Living with the End in Mind: How to Avoid Worshiping Your Money

Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

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The average working person will spend 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime which equates to one third of his lifetime. The reasons we work will make all the difference in whether or not we live a healthy life focused more on serving God and others, or a destructive life focused more on self to the exclusion of God and manipulation of others. In Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12, Solomon concludes his observations concerning the worship of wealth and its destructive consequences in our lives and relationships. We’ll learn how to avoid worshiping our money and possessions by living a life of contentment.

1. The Worship of Riches Illustrated: Look to the governments of this world to see the worship of wealth in action (8-9).
   1. The governments of this world oppress by appealing to the baser natures of their people, promising them wealth and prosperity but delivering only misery and oppression (8a).
      1. Their policies oppress the poor while promising prosperity.
      2. They violently pervert justice.
   2. The primary motivation of those in power is self-aggrandizement (8b-9).
      1. They use government to get ahead rather than serve.
      2. This corruption is at all levels of government.
      3. The only one who profits from those who labor in the field is the king (9; cf. 1 Samuel 8:10ff).
2. The Worship of Riches Exposed: Arm yourself against the worship of riches (9-17).
   1. Riches cannot satisfy (10).
      1. Like all false gods, money is incapable of satisfying the hunger and thirst of the person who is devoted to it.
      2. The more wealth you feed the idol of materialism, the more you want and the less you are satisfied with what you have.
   2. Riches attract parasites (11).
      1. Wealth attracts people who will do everything possible to consume it before your very eyes.
   3. Riches can cost you your sleep (12).
   4. Riches can destroy those who possess them (13-17).
      1. The miser harms his neighbor by hoarding his wealth and harms himself also (13).
      2. The miser hoards his wealth in hopes of leaving it behind to his heirs, only to find that his hoard can be lost much faster than it can be made (14).
      3. The miser cannot take his money with him beyond the grave (15-16).
      4. The miser lives life chasing the wind, living in darkness, sorrow, wrath and sickness (17).
3. The Worship of Riches Avoided: Receive the fruits of your labor as a gift from God (18-20).
   1. Enjoy the fruits of your labors because it is God’s gift to you (18).
      1. Learn to enjoy both the work and its reward.
      2. Learn to enjoy whatever fruit God has given.
         1. Even our setbacks become the springboard for greater successes.
         2. Setbacks are like drawing a string on a bow, the greater the setback the greater the potential for greater impact.
   2. Enjoy the capacity God has given you to enjoy the fruits of your labor (19).
   3. Enjoying what God has given you puts life in its proper perspective (20).
4. The Worship of Riches Punished: Materialism is a cruel task master (6:1-9).
   1. God often gives the materialist the wealth and possessions that he desires but withholds from him the ability to enjoy it (1-2).
      1. This is not cruel on God’s part; He does so to turn our hearts toward Himself (Isaiah 55).
   2. God bestows the materialist with many blessings, but those blessings go unenjoyed (3-6).
      1. Without contentment the good things in life (large family, and long life) are of little benefit (3).
      2. Often, the materialist alienates himself from his family resulting in a lonely and pointless death (4-6).
5. The Worship of Riches Concluded: Don’t look to riches to provide what only God can (10-12).
   1. We should rest content with what lies before us and resist the temptation to wander in search of more (7-9).
      1. Deuteronomy 8:11-18 “Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God…And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth…”
   2. We should remember that man is but dust, and it is God Who is almighty; therefore, we should rest in Him Who knows all and controls all (10-12).
      1. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
      2. Colossians 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
      3. Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Conclusion:

1. What does our government tell us about the kind of people we’ve become?
2. Have you allowed your pursuit of wealth to alienate you from God and those around you?
3. In what areas are you struggling to rejoice in what God has given you?
4. In what areas are you struggling with contentment?