

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry Unit 3
Practical Issues
Week 2 – The Challenge of Wealth

Profile of a fool

(Luke 12:13-21) And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" 15 And 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." 16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. 17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 "And 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. 19 '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.'" 20 "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?' 21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Foolish thoughts and actions:

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What is Materialism?

Materialism is a world view that defines identity, fulfillment, security and success in terms of temporal things.

Materialism is also:

(Jer. 2:13) "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water.

(Col. 3:5) Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Materialism is also:

(Heb. 13:5) Let your character be 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," 6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?"

Alcoholism and materialism compared:

Alcoholism	Materialism
1. By hitting the bottle, the alcoholic can get a temporary, pseudo-sense that all is well.	1. By closing some deals, winning an award, or going on a buying spree, we get a temporary sense that things are going great.
2. A double-shot of whisky delivers a temporary thrill, but is followed by a corresponding letdown and dissatisfaction.	2. Material advancement can be temporarily exciting, but increased worry and an acute need for more often follow.
3. The alcoholic never reaches a point where he feels he has finally had enough—he has to constantly feed his expanding habit.	3. The money lover can never get enough—every gain suggests possibilities for even more gain.
4. Alcoholism can interfere with relationships, even making deep relationships and successful family life impossible	4. When materialists destroy their relationships, their families and even their own health, nobody thinks anything of it
5. The alcoholic is often out of touch with his problem.	5. The materialist believes he is only being prudent, only realizing his potential, only providing a good life for his loved ones, only staying out of trouble at work...
6. The alcoholic ignores others' needs and dismisses them as unimportant.	6. The materialist ignores others' needs, and dismisses them as unimportant.

Materialistic Christians?

The Project on Religion and Economic Values at Princeton University surveyed 2000 working Americans and focused on the relationship between religion and economic values. Here's what they discovered:

“The evidence suggests that faith makes little difference to the ways in which people actually conduct their financial affairs.”¹

The survey results revealed that for religious people, there is no conflict between:

- (A) Valuing one's relationship with God
- (B) Valuing making a lot of money

(1 Timothy 6:9) 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. 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 a pang.

(Matthew 6:24) "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

“I don't want to be rich, just comfortable...”

- The United States generates a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$12,360,000,000.²
- There are 233 countries in the world. Our country's GDP is greater than the combined GDP of the bottom 210.³
- The Gross National Income in the U.S. is \$41,400/year. Compare that with the countries below:⁴
 - Haiti: \$390/year
 - Cambodia: \$320/year
 - Ethiopia: \$110/year
 - Berundi: \$90/year
- Half the world—about three billion people—live on less than two dollars a day.⁵
- 20% of the population in the developed nations, consume 86% of the world's goods.⁶

How can we be sure that pursuing a “comfortable” lifestyle by American standards isn't pursuing the GREED that Jesus warns against?

Before you assure yourself that you are unaffected by materialism, consider these questions:

¹ “Pious Materialism: How Americans View Faith and Money”, *Christian Century*, March 3, 1993 by Robert Wuthnow. Full text available at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=238>.

² According to Wikipedia, “A region's gross domestic product, or GDP, is one of the several measures of the size of its economy. The GDP of a country is defined as the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period of time.”

³ CIA World Fact Book (2006 data).

⁴ World Bank (2005 data).

⁵ <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp> (2000 data).

⁶ Ibid. (1998 data)

What are your dreams and aspirations? Are they dominated by career, possessions, and money? Do you have trouble thinking of any other alternatives?

Who do you admire most? Why? Is it because they have the most money and toys?

What kind of advice do you seek about important financial decisions? Do you only ask financial counselors - or do you also ask family members and spiritual mentors?

Do you catch yourself daydreaming about money or possessions you might inherit? How would that inheritance make your life better?

How do you habitually spend disposable time and money? These are two of the truest indices of what we value.

How much debt do you have for non-necessary acquisitions? Your answer to this question may indicate that you can be content with what you have materially - or that you are seeking fulfillment from things.

How do you view retirement? This man viewed it as a well-deserved time to focus on selfish enjoyment. How about you?

How to Struggle Against and Replace Materialism (1 Tim. 6:11)

(1 Timothy 6:9-11) People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1. Learn to trust God for your material needs (Luke 12:22-30)

(Luke 12:22) And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.

(Hebrews 13:5) Let your character be 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," 6 so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?"

Why say this ("I will not be afraid") here?

(Luke 12:23-30) "For life is more than food, and the body than clothing. 24 "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! 25 "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? 26 "If then you cannot do even

a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?²⁷ "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these.²⁸ "But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith! ²⁹ "And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰ "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

Jesus gives us several reasons why we can trust God in this area:

- Vs. 24, 27, 28:

- Vs. 25, 26:

- Vs. 30:

What actions steps can you take to trust God in this way?

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Being Content	Being Discontent
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

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2. Pursue God's kingdom (Luke 12:31-34)

(Luke 12:31) "But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. 32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. 33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. 34 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

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(1 Timothy 6:17-19)** 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. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

Conclusion:

Memory Verses:

1 Tim. 6:9* Living life with the desire to get rich is wrong.

1 Tim. 6:17-19** It's not wrong to be rich, but the rich do have special temptations and unique responsibilities to use their money to have an eternal impact on people.

Assignment:

Your friend, who has diligently been looking for work for several months, comes to you and says she plans to take a job as a security guard working the evening shift. The job pays well – enough to cover her ongoing expenses and pay down her debt, which is considerable. She sees the job as a provision from the Lord, citing the fact that she prayed extensively before the interview and was competing with 20 other applicants for the position. Her new schedule will make it impossible to attend any evening Bible studies for at least 6 months. After her probationary period is over at work, she will have the opportunity to apply for the day shift.

She has come to you looking for advice on what to do. What would you say? Support your response with the use of scripture.