

## 1. The Influence of Materialism (1Q 2018—Stewardship: Motives of the Heart)

**Biblical material:** 1 John 2:16, 17; Luke 14:26–33; 12:15–21; Deut. 8:10–14; 1 Tim. 6:10; John 15:5; Gal. 2:20; Romans 12:2.

### Quotes

- We live in a materialist world, and materialism appeals so strongly to humanity, no matter where. *Wole Soyinka*
- It is the preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents us from living freely and nobly. *Bertrand Russell*
- Generosity is to materialism what kryptonite is to Superman. *Lloyd Shadrach*
- To turn the tide of materialism in the Christian community, we desperately need bold models of kingdom-centered living. Despite our need to do it in a way that doesn't glorify people, we must hear each other's stories about giving or else our people will not learn to give. *Randy Alcorn*
- There can be no doubt that this possessive clinging to things is one of the most harmful habits in the [christian] life. Because it is so natural, it is rarely recognized for the evil that it is. But its outworkings are tragic. *A. W. Tozer*
- Many Christians and Christian leaders have been neutralized by the love of money and materialism. The homage paid to affluence becomes a burden that saps our energy as well as our love for God and other people. Though repentance and the cleansing of forgiveness, we can rid ourselves of this burden and begin to let God transform our value system. Like Jesus and Paul, we can learn to be content with what we have, living modestly in order that we may give liberally to the work of the kingdom and to meet the needs of others. *John Wimber*

### Questions

In what ways do the materialistic influences of the world affect us? How do we apply Christian principles today as we deal with financial issues, credit, loans, consumerism, and all the advertizing that encourages us to spend on things? How can we avoid having misplaced priorities in the way we live our lives and use our resources?

### Bible summary

1 John 2:16, 17 tells us that materialistic desires come from the world, and do not last. Jesus in Luke 14:26–33 reminds us of what our true priorities should be, and that we should count the cost of our actions beforehand. Jesus also warned about focusing on material things: “Watch out, and beware of all greedy thoughts and actions, for a person’s life isn’t summed up by all the things they own.” Luke 12:15 FBV. He then went on to tell the parable of the foolish man who built bigger barns but then died. God warned his people in Deut. 8:10–14 not to become reliant on their wealth and to forget about him. “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” 1 Tim. 6:10 NIV. Jesus reminds us that he is the vine and we are the branches, and we need to remain connected to him. John 15:5. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us. Gal. 2:20. “Don’t follow the ways of this world; instead be transformed by the spiritual renewal of your mind so you can demonstrate what God’s will really is—good, pleasing, and perfect.” Rom. 12:2 FBV.

## **Comment**

Materialism is a constant threat to our Christian experience. We are bombarded on all sides with advertising and information about what we should be buying, and what we should *want* to buy. None of us are immune from the consumer society in which we live.

The challenge is to admit this, and then deal with it. It certainly is not enough to say “I don’t watch ads,” or “I’m not influenced by others to buy anything.” Our whole society is built around being consumers, and we do indeed need basic things in order to live.

The problem comes in the way we think about what we want. We are conditioned to want more than we need or can afford. We are taught to be competitive in our purchase, wanting to have more or better than our friends and neighbors.

Jesus was very much aware of the temptation of gaining possessions. He warned that we are not to value others by their wealth or lack of it. He also told us to consider what our life’s priorities are, and how we should set about storing up treasure in heaven.

He gives clear advice on how to live without becoming materialistic. His cautionary tale ends: “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’ This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:20, 21 FBV. This is the conclusion to Jesus’ story about the man who went on building bigger and bigger barns, and then died. His point: what is the profit in such materialistic investment? He expands on this to his disciples: “That’s why I tell you don’t worry about life, about what to eat, or about what clothes you should wear. Life is about more than food, and the body is about more than wearing clothes.” Luke 12:22-3 FBV.

How very different this is to the way the vast majority live in our upside-down world! Even the have-nots still look for material advancement in the same way as those who are already have. It is not the quantity of possessions, but the desire for them...

## **Ellen White Comments**

When Christ came to the earth, humanity seemed to be fast reaching its lowest point. The very foundations of society were undermined. Life had become false and Artificial... Disgusted with fable and falsehood, seeking to drown thought, men turned to infidelity and materialism. Leaving eternity out of their reckoning, they lived for the present. {Ed 74-5}

Eve thought the discourse of the serpent very wise. She viewed the prohibition of God unjust. She looked with longing desire upon the tree laden with fruit which appeared very delicious. The serpent was eating it with apparent delight. She longed for this fruit above all the fruit of every variety which God had given her a perfect right to use. {RH, February 24, 1874 par. 13}

The majority of the world permit earthly possessions to eclipse heavenly attractions. They set their affections upon earthly things, and turn away from God. What a grievous sin it is that men will not come to their senses, and understand how foolish it is to permit inordinate affections for earthly things to expel the love of God from the heart. When the love of God is expelled, the love of the world quickly flows in to supply the vacuum. The Lord alone can cleanse the soul temple from the moral defilement. {CS 136}

Men seem moved with an insane desire to procure earthly possessions. Every species of dishonesty is practiced in order to accumulate wealth. {CS 137}

Prepared September 17, 2017 © Jonathan Gallagher 2017