

## LESSON 3: MATERIALISM VS. ETERNALISM

YOUR HANDLING OF MONEY AND POSSESSIONS REVEALS  
YOUR PERSPECTIVE AND SENSE OF DESTINY.



In the context of Biblical stewardship, “materialism” may be defined as a preeminent focus on the possession of goods or property and/or the influence, power, self-sufficiency, and self-satisfaction that typically accompanies wealth. The strong lure of material possessions frequently results in giving control over your life to something that should not wield that power. In this way, the affection and attention – indeed, the worship – of such things suggests a very real and widespread epidemic of idolatry, particularly in American culture. (i) To believe our church circles are immune is to suspend common sense and a discerning heart.

“Eternalism,” on the other hand, shall be taken to mean a responsible, humble view of our brief, limited existence (ii) held in contrast to His eternal, complete perspective, especially with regard to money and our true net worth. An attitude marked by thanksgiving, worship, and a deep appreciation for the Father’s generosity signifies the believer who embraces an “eternalist” view. Such a lifestyle reveals devotion to the One “from whom all blessings flow.” (iii)

Our culture remains saturated with an expectation of, with various means to achieve, prestige and social standing as benchmarks of success. Counter to such a worldview, the believer must adhere to patterns and habits that help him/her deny the flesh and energize the spirit. Fasting, among other disciplines modeled by Jesus, offers a natural process by which we may experience supernatural outcomes.

Our response to material wealth shows the maturity of our Biblical understanding. And when we understand the way our character is molded, a simple truth prevails. What we feed will thrive; what we starve will die.

**THINK ABOUT IT: We must flee from, and starve, a lifestyle of “materialism.”**

Why? Because materialism:

- blinds or distracts us from holy priorities. (John 9.40)
- causes anxiety and stress over unimportant goals. (Col 3.2)
- corrupts by encouraging a false sense of self-sufficiency. (Prov 3.5)
- confuses by trying to find meaning outside of scripture. (Ps 112.1)
- promotes coveting and a sense of never having enough. (Phil 4.11)

**TALK ABOUT IT: How does “keeping up with the Jones” keep us in spiritual chains?**

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**THINK ABOUT IT: We must pursue, and feed, a lifestyle of “eternalism.”**

Why? Because an eternal perspective produces a life more abundant. (iv)

- We are more blessed in giving than receiving. (Acts 20.35)
- We gain all by losing all. (Luke 17.33)
- We store up “treasure in Heaven.” (Matt 6.20)
- We release faith through the planting of seed. (James 2.18, Matt 17.20)
- We protect, trust, hope, and persevere. (1 Cor 13.7)

**TALK ABOUT IT: Fasting helps us control our appetites by withholding from our flesh. How then do we “feed” our hearts to reflect eternal vision and values?**

**THINK ABOUT IT: We cannot serve two masters. (v)**

Deut 8 recounts how Israel’s destiny – and ours (vi) – includes an “ability to produce wealth” that is interconnected with our obedience AND the responsibility we bear to acknowledge God as source of that ability.

Luke 12.15-21 provides valuable insight into the consequences of choosing the wrong master. The rich fool “forgot God” (contrasted with the “remembering” of Deut 8.19) and instead presumed a posture of self-sufficiency. His selfishness and arrogance led to laziness, all of which prompted God’s judgment of his heart.

**TALK ABOUT IT: What are the consequences of a “divided heart” when it comes to finances?**

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## DISCUSS

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