

A Lesson in *Real Prosperity* . . .

*"I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."<sup>1</sup>*

—Martin Luther

"George W. Truett, a well-known pastor from many years ago, was invited to dinner in the home of a very wealthy man in Dallas. After the meal, the host led him to a place where they could get a good view of the surrounding area. Pointing to the oil wells punctuating the landscape, he boasted, 'Twenty-five years ago I had nothing. Now, as far as you can see, it's all mine.' Looking in the opposite direction at his sprawling fields of grain, he said, 'That's all mine.' Turning east toward huge herds of cattle, he bragged, 'They're all mine.' Then pointing to the west and a beautiful forest, he exclaimed, 'That too is all mine.' He paused, expecting Dr. Truett to compliment him on his great success. But Truett simply placed one hand on the man's shoulder and pointed heavenward with the other and said, 'How much do you have in that direction?'"<sup>2</sup>

*"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."  
(Psalm 1:1–3)*

**Q:** "What does the Bible say about our possessions?"

Material possessions are mentioned 2,172 times in the Bible—seven times more often as prayer.

- Material possessions have God as their beginning and His glory as their end.
- Material possessions are a gift from God meant for His people to enjoy, and yet they may be one of the primary means of turning human hearts away from God.
- One indication of a life that has been redeemed is a transformation in the area of stewardship of material resources.
- Above all, the Scriptures teach us that material possessions are inextricably intertwined with more spiritual matters.

*"Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me,  
lest I be full and deny you and say,  
'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor  
and steal and profane the name of my God."  
(Proverbs 30:8–9)*

*"Let us not grow weary of doing good,  
for in due season we will reap,  
if we do not give up. So then, as we  
have opportunity, let us do good to everyone,  
and especially to those who are  
of the household of faith."  
(Galatians 6:9–10)*

## The Mind-set of Materialism

- Our possessions possess us . . . in bondage.
- Little pleasure can be found in what you have . . . discontent.
- Desires are to be instantly gratified . . . impatient.
- Boredom is to be expected . . . dissatisfied.
- You are entitled to everything you want . . . ungrateful.
- Property and people are not to be treated with respect . . . inconsiderate.
- Pleasures are to be pursued . . . unfulfilled.

## God's Purposes for the Christian

- To *reflect* the character of Christ (Romans 8:29)
- To *reign* over the material world—not being ruled by any material thing (Genesis 1:26)
- To *respond* to God's call to accountability (Matthew 6:24)
- To *reveal* God's power to others (Acts 1:8)

*“Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*  
(Romans 8:29)

## The Materialistic Checklist

- Is my mind preoccupied with material things?
- Do I feel good when I have something bigger and better than someone else?
- Is it hard for me to wait to receive a new item once I've decided to purchase it?
- Are salary and benefits more important to me than the work itself?
- When I buy something, does it have to be known as being the best?
- Am I envious of my friends who have more than I have?

## Key Verse to Memorize

*“Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me.”*  
(Proverbs 30:8)

## Key Passage to Read and Reread

### 1 Timothy 6:6–19

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*  
(Matthew 6:19–21)

## Battling Materialism in a Material World

- Live a life that focuses on God's eternal purposes. (1 Timothy 6:11)
- Choose a lifestyle that is not self-indulgent. (2 Timothy 3:2–5)
- Avoid the bondage of unproductive debt (items that depreciate in value). (Matthew 6:33)
- Resist the temptation to accumulate and hoard. (James 5:3)
- Do not take financial advantage of another person. (Psalm 119:36)
- Learn contentment in plenty or in poverty. (Philippians 4:12)
- Contribute willingly and generously to the needs of others. (2 Corinthians 9:5)
- Use your possessions to further God's kingdom. (Matthew 6:19)
- Recognize that God is the owner and has the ultimate control of all things. (Malachi 3:8–10)

*“Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*  
(Matthew 6:34)

# Getting In on God's Plan

Trust Him . . . so He can trust you.

**T**hank God for what He has given to you.

**R**est in God as your Provider.

**U**phold God's perspective on possessions.

**S**eek God's provision in each and every circumstance.

**T**rust in God and not in what you possess.

**H**onor God with what He gives to you.

**I**nvest in heavenly treasures not in earthly things.

**M**anage well what God entrusts to your care.

*"One who is faithful in a very little  
is also faithful in much."  
(Luke 16:10)*

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## Related Topics . . .

- Financial Freedom:  
*Principles of Wise Money Management*
- Purpose in Life:  
*Pinpointing Your Priorities*
- Self-Worth:  
*Discerning Your God-Given Value*
- Success through Failure:  
*From Stumbling Stones to Stepping Stones*
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1. Cited in Matt T. Friedeman, "Is Meekness Weakness?" *Discipleship Journal*, May/June 1988.

2. *Our Daily Bread*, RBC Ministries, © October 24, 1992. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Reprinted with permission.



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