

Materialism, How to Counter it? by Carl McMurray

We live in a materialistic society, as evidenced by the excessive, suggestive, and aggressive advertising that permeates TV, radio, internet, phone apps, billboards, and mail out materials. Jesus taught in Matthew 13:22 that the deceitfulness of riches can make us spiritually barren and Paul warned in 1 Tim. 6:9-10 that one can be ensnared and led astray just by the desire for such. So how do we counter what seems like an overwhelming influence in our society and in our lives?

In Isaiah 1:21-23, the prophet is told that he was being sent to a corrupt and unrighteous culture also. How was he to counter the influence of materialism? It appears from Isaiah 55:1-3 that the answer he was given was that instead of the hollow, empty, unsatisfying deceit of earthly things; he was to offer that which was truly rich and satisfying, the sweet will of God.

This seems to be the tact that Jesus and his apostles took also. Although our Lord warns in Luke 12:15 that one's life does not consist of possessions and clearly showed the temporary deceit of wealth in the parable of the rich fool in vv. 16-21, he stated unequivocally in John 10:10 that he came to give life abundantly. That rich, real, and abundant life includes peace, John 14:27, even when the world around is storming. It includes love, John 15:9-10, patterned after the perfect love that the Father had for him. And it includes joy, John 15:11, given in such amounts that it is described as "full."

Rather than being envious of the world, let us learn to see through the facade to the empty shadows, broken hearts, and broken homes sacrificed on the altar of materialism. Let's learn to be content with our blessings and see them as so abundant that our love, peace, and joy are worth sharing. That starts with believing the promises of God, obeying the word of God, and appreciating the grace that he bestows on each of his children. We must show the world who the truly rich are.

The truth is that it seems we are all on the edge of the cliff with this one. Most all of us are greatly blessed, comfortably seated, and like it in our comfort zone. We all need to come to terms with ways to defeat this deceitful and deadly enemy, this pervasive attitude of Satan.