even owned themselves. Stewards were given responsibilities by the master not rights. They could receive reward for the faithful management of the master’s resources or punishment for foolish management. What we have been provided God expects us to manage well (1 Peter 4:10). Also if we view our selves as stewards it will help us avoid the struggle of whom to serve...God or Money (Luke 16:13).

Third we need to understand the primary reason why God has provided us with money and material resources to manage. We have been provided money and resources to fulfill God’s purposes in promoting the Gospel and in so doing bring Him glory and honor.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: You find a large fresh door ding in your newly purchased vehicle and an anonymous note under your wiper that says, “Sorry I damaged your vehicle.” How do you respond? What do you focus upon to be walking in the spirit?

Someone Else #1: Your close friend grumbles a lot about their financial state making statements like “If only I had what you have. Then I could relax and be happy.” What questions might you ask to find out what is the issue? What scriptures might you share?

Yourself #2: You discover that your parents are about to lose their home due to what are communicated as a series of unfortunate events and will not have the resources to find place to stay. What biblical principles come into play? How do you determine your response to the situation?

Someone Else #2: Your friend confides in you that they are a couple of months late in paying their utilities but then also laments that their spouse is never home because they are working lots of extra hours in order to take a family vacation. What do you share with your friend? How do you approach the spouse?

Conclusion

Materialism is rampant. We see manifestations of it all around. Money however is not the problem. It is our attitudes toward it and the use of it that make it good or evil. Christ has

said that where we find our treasure is an excellent indicator of our hearts toward Him (Matthew 6:19-21). Taking time to “let the word of Christ dwell richly within you” and to reflecting on who God is, who we are and His purposes in providing us material resources can help us avoid the manifestations of materialism in our lives.

