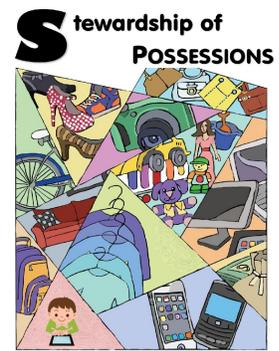


Church of God Sunday School

WHOLE-LIFE STEWARDSHIP #5 – POSSESSIONS



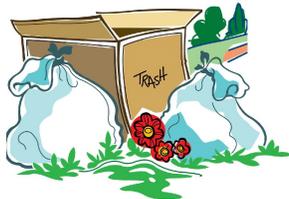
DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** Possessions prevented the young ruler from following Jesus (Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 18:18-23).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** More possessions do not satisfy (Proverbs 11:28; Ecclesiastes 4:8; Ecclesiastes 5:10-11).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Many possessions can cause wrong attitudes (1 Timothy 6:17-19; 1 John 2:15-17).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Many possessions can cause us to forget God (Deuteronomy 6:10-12; Deuteronomy 8:11-20).
- ❑ **Friday:** The rich fool had much wealth but forgot God (Luke 12:16-21).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Good stewards are content (1 Timothy 6:7-9; Philippians 4:6-11; Hebrews 13:5).

MEMORY VERSE: "... 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

Are We Drowning in Our Stuff?

There is an old saying, "He who has the most stuff wins." Yet, one might wonder, "Wins what?" Our culture today constantly bombards people with advertisements, trying to get us to buy more "stuff." Perhaps you have heard some of them: "Everyone else has this"; "To be popular, happy, and successful, you must buy this"; and "This is too good of a deal to pass up." At the same time, the majority of Americans would probably admit that they have too much "stuff." In 2011 the *Wall Street Journal* reported that every year Americans spend 1.2 trillion dollars on things they do not need ("nonessentials"). Another study revealed that the average American throws away 40 percent of the food they buy and 65 pounds of clothes every year. *The New York Times* published an article that stated 1 out of every 10 Americans rent a storage unit for things they do not have enough room for in their homes. While it is not wrong to throw something away or rent storage space, it might be good to look at the Biblical principle of stewardship when it comes to our possessions.



If you were to make a list of every possession you do not want to live without, how many things would be on that list? Consider each one. Did you buy it because it made you happy, for a practical purpose, or on impulse? Did you have to borrow money to purchase that item? Do you own things that you have never worn or never used? Do you take care of your possessions and make them last, or are you replacing them often? Many times our possessions cost much more than the initial price. These costs could include: repair, insurance, batteries/gas, storage, cleaning, and theft prevention. The costs are more than just money, as your possessions usually require your time and attention. One author wrote, "The more 'things' I have, the more time I spend thinking about them, moving them around, fixing them, looking for them, or upgrading them" (Taite Adams).

The Dangers of Having Too Many Possessions

When the rich young ruler asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." Does that mean everyone who wants to be a Christian needs to do the same? The rest of Matthew 19:21 lets us know why Jesus said that: "and come and follow me." Those possessions were preventing the young ruler from following Jesus. We might say that "his stuff had him." What are some ways the devil uses possessions to hinder you in your walk with God? Too many possessions can bring about discontentment. Have you ever heard the old saying, "Keeping up



with the Joneses"? In other words, you are always trying to have all the nice things the "Joneses" have. The "Joneses" could be your neighbors, your friends, your coworkers, or anyone who has something better than you. Another way discontentment works is through "retail therapy." That is buying more things to make you feel better when you are having a bad day. Yet, in the midst of all this buying more and more to keep up with others or to make you happy, you are actually exhausted and poorer. Why? Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 5:10 that the man who loves increased wealth will never be satisfied. Too many possessions can cause you to have wrong attitudes. You might be proud (as the rich fool in Luke 12:16-19); you might be selfish (unwilling to share your possessions); you might be covetous (always wanting more); or you might be depressed (cannot afford to buy more). Some people put their trust in their riches (1 Timothy 6:17-19) and others love their possessions (1 John 2:15-17), failing to realize that these things are fleeting. Proverbs 23:5 AMP warns, "When you set your eyes on wealth, it is [suddenly] gone."



The most serious concern when it comes to being poor stewards of possessions is that it can cause us to forget about God. God warned Israel of this very thing in Deuteronomy 6:10-12. When He blessed them with houses, wells, vineyards, and olive trees, He knew there was a danger of them forgetting "the LORD." Mark 8:36-37 tells us nothing in this world is worth more than our soul. Sadly, the rich young ruler chose his possessions over God. In essence, he said, "I don't want to follow Jesus *that much*." He wanted his "stuff" more than he wanted eternal life.

Materialism

Materialism is defined as "a tendency to consider material possessions as more important than spiritual values" (*Oxford Dictionaries*). Materialism can change your values and affect your happiness. Things become more important than doing what is right, serving God, and helping others. It makes you selfish and convinces you that the path to happiness and success is through accumulation of the right things. Did you ever wonder why God called the rich man in Luke, Chapter 12, a "fool"? The man had many crops and not enough barns to hold them. Was it not a good business decision to build greater barns to store all these crops? Was it wrong to take it easy since he had "much goods laid up for many years" (verse 19)? He was not a fool because he was rich, but because he had forgotten God. All he had was from God (the owner), and he was only the steward (manager). Yet, we read nothing of him giving God thanks and praise nor of his sharing with others. Verse 21 warns us, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Mark 4:19 talks about "the deceitfulness of riches." This will make you feel that as soon as you get just a little more, you will be happy. This is like a horse chasing a carrot on a stick that is held in front of him. The purpose of that carrot is only to make him run faster; he never actually catches it. So it is with materialism. If things could satisfy, then Solomon (who had everything he could have wanted) would have been satisfied. Yet, he said that "all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). In other words, it is all worthless! Many possessions did not make King Solomon happy.

Being Wise Stewards of Possessions

Revelation 4:11 says that God "created all things, and for thy pleasure [or His purpose] they are and were created." When we learn that God owns everything, we begin to realize that He has a purpose for everything. A wise steward will ask for God's help in determining which possessions he or she should purchase and use. Not everything is good for you. Some possessions need to be left alone. God knows which possessions will help you fulfill His purpose in your life and which possessions will hinder you. He knows which things you will become too attached to and which things will cause you to spiritually stumble.

Another way to be a good steward is to work on being content. This does not mean that you never desire to buy something new or replace something that is old, but when you are content with what you have, you will approach new purchases with a different outlook. You will ask yourself questions, such as: "Is it need or greed? Do I have enough money? Will I actually use it or wear it? Is this purchase pleasing to God? Could it hinder me in my walk with the Lord?" To prevent your "stuff from having you," realize that every one of your possessions actually belongs to God. He might be asking you to declutter your life. Are your possessions taking too much of your time, energy, and money? Do they hinder you from serving the Lord? Talk to the Owner, and let Him teach you how to be a good steward of possessions.

Bible Quiz



1. How do advertisements try to convince you to buy things?

2. How many pounds of clothing does the average American throw away every year? _____

3. How could possessions cost more than the initial purchase price? _____

4. Why did Jesus tell the rich young ruler to sell all his possessions and give to the poor? _____

5. What are some of the ways the devil uses possessions to hinder you in your walk with God? _____

6. What are some of the wrong attitudes that too many possessions can cause? _____

7. What is the most serious concern when it comes to being poor stewards of possessions? _____

8. What is materialism? _____

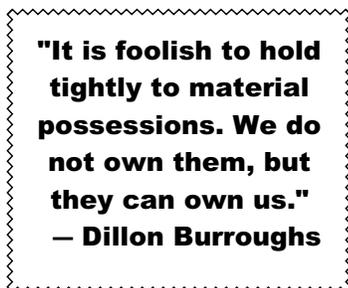
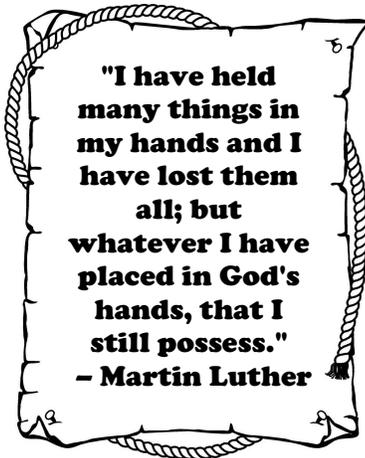
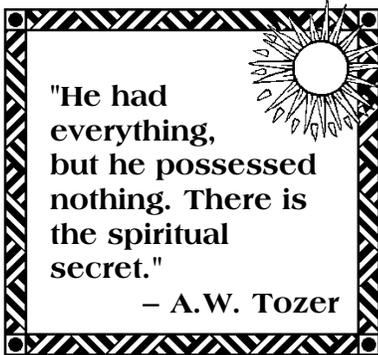
9. Why did God call the rich man in Luke, Chapter 12, a "fool"? _____

10. How can wealth be deceitful? _____

11. How can you be a good steward of possessions? _____

Write down 5 of your favorite possessions. Then answer the following questions about each one: (A) How much of my time does it take? (B) Does it hinder my relationship with God? (C) How might God want me to use this possession? (D) Would I be able to give up this possession if God asked me to?

Possessions



1.	_____
(A)	_____
(B)	_____
(C)	_____
(D)	_____
2.	_____
(A)	_____
(B)	_____
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