

Materialism is all about the **physical**

The world, and everything is **physical**

The chair, floor, ceiling, clothes, devices, the air, cars, work, house, food, money, etc.

We spend our entire lives buying, trading, selling, crafting, obtaining, gathering, acquiring, building, creating, and assembling **physical** stuff

Everything around us pertains to the **physical**

We breathe in a physical world

We eat in a physical world

We hear in a physical world

We feel in a physical world

We smell in a physical world

We live in a world made with physical stuff

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth

All our lives the things around us besiege us, clamoring for attention

It's **easy** for us to be pre-occupied with things

Definition of materialism:

A focus on things so they become our predominant emphasis

A focus on the possession of goods or property.

Materialism can also be defined as:

A focus on the influence of power, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction and complacency which typically comes with... **Wealth**

If you and I are honest: We're preoccupied with things. We want to acquire and control things

The strong enticement of material possessions **allows things to control our lives**

Because we live in a physical world, it is

mighty-easy for us to think (and believe) that things are important

But they are not

God has other, more important, purposes for us

I read somewhere that one of the last and greatest tests which God gives to mankind is...

Wealth

Today, the US is the wealthiest country in all of history

Because God uses wealth as a test...
He is testing our society.

Why?

He tests us to determine how we respond to the responsibility
of handling our wealth

Maybe you're saying to yourself:
"I'm not wealthy."

I would reply:
"Who are you comparing yourself to?"

Possible answers:
Friends – Family – Neighbors – Church – Work

Why do you think that people around the world, are trying to get into this country, both legally
and illegally?

They see the wealth we possess. They want the things we have

If you visit third-world countries, you'll find people living on \$200 per year

Could you live on that? No, not with your current lifestyle.

To those people, you and I are as rich as:
Bill Gates
Jeff Bezos
Warren Buffett
Mark Zuckerberg

You and I are filthy rich. To them, we are sickly rich

These people believe we have no bottom to our checkbook

To them we look like a million bucks, but... **We are green and wrinkled**

Do you know the difference between
A million -- A billion -- A trillion

Consider this: Let's say I owe you \$10,000 and you ask to be paid back and I reply,
I'll pay you in ...

1 million seconds = about 12 days

Or 1 billion seconds = about 32 years

Or 1 trillion seconds = about 32,000 years

Many in the world think of Americans as...

Ostentatious

That's a 32 dollar word meaning:

Characterized by vulgar or pretentious display; Designed to impress or attract notice

We have things (materialism)

Many in the world—**Don't**

Any affection or attention that we place on our things and wealth suggests a very real and widespread... epidemic in our American culture

This is something we fail to notice because...we're part of this culture.

Central to this mindset is our yearning for the pursuit of personal pleasure, personal comfort, personal gain, or personal glory.

Consumption (greed) drives the process we use to make our decisions

This type of thinking feeds selfishness which is:
the unquenched thirst for 'more' and a lust for things

This consumption becomes an unhealthy craving for things (materialism)

All around us are advertisements. Consider:

Where can you go without being confronted by billboards, signs, posters, commercials, or internet soundbites. This year, we're in a political environment

Our culture remains saturated with the expectation of multiple ways to achieve **prestige** and **social standing**.

We often equate **prestige** and **social standing** as...**Benchmarks for Success**

1 Timothy 6:10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Being rich or being poor doesn't matter. How much you possess doesn't matter.

What matters is: What do you do with your stuff

Everything belongs to God. We don't actually **own** anything

We're stewards and only have the use of things for a short time while on earth

Proverbs 30:8-9 ... *Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to 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.*

If I'm rich I'm liable to turn my back on God If I'm poor, I might steal from others

Job 1:21 *Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there.*

1 Tim. 6:7 *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

Psalm 49:16-17 *Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, When the glory of his house is increased; For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; ...*

Ecclesiastes 5:15 *As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return, To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor Which he may carry away in his hand.*

Scripture specifically states that anything in this physical world, including all the stuff, all the honors, all the accolades, all the praise, all the fame, all the notoriety, all the glamor, all the importance: all of that... we **cannot** take with us when we leave this life.

Mother Mary Angelica – founder of the Eternal Word Television Network said: *“It is not so much the possession of things... it is the burden these things impose—the fear of loss, the greed for more, the power they exert, the glitter that is so bright for so short a time.”*

We know from scripture that we are **Stewards**

We are admonished to use our things for God's glory

Matthew 25:14-30 ¹⁴“For *the kingdom of heaven* is like a man traveling to a far country, *who* called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶ Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷ And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. ¹⁸ But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ ²¹ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²² He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ ²³ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²⁴ “Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is yours*.’ ²⁶ “But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷ So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents. ²⁹ ‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

We are stewards (managers) of things (stuff) not owners

Why? Because we can take nothing with us

We also read in scripture that ALL physical stuff will be... **Destroyed**

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

Matthew 13:40 *Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.*

If the physical world and all the things that we handle, hear, smell, taste, and see every day,

If they have little value, therefore, we are living in a situation that is **temporary and disposable**

If that's true, then what IS REALLY important?

I'm glad you asked

Things (stuff) in this world have little value to God except for this reason...

God uses physical things as a training tool for us to learn

That means we live our lives on earth as if we're in a school

God uses the stuff round to teach us

God uses physical things as tools to accomplish His goals for our lives.

Things are not the all-to-end-all. They're temporary

We've been told when we die, we can take nothing with us.

I disagree. We **do** take something with us

If we are talking about physical things, I would agree that we can't take anything with us

But keep in mind that **learning** is not physical

Therefore, when we die, we'll take with us the things we learned.

We take what we learn

John 4:24 *God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*

God isn't concerned with the physical (stuff)

He's concerned with the spirit within us and what we learn

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such, there is no law*

For fruit to grow on trees, it takes time Spiritual fruit also takes time to produce (Learning)

The fruit of the Spirit is character We learn (or fail to learn) character traits during our lives

Love is a character trait Joy is a character trait Peace is a character trait

Longsuffering (patience) is a character trait Kindness is a character trait

Goodness is a character trait Faithfulness is a character trait
Gentleness is a character trait Self-control is a character trait

When we die, we will take with us any learned character traits

Matthew 5:12 *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your **reward** in heaven,*

Matthew 6:4 *that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself **reward** you openly.*

Matthew 6:6 & 18 *...and your Father who sees in secret will **reward** you openly.*

Matthew 16:27 *For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will **reward** each according to his works.*

(works = what you do with stuff and how you handle it)

Luke 6:23 *Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your **reward** is great in heaven...*

1 Corinthians 3:8 *Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own **reward** according to his own labor.*

1 Corinthians 3:14 *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a **reward**.*

Colossians 2:18 *Let no one cheat you of your **reward**...*

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a **rewarder** of those who diligently seek Him.*

God promises rewards for the traits we take with us (learning)
What have you learned? What character traits have you acquired?

If you are living for stuff, and glory, and praise, and notoriety, and fame, and approval, and acclaim, and production, and wealth, and ...

Then you've missed the point which God wants you to learn

Too often today we give little thought to the spiritual consequences or their impact on our lives
Maybe we think: Nah, that's just church stuff.

The Bible warns repeatedly of the folly and consequences of living to 'self' or 'in the flesh'
(physical stuff – worldly stuff)

To be living for God (Eternalism) means: to be responsible for our stuff and...
to be humble (in attitude) during our brief, and limited stay on earth

Contrast the following: God's eternal viewpoint about our true worth compared with:

stuff, wealth, fame, importance, notoriety, glory

To have an attitude marked by thanksgiving, by worship, and a deep appreciation for God's generosity... That signifies a believer who embraces an eternal view

Such a lifestyle reveals devotion to the One "From whom all blessings flow."

At the start of all things:

God created the heavens and earth

At the end of all things:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

All our stuff will be burned up

If you think ... Well, that's at a future time - Or - That's a long time off

That may reveal you have an **attitude** problem which hinders Christian character growth

Also, by thinking that, you could be kissing your rewards good-bye

This brings us to a few questions:

- How well are you managing the material things God has provided for you to use?
- How does God want you to use material things for Him?

God expects you to use material things to live and grow. But He also wants you to use them to serve Him.

- How are you doing that right now?
- How are you being responsible to God with the material things He's allowed you to manage?

Jesus said: *it is more blessed to give than to receive*

- How are you blessing others?
- How are you using material things to grow in your Christian faith and to develop the character traits of the *fruit of the Spirit*?