



Fall 2005 *GOstudents.net* Bible Study

# Stuff Enough?

## Materials:

- *GOstudents.net* Download Video: *Materialism*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *GOstudents.net* Group Activity for “Stuff Enough?” for each student
- Optional: Printouts of the *GOstudents.net* roundtable interview called “Materialism Mania.” You'll find it through the “Hot Topics” section of *GOstudents.net* by clicking on “Roundtables.” (Or click this link in your PDF document: <http://www.gostudents.net/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=ejINI5PNKpG&b=692413&ct=1373889>)

## Group Activity:

Hand out copies of the Group Activity sheet to each student. Explain that today you're going to be talking about materialism, the desire to get more and more stuff. Can you ever have enough stuff? Can you have too much?

On the sheet, your students will find space for two lists. The first is for writing down stuff they currently would like to have. There's nothing wrong with wanting stuff. Use this list-making exercise to get a conversation going about the kinds of stuff your group is into. Ask questions about it. What brands of clothing, shoes, makeup? What kinds of cars, video games, computers, etc.? Allow the members of your group to express their passion and compare notes on their interest in all kinds of stuff.

We'll come back to the space for listing things they're thankful for at the end of the session.

## Video:

Explain that today you're going to dig into a couple of paragraphs in 1 Timothy 6 about the issue of Christians and money. Specifically, you're going to talk about the desire to get rich (or die trying). Before you do that, though, you're going to watch a video clip that features a group of Christian students talking about materialism. Play the video. Ask your students to think about how they would answer the questions.



## Group Discussion:

Now turn the questions on your students. How would they define materialism? Do they think it's a problem in our culture? in their schools? in their homes? in their own lives? Is it wrong to want nice stuff? If not, at what point does wanting nice stuff turn into a sinful love of money and the stuff it can buy?

After a few minutes of conversation on the issue, ask your students to open their Bibles to 1 Timothy 6 to see what Paul told a young pastor to teach his congregation about the issue of Christians and the desire for money.

### **Bible Study:**

Everybody understands that money in and of itself is not evil. We all need it to pay for food, clothes, places to live. That's what makes this conversation kind of tricky, isn't it? We all need to work to support ourselves and/or our families. But how much money do we need? How hard should we work to get stuff we don't need, but really want? Let's see what the Bible says. Keep an open mind to what God wants you to understand about money and stuff.

### **God Doesn't Promise Us Earthly Riches**

*"Men of corrupt mind . . . have been robbed of the truth and . . . think that godliness is a means to financial gain." (1 Timothy 6:5, NIV)*

Obviously, lots and lots of Christians are rich, especially in our culture. And we'll see in a minute that there's nothing wrong with a Christian being wealthy. But in Paul's time (and in ours), some teachers were telling whoppers about money. They were saying that God rewarded followers of Jesus with great wealth. That's a lie. God never promises Christians earthly riches.

God does promise us untold riches in heaven. And Jesus did promise that His followers wouldn't need to worry about the basics of food and clothing (Matthew 6:30-32). But Jesus Himself was a homeless man, and his disciples often found themselves broke (Acts 3:6). If living a godly life guaranteed us financial gain on earth, wouldn't Jesus and the apostles have been the richest people in the world?

Obviously, God doesn't see having money or the stuff it can buy as being a high priority for believers. So what is worth chasing?



### **Contentment Rocks**

*"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." (1 Timothy 6:6-8, NIV)*

Contentment could be defined as being satisfied with what I have right now. It doesn't mean never wanting anything else, but it does mean learning to say, "I'm satisfied with what God has allowed me to have today."

After all, what do we really need? Food, clothing, a place to sleep. As long as we have those, we're covered. Paul makes the point that death is not the finish line, but it is the place we leave behind all our stuff. Why spend our lives dissatisfied, constantly chasing money and stuff, if we're only going to dump it all on our way out the door into eternity?

If you've been on a mission trip to an area where people are extremely poor, you might have noticed something that many, many people have reported. Poor people in other cultures without all of our luxuries often seem much more content than the people who live next door and have all the coolest stuff. Fact: Having stuff does not make people happy. It just doesn't work.

So Paul says to choose contentment and keep chasing what really matters: godliness and following Jesus' path through this world.

### **Materialism Is a Trap**

*"People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this." (1 Timothy 6:9-11, NIV)*

For some of us, these are painful words. Our culture is geared toward the desire to get rich. Rapper 50 Cent got rich following the philosophy of "get rich or die trying." For lots of people, it's absolutely the most important thing in life. Even more people would list it among their top 5 priorities.

So many Christians jump on the bandwagon without ever thinking about how different our goals should be from the world around us. We're on a different path, after all. It shouldn't surprise us that it goes in the opposite direction.

Paul said it, and we've all seen it: The desire to get rich is a trap. Why? Because it leads us away from the path God has called us to follow, the one Jesus walked. Jesus said you just can't serve both God and money. You've got to choose. Christians who try to do both end up in "ruin," "destruction," and skewered with all kinds of sadness. It doesn't work.

This sounds hard, doesn't it? Some of us can't imagine not living for money and material possessions. Paul said the only way to escape is to . . . run away.

### **Chase Godliness**

*"Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith." (1 Timothy 6:11-12, NIV)*



You can't just force yourself to stop wanting to be rich, if that's your nature. You've got to come up with a replacement. Paul said, "Run away from materialism and toward godliness." Fight for it. Fight to hold on to your belief that you're living for a home that comes after this life, that it's less important how much stuff you end up with before you die.



What should we run toward? Doing right. Living like Jesus. Trusting God. Loving Him and each other. Not giving up. And reacting to hard things by resting in the fact that God will meet our needs. Those are things worth chasing.

### **Live Richly**

*"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*  
(1 Timothy 6:17-19, NIV)

You might not have as much cool stuff as your neighbors, but by world standards, most Americans live in extreme luxury. Heat and air conditioning. Indoor plumbing. Electricity. Internet. Houses with more than three rooms. So much food, we throw tons away every year. Clean clothes every day. Very few people around the world have as much as we do. We might not be "rich," but we're privileged.

So what should you do if you're a Christian and you do have it pretty good financially? Paul made a list:

- Don't trust your money. It won't satisfy your soul, and it can vanish quickly.
- Hope only in God. He is the source of everything.
- Remember, God likes to give you things you enjoy. Thank Him for what you've got.
- Be rich in what really counts—doing good for others.
- Give away your money; be ready to share when someone has a need.

If "wealthy" people live this way, they will avoid falling into the trap of materialism. Why? Because, Paul writes, they'll be investing in the next life, not collecting stuff that will do them no good when this life ends. That's rich living.

### **Group Activity:**

Now ask your students to pull out their Group Activity sheets once more.

Paul wrote an amazing thing in 1 Timothy 6:17: “God . . . richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” God isn’t sitting in heaven hating all the cool stuff we have. He’s the One who gives it to us. He’s the source of everything that can be called good (James 1:17).

Part of the reason we become so discontent is that we tend to focus on what we don’t yet have instead of what’s already sitting right in our laps. In our market-driven society, nearly everything we see and hear is designed to make us want more stuff. You have to battle for contentment. One of the best weapons is an A-bomb called “saying thanks.”

On your sheet, start listing as many things as you can think of to be thankful for right now. Write small, because you’re going to need the room. Once you start listing things to give thanks for, more and more ideas will come to the surface.

### **Conclusion:**

After a few minutes, ask your students to stop listing things they’re thankful for.

If it is true that God provides us with everything for our enjoyment, would you say you’ve been enjoying the things on your list? We all have a tendency to take things for granted, but how good is God for giving you all those things? How much does He love you? Can you trust Him to provide you with everything you need?

Ask your students to pray silently, thanking God for all the good gifts on their lists. Encourage them to ask Him to free them from materialism and the constant desire for more stuff. Then close in prayer, thanking God for the countless ways He provides for all of you, for all the good things He gives above and beyond what we need. Ask Him to help all of you to run away from materialism and toward living like Jesus.

As they leave, remind your students that they can check out more current cultural topics in the “Hot Topics” section of [GOstudents.net](http://GOstudents.net).

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