

FINANÇIALLY FREE



Week of January 31, 2021¹

The Antidote:

This moment in human history may be the most difficult moment to resist the temptations of a culture awash in consumerism. Our mobile devices allow us access to hosts of products that were once unreachable. Online influencers use their platforms to promote products. “Free” video content online is only “free” because the advertiser wanted access to our eyes.

The challenges run deeper still. Comparing our lives to others have never been easier. In decades past, we had to worry about “keeping up with the Joneses.” Now, we get constant updates of how our friends and acquaintances are leading their lives. Those updates, idealized to represent the most interesting and successful parts of their lives, invite further comparisons to a much wider audience.

It does not end there. Technology has removed many of the constraints that shaped our lives. Back in the dark ages you had to assemble at the top of the hour to watch your favorite show. Now, that show is available on demand. Through this and other experiences, we have been conditioned to get what we want when we want it and we want it now.

While these challenges may be greater than in the past, they are not new. The Bible offers us frequent guidance to focus our lives on eternal blessings rather than on the pursuit of wealth that will not satisfy. This week’s lesson explores the challenges of living in a consumer driven world from a Biblical perspective.

Conversation Starters: (Pick 1 or 2 of these questions)

- What item or type of good are you most likely to purchase on impulse in a grocery store?
- What is an item you purchased in the past and later regretted?
- What type of “click bait” are you most likely to respond to?

Bible Study Discussion:

- **Read Matthew 19:16-22**
 - What does the rich young man ask?
 - How do the phrases “must I do” and “get eternal life” point to his desire for his relationship to his material possessions?
 - How does Jesus use the omission of the tenth commandment (You shall not covet) to draw attention to the man’s relationship to material goods?
 - What does Jesus’ extreme remedy and the rich young man’s reaction tell us about the state of his heart?

¹ This week’s lesson was written by Scott Kubie and edited by Dawn Gentry.

- **Read Matthew 6:19-24**
 - What is the difference between heavenly treasure and earthly treasure? How does what we treasure shape our heart?
 - Since the 1970s the number of advertisements we see each day is estimated to have increased ten-fold. How does Jesus help us understand the importance of staying focused on the right things? (see verses 22-23)
 - Jesus offers a stark choice between serving God or serving money. What have you experienced that supports the idea that it is either one or the other?
 - Bonus question: Contrast Jesus' idea that you will be in service to something with the worldly idea that freedom means being able to choose what I want. Relate the answer back to the rich young man.

- **Closing Questions**
 - How can *giving* serve as an antidote to the “unhealthy eyes” (NIV) in verse 23?
 - Who benefits when you give?
 - What other practices can you use to keep your eyes healthy and your heart in the right place?

This Week's Next Steps

- Invite the Spirit into your prayers and discussion about giving and spending.
- Pay extra attention to when you noticing your eyes wandering.
- Mediate and journal about your history with money and how your attitudes have been shaped by your experiences.
- Ask your parents or siblings about how your relationship with money was shaped by your upbringing or ask your children what lessons they learned from you.
- Find something in your home you don't use and give it away.

Prayer Prompts:

- *Father God, we trust you to provide everything we need. Help us to look to you for “daily bread,” and not depend on our own ability for earning. We recognize that everything we own comes from you.*
- *Holy Spirit, shape our hearts and guide our thoughts to desire fewer possessions and live on less. Be our comforter when we feel “less than” because of our material wealth and remind us that our only hope is in you.*
- *Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice for us on the cross. Help us to make daily sacrifices that keep us aligned with your will for our lives.*