



The Best Things in Life are Not Things

Introduction:

The managing editor of Money Magazine, summing up a study his magazine did, concluded that money has become the number one obsession of Americans. “Money has become the new sex in this country.”

Newsweek Magazine has described Americans as having achieved a new plane of consciousness called “transcendental acquisition.”

Television and advertising convinces us we need it all and Mastercard promises us we can have it all.

Webster says, this about materialism, “A preoccupation with, or tendency to see after or stress material rather than spiritual things.”

Thorndike & Barnhart Junior Dictionary says this about materialism, “A person who care too much for the things of this world neglects spiritual things.”

Jesus says, “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.”

Truth About Things

1. We all struggle with materialism.
 - a) The Poor – “Why don’t I have enough?”
 - b) The Rich – “How much is enough?”



2. We don’t feel comfortable with materialism.

John Stott: “We cannot maintain a good life of extravagance and a good conscience simultaneously. Or the other has to be sacrificed. Either we reduce our affluence by giving generously and helping those in need, or we keep our affluence and smother our conscience. We have to choose between man and God.”
3. Never satisfy significant needs. It is good to buy things that money can buy but it is better to have thing that money cannot buy.

Money can buy medicine, but not health.
Money can buy a house, but not a home.
Money can buy companionship, but not friends.
Money can buy entertainment, but not happiness.
Money can buy food, but not an appetite.
Money can buy a bed, but not sleep.
Money can buy an agreement, but not peace.
Money can buy a book, but not a knowledge.
Money can buy pleasures, but not a purpose.
Money can buy the good like, but not eternal life.



Monitoring My Materialism



Questions to ask myself:

1. Am I envious or jealous because of what other have? After a person his mark in the world, a lot people begin showing up with erasers.

Envy springs from a basic insecurity about our own self worth. As Elizabeth O'Conner has rightly notes, whenever a person is envious of another, you can be sure that individual has never fully recognized and accepted his or her own gifts.

2. Is my appreciation for what God has given me lessened? Weakness of our age; Our inability to distinguish our needs from our greeds.
3. Have I lost the joy of giving? Giving with glad and generous hearts has a way of routing out the tough old miser within us. Even the poor need to know that they can give. Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. It destroys the demon greed.
4. Am I preoccupied with things in my life? Truth be known, many of us live more for the world that is going than the world that is coming. It takes time, lots of time, to manage all "things" we accumulate. Time, in the final analysis, is the ultimate resource. Where are you spending your time? Pleasing God, or managing your assets? The Lord says, "I would like you to be free from concern." (I Corinthians 7:32)
5. Do I place my value and hope on possessions? I Timothy 6:17, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainly of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."
Materialism is putting hop in riches or possessions.
Materialism is an issue of priorities and possessions.
6. Do I think "Things will make me happy?"
7. Do I continually want more? Some statistician has pointed out that an average man today has 484 wants, or desires, compared to 72 a century ago. Of these, 94 can classified as necessities, compared with 16 one hundred years ago. There were only 200 articles being offered for sale then, while today the total is well over 32,000.
8. Am I enslaved to debt? Most people would be happy to pay as they go, if only they could catch up on where they have been.
9. Do I buy a lot on credit? "People can divided into three classes: (1) Haves, (2) Have nots, and (3) the have not paid for what they haves." (Earl Wilson)
10. Have a less of desire to serve God now that I have things? "Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (I Timothy 6:10)



Choices that Bring Contentment



Philippians 4:10-13

(10) How grateful I am and how I praise the Lord that you are helping me again. I know you have always been anxious to send what you could, but for a while you didn't have the chance.

(11) Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. (12) I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation, whether it be a full stomach or hunger, plenty or want; (13) for I can do everything God asks me to with the help of Christ who gives me the strength and power.

1. Understand Timing: Eccl. 3:1 There is a right time for everything.
 2. Putting people first. II Timothy 3: 1-5 (1) You may as well know this too. Timothy, that in the last days it is going to be very difficult to be Christian. (2) For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them, and thoroughly bad. (3) They will be hardheaded and never give in to others; they will be constant liars and troublemakers and will think of nothing of immorality. They will be rough and cruel, and sneer at those who try to be good. (4) They will betray their friends; they will be hotheaded, puffed up with pride, and prefer good times to worshipping God. (5) They go to church, yes, but they won't really believe anything they hear. Don't be taken in by people like that.
 3. Develop the habit of giving things away. "... freely you received, freely give." (Matt. 10:8) In 1889 steel king Andrew Carnegie wrote in his essay Gospel of Wealth that the life of a rich man should fall into two periods – first, that of acquiring wealth; the second, that redistributing it.
 4. Learning to enjoy things without owning them. Owning things is obsession in our culture. If we own it, we feel we can control it; and if we can control it, we feel it will give us more pleasure. The idea is an illusion. Many things in life can be enjoyed without possessing or controlling them. Share things. Enjoy the beach without feeling you have to buy a piece of it. Enjoy public parks and libraries. (Richard Foster)
 5. Cut down on things that control you. "Money is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If it gets on top and you get under it, you will become its slave." (E. Stanley Jones)
 6. Express daily gratitude for your blessings. There is nothing wrong with nice things. "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" I Timothy 4:4
 7. Write down what really brings contentment and happiness.
 8. Don't confuse tempted benefits with eternal ones.
- 1) What did I do today that helped someone else?
 - 2) What did I do today that will live beyond my time?

