

## Week 3: Fighting Materialism

- **WELCOME REVIEW OF LAST TIME**

- **History, Heart, and Recipients of Generosity**

- Anything stand out over the last week as you thought about those things we discussed last week?
- Any stories of victory or growth in the areas of stewardship or generosity that anyone would like to share?

- **DISCUSS/PRAY – SMALL GROUPS**

- Break Into small groups and discuss these two questions:
- What are some practical and spiritual things that proved to be hurdles to generosity last year?
- What is one prayer request you have for the group that we can pray for right now with regards to the area of generosity to the church, the needy, or both?
- Pray together.

- **EXERCISE**

- If you had 1 week with no financial or other physical limitations, be honest, what would the first two or three things you'd want to spend that week doing?

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- Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- If you had \$10,000 given to you with no strings attached, be honest, what would you do with it?

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- Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- In the last 30 days, be honest, what “thing” that you either have or want has consumed the largest percentage of your time?

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- Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- **Review Chapters 3-4 of Treasure Principle**

- “[King Tut], who lived in opulence and called himself king, is in the misery of a Christless eternity.” –Alcorn
- “Tut’s life was tragic because of an awful truth discovered too late – he couldn’t take his treasures with him.” – Alcorn
- “ If you handle his money faithfully, Christ will give you true riches – eternal ones. By clinging to what isn’t ours, we forgo the opportunity to be granted ownership in heaven. But by generously distributing God’s property on earth, we will become property owners in heaven!” – Alcorn
- “But isn’t it wrong to be motivated by reward? No, it isn’t. If it were, Christ wouldn’t offer it to us as a motivation. Reward is His idea, not ours.” - Alcorn
- “My heart always goes where I put God’s money.” - Alcorn
- “ He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he’s moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain.” - Alcorn

- “I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness.” - Rockefeller
- “We think we own our possessions, but too often, they own us.” – Alcorn
- “Acquiring a possession may push me into redefining my priorities. If I buy a boat, I’ll want to justify my purchase by using the boat, which may mean frequent weekends away from my family or church, making me unavailable to attend my daughter’s basketball game or teach a Sunday school class or work in the nursery. **The problem isn’t the boat or television. The problem is me. It’s a law of life, the tyranny of things.**” – Alcorn

- **Biblical Observations About Materialism**

- **First, a few definitions of materialism:**

- Materialism is spending money you don’t have on stuff you don’t need. – Excel Ministries
- Materialism is a fruitless attempt to find meaning outside of God. - Alcorn
- Materialism is choosing and pursuing any material thing as a temporary or permanent replacement for God as the center, priority, or emphasis of our lives.

- **1 Timothy 6:10**<sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

- **Solomon – wisest man ever to live: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11** I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.” But behold, this also was vanity.<sup>1a</sup> <sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, “It is mad,” and of pleasure, “What use is it?” <sup>3</sup> I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. <sup>4</sup> I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. <sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. <sup>6</sup> I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. <sup>7</sup> I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines,<sup>1b</sup> the delight of the sons of man. <sup>9</sup> So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. <sup>10</sup> And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. <sup>11</sup> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

- **Jesus – God in human form: Matthew 6:21** “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Notice, it’s not the other way around...it starts with your treasure. Your heart follows your treasure.

- **Solomon again: Ecclesiastes 5:10-15**

- <sup>10</sup> He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.
- <sup>11</sup> When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?
- <sup>12</sup> Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.
- <sup>13</sup> There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, <sup>14</sup> and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.
- <sup>15</sup> As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.

- CS Lewis: “We are halfhearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.

- What does this discussion teach us about God?

- What does this discussion reveal to you about yourself?
- **The False Promises of Materialism**
  - Human nature and our modern culture scream out false promises about “Things”.
    - If you just had **nicer clothes**, you’d be more accepted.
    - If you just lived in that **neighborhood**, owned that **house**, you could have more **friends** because you could have more people over.
    - If you just work a few more hours this week, your boss will finally notice you, and give you that **raise**.
    - If you just get that **raise**, you can buy that **car**, take that **vacation**, give your kids or your wife better **gifts**.
    - If you just stop worrying about the future and get that new **tv** you want now, you’ll be happier...and YOLO, so just get it.
    - You’ve worked hard, you deserve a **break**, you NEED to unwind, so just go **out to dinner** tonight and enjoy yourself.
    - If you were a better parent, you’d get your kids that **go-cart**, that **gaming system**, that **cell phone**, and let them play **soccer** and take **music lessons** and participate in **summer camp** and take them to **Disney** once a year....you’re going to need to work more hours to earn more money so you can be **more popular in your home**.
    - See that movie star? They look happy...must be because they have **money** and can do whatever they want.
    - You should really work hard so that you can have this thing, or get that thing, or prove this to that person. (This one is particularly dangerous, because it starts with a Biblical Truth....we should work really hard so that we can have something...but the reward we’re called to pursue is not ultimately in this world.)
  - Stop and glance back at the words in bold above....I want to make a bold (no pun intended) statement. None of those things, in and of themselves is wrong, sinful, or foolish to pursue.
  - As Alcorn said in the chapter this week...the problem isn’t the things...we can’t allow ourselves to get caught up exclusively evaluating each thing we own and trying to decide if God wants me to enjoy that or not....we have to consider the heart motivation. Why do I want that, how is God glorified in my pursuit of that, and how would He be glorified by how I would use it once I had it.
  - What are some other false promises that the world and our own hearts tell us about money and possessions?
  - Everyone answer....what’s ONE lie about possessions/accomplishments you’re tempted to believe?
- **The Cure for Materialism**
  - **Biblical Commands**
    - **I John 2:15** “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”
    - **Colossians 3:1-2** “Set your affections on things above, not on things below.”
    - **Matthew 6:19-21** “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”
  - **Focus on the Kingdom** – If we take our eyes off of ourselves and focus on the kingdom, we will see the rewards God has for us. These rewards are eternal as well as temporal.
    - **I Timothy 6:17** As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. <sup>18</sup>They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, <sup>19</sup>thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.
    - **Proverbs 11:24-25** There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.

- **Malachi 3:10** “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.
- **Deuteronomy 15:10**  
Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.
- **Proverbs 28:27**  
He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.
- **Matthew 6:3-4**  
But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

- **DISCUSS – SMALL GROUPS**

- How can you fight to believe the promises of God about generosity vs. materialism?
- Are there any possessions that you either have or have been pursuing that you couldn't or wouldn't consider giving up if God told you to?
- What is the next step in your battle to believe the Biblical Truth and promises about possessions, fight against the lies of materialism, and pursue the current and eternal rewards promised by Jesus?

- **ASSIGNMENTS:**

- 1) Read Chapters 4-5 of The Treasure Principle
- 2) Take 15 minutes each to pray through and meditate on these passages...write down in your journal. Ask the Lord to help you receive the warnings, encouragements, and promises held these passages.
  - Ecclesiastes 2:1-11, especially vs. 11. Ask the Lord to sink the truth of the vanity of striving after possessions and temporal pleasure deep into your heart.
  - Colossians 3:1-2, especially that the Lord would focus your sight on the kingdom, not the things of this world.
  - I Timothy 6:17, especially that the Lord would help you not set your hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God!