

THE PROBLEM OF MATERIALISM

(Mark 8:36-37)

I. The meaning of materialism.

- A. Materialism is defined as: preoccupation with or emphasis on material objects, comforts, and considerations, with a disinterest in or rejection of spiritual, intellectual, or cultural values.
- B. Notice in the definition that it is a preoccupation that leads to the disinterest or even rejection of spiritual values.
- C. Many act as if it is a respectable sin.
- D. Ira Rice wrote, "The worship of finite things of this world rather than the infinite things of the Spirit of God is one of the greatest curses the church faces today."
- E. What materialism does is replace God on the throne of our heart with the desire for and the pursuit of money and things of this life.
- F. Is there anything wrong with owning TV's?
- G. Is there anything wrong with owning cars?
- H. Is there anything wrong with buying clothes?
 - 1. We know the answer to this is not yes or no.
 - 2. The answer is maybe.
- I. There is no certain amount of money one can make that makes one materialistic.
 - 1. There were rich people in the Bible who were not materialistic (Abraham, Job, Barnabas).
 - 2. There were people who weren't rich who were materialistic (Achan and Gehazi).
- J. Material prosperity and materialism are two different things.
- K. The attitude in back of materialism is addressed by Paul (1 Timothy 6:9).
 - 1. The phrase "they that will" has a reference to a deliberate mindset.
 - 2. The desire of these people is to get rich.
 - 3. The getting and keeping of wealth is that on which their hearts are set.
- L. So, materialism is a mindset that replaces the getting of wealth and goods over one's relationship with God.

II. The manifestation of materialism.

- A. There are many different reasons for materialism.
 - 1. We believe that money and goods protect us.
 - 2. We believe that money and goods define us.
 - 3. We believe that money and goods enliven us.
- B. There are signs of materialism in our own lives for which we need to be looking so we don't fall into its trap.
- C. We show a spirit of materialism when we are intent on accumulating things.

1. How much of what we own do we truly need?
 2. Someone once said that the religion of first class is taking the place of the religion of Jesus Christ.
 3. Luke 12:15.
- D. We show a spirit of materialism when we spend more time shopping and looking for things than we do in the pursuit of spiritual aims.
1. How much time is spent in stores and how much time is spent in God's word?
 2. When the time spent getting things is more than the time spent in worship, study or benevolence, we are showing signs of a problem.
- E. If we get mad when someone preaches or teaches about this topic we are showing signs of a problem (James 4:1-2).
- F. We show signs of being materialistic when we turn from the truth of God's word in order to appease people so they won't leave the congregation.
1. This has happened in congregations across the world.
 2. The congregation has something come up that costs money and some in the congregation who have that are appeased in various ways in order to keep their money from leaving.
- G. We show signs of materialism when we are so caught up in our work that we fail to attend the way we should trying to earn more money.
- H. We show signs of materialism by accumulating great amounts of debt.
1. The average indebted household is \$15, 608 deep in credit card debt.
 2. We need to remember that the borrower is slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7).

III. The madness of materialism.

- A. Falling into the trap of materialism is madness because these things cannot do for us that which we hope they can.
- B. They don't make us happy.
 1. Ecclesiastes 2:11.
 2. Ecclesiastes 5:10-11.
 3. 1 Timothy 6:9-10.
- C. They are going to perish.
 1. Matthew 6:19.
 2. 2 Peter 3:10-11.
- D. It will separate us from God, the giver of all good things, here on earth (Isaiah 59:1-2).
- E. It will keep us out of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9).
- F. The Bible describes riches as "uncertain" (1 Timothy 6:17).
 1. They are such because they can disappear more quickly than they appeared.
 2. We can lose riches through many different means (mismanagement, theft, fire, deflation, etc.).

- G. We need to remember that all the things we accumulate, and all the wealth we can make, will just be left for those to whom we leave it when we die (Ecclesiastes 2:18-21).
- H. The chasing after it is pure madness.

IV. The method of overcoming materialism.

- A. If we can remember three words that start with the letter “c” we can overcome materialism.
- B. The first word is “confession.”
 - 1. We need to realize if we are materialistic and then confess that to God (1 John 1:9).
 - 2. All the signs we discussed previously will reveal to us whether or not we are materialistic.
 - 3. God will forgive us if we confess that sin to Him and repent of it.
 - 4. We then need to confess that fault to a brother or sister in Christ who can hold us accountable (James 5:16).
 - a. I have come to believe this type confession is neglected among the vast majority of Christians.
 - b. We need to have a close Christians group of friends who will be able to help us with our problems and hold us accountable with our weaknesses.
- C. The second word is “contentment.”
 - 1. It is interesting that right before Paul told Timothy about the problems of seeking after wealth, he told Timothy to preach to Christians to be content (1 Timothy 6:8).
 - 2. Content is defined as “satisfied with what one is or has; not wanting more or anything else. “
 - 3. It is a learned attribute (Philippians 4:11).
 - 4. It is also a command (Hebrews 13:5).
 - 5. We are a rich people in America, but we are not a content people.
 - 6. We need to learn to make due with what we have and not constantly be pursuing bigger, better, faster things.
 - 7. God blesses us with all the things we need if we can just learn to be content with them (Matthew 6:31-32).
 - 8. Too many times we are busy running after things that we don’t need, we miss out on the blessings that we do need.
- D. The third word is “commitment.”
 - 1. We need to make a commitment to God that we are going to seek Him above all else.
 - 2. Matthew 6:33.
 - 3. Colossians 3:1-3.
 - 4. We want to be a friend of God, not the world.
 - 5. Loving the things of the world is condemned (1 John 2:15-17).
 - 6. When we love the world we are enemies of God (James 4:4).

7. We have to be committed to God and His way of life that is best for us in order to keep from being overcome by materialism.