

# The Materialism Trap

“Sale!” “No payments for 90 days.” “Call our toll-free number now to order.” These and other slogans are paraded endlessly before us. Billboards, newspapers, mailings, and other media forms are supported by advertisers who do their best to prove that we need what they offer. Although the advertisements can be informative, they can also create an inordinate desire for material things. God, however, has promised to supply all our needs.

The influences of materialism are all around us, but we need not be snared into its clutches. If our happiness is based on things we possess, then we will be unhappy when they are gone. Job said, “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). His satisfaction was not dependent on his possessions, health, or family but on God alone. As we learn that principle, the Lord will pour contentment into our lives. If we will let Him, He will use everything we have in order to glorify Himself and to further the work of His Kingdom.

**1.** Our attitudes about money and possessions are often derived from the incorrect assumption that we “own” things. In Matthew 25:14, Jesus told of the Kingdom of Heaven being like a man who delivered his goods to his servants while he was away. God has delivered His goods to us,

His servants. What are our responsibilities for the “goods” given to us? How are we accountable to God for our possessions?

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**2.** The dictionary states that *materialism* is the “doctrine that comfort, pleasure, and wealth are the only, or highest, goals or values.” This belief, therefore, reflects the tendency to be more concerned with material goals than with spiritual goals. Compare this to what Jesus said in Luke 12:15-23. Why did God call the rich man a fool? What false views did this man hold that are still held by many today?

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**3.** Does God equate great riches or even modest affluence with materialism? Is it necessary to have great riches and possessions to be caught in the “materialism trap”? Explain your answers.

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**4.** In Matthew 19:24, Jesus told His disciples that, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” In the midst of prosperity, how might our focus be shifted from God? Include some of the temptations the devil might use on those who own great substance. How could these snares be avoided? See 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

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**5.** In Ecclesiastes 5:10,11, the wise man lets us know that riches and possessions do not bring contentment. Still, some suppose that “gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5). Paul strongly categorizes these people as proud, knowing nothing, and destitute of the truth (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Define *contentment*, and explain how we can obtain it. Is contentment (or discontentment) a feeling, a determination of our will, an attitude, or all three? Why? See 1 Timothy 6:6-8,11 and Hebrews 13:5,6.

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**6.** Paul the Apostle learned contentment in a variety of circumstances. Philippians 4:11-13 outlines how he suffered need at one time and prosperity at another. Why do you

suppose God allowed Paul, a chief Apostle, to go through times of great need? through times of abundance? How can we learn contentment when it comes to our material needs?

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**Thought Provoker:** What are your most prized possessions? Are you holding them with a “loose hand”?

### **Key Texts**

Job 1:21; Ecclesiastes 5:10,11; Matthew 19:24; 25:14;  
Luke 12:15-23; Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:3-8,11;  
17-19; Hebrews 13:5,6

### **Other Scriptures Used in This Study**

Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:9,10,15

### **Suggested Verse for Memorization**

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. — Luke 12:15