Love People, Use Things

Michael d'Offay 22 November 2021



I'll start with a confession: I do love Apple devices – they are well crafted and easy to use. I know Android haters are gonna hate. My kids bought me an 'iDad' T-shirt a number of years ago on Father's Day and an iDad mug the next year. However, in desiring the newest gadget, my heart easily drifts from loving God and people and so, in this area, I have to be vigilant. The easiest way for me to get distracted is to be discontent with what I have. This is especially true as the upcoming Black Friday deals and Christmas holidays bring about a "consumerist insanity" where we get swept up into frenzied spending that can be ungodly. We have to navigate carefully during this season.

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The Deceitfulness of Riches

"As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." – Matthew 13:22, ESV

One of the phrases I want to pay attention to says, “the deceitfulness of riches choke the word”. Riches refers to money as well as possessions, which was and still is a sign of worldly wealth.

Why does Jesus call riches deceitful?
The word deceitful speaks “of anything which is seducing” according to one Bible dictionary. Proverbs 5 speaks of the allure of a seductive person (or fantasising about one) but in this context Jesus is speaking about ‘stuff’ that can be deceitful. In other words, riches and possessions can make false promises – they lure us in and promise us happiness. Have you noticed how modern advertising sells an experience such as joy, contentment, or a sense of family or worth? If you have our product, you will be admired, accepted, desired, or fulfilled! The truth is that these things can never give you what they promise. Only God is truly enough at the deepest level where we find life and meaning. Only He is worthy of our affection.

Consumerism vs Contentment

Let’s be honest, we all seek after some kind of treasure. It is hardwired into us to desire more and to be ambitious in some way, but the world and the Kingdom of God are in direct conflict over how this plays out. The way of the world is to seek after things (or experiences), while the way of the Kingdom is to seek after God (Matthew 6:32-33). The world teaches us to be discontent with material things and celebrates the desire to get rich. But God warns us that these desires can cause us to “fall into temptation, into a snare” (1 Timothy 6:9) and instructs us to be content with material things (1 Timothy 6:6; Philippians 4:11).

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Is Having New Possessions Wrong?

I don’t believe that God wants us to be like the Amish – shunning possessions and any modern technology. Money can be a wonderful tool to do good. If you can afford it, and have a clear conscience over it, buy things. Jesus did say that if we put God first, “all these things will be added to you” (see Matthew 6:33). As a rule, buy them in order to use them, not to be consumed with a need to hoard or find fulfilment. As I wrote earlier, I enjoy gadgets. I have an iPhone, an iPad, an Apple Watch and a Mac! They are tools that are reliable to me. I have invested in them over the years in order to use them wisely. My principle is that if I am not using it, I am not keeping it. Rather sell it or give it away.

In closing, as Christians navigating this crazy end-of-year season, this is a reminder (to myself

first and then to you) that we find our satisfaction in Christ. Jesus is enough for us in the sense that only He truly satisfies and is sufficient to meet our deepest needs. He is the Promise Maker and the Promise Keeper. Let's be those who love people and use things for the glory of God rather than those who love things and use people.

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