

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Watch Out!

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Benjamin Franklin once said, "It is the eyes of other people that ruin us. If all but myself were blind, I should want neither a fine house nor fine furniture."

His remark was very perceptive. Sometimes we want more things because our own vision is skewed. But other times we want more things because of our perception of what other people value. Materialism can be a draining sin. We can hurt ourselves with it, and sometimes we let others hurt us when we spend our emotional and financial resources to impress them.

Jesus is well known for dealing with the outcasts of society. Think about it. Every group of people that Jesus dealt with was a needy group. We have little trouble agreeing with this when we think of the poor, the prostitutes, the lepers, and the demon-possessed. But what about the rich people that He dealt with? Were they just as needy? They were, but we don't often think of them in those terms.

Someone once said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?' Then He said to him, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions'" (Luke 12:13-15, NIV).

Webster's Dictionary defines materialism as "the tendency to be more concerned with material things than spiritual values." This is an

interesting definition. Whether you have a little money or a lot, if you spend more time and energy concentrating on your personal financial gain than on God, you are materialistic. How do you know if you are materialistic? Look at your checkbook, credit card statement, and calendar. Do the entries reflect heavenly values or earthly values?

"A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." It is easy in America to believe that life consists in the abundance of possessions. We feel satisfied when we have more and the stock market is up. Over the last year the stock market has been down. When that first occurred, did you feel that life was less abundant or fulfilling? When the market goes back up, will you feel more satisfied than you do now? Jesus warned those who ride this emotional roller coaster to put their hope in God, not riches.

Watch out! Materialism gets even the best of us. The riches of Christ's kingdom are far greater than anything on earth (Col. 3:4). Choose wisely and be encouraged! God has given wisdom and hope in the Bible regarding finances. Begin with the book of Proverbs and make wise checkbook and calendar decisions this week.

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org