

are quick to point out, “Jesus never said money is the root of all evil, only that the **love** of money is.” Crazy Love, page 73

“When we put it plainly...as a direct choice between God and our stuff-most of us hope we would choose God. But we need to realize that **how we spend our time, what our money goes toward, and where we will invest our energy is equivalent to choosing God or rejecting Him**. How could we think for even a second that something on this puny little earth compares to the Creator and Sustainer and Savior of it all?” Crazy Love, page 95

**Consider the following ideas for implementing “disengagement” from the consumer culture we live in, which can lead to the release of resources to spend on your global neighbors;**

- Relearn dependence on God. Don’t buy yourself everything you need...give God the opportunity to do something different
- Downshift your lifestyle (live below your means)
- Scrutinize your spending decisions and practice conscientious consumption (learn where stuff comes from and the resources it takes to provide it)
- Avoid things that make you want more
- Ignore luxury and status branding messages
- Deconstruct the commercial system through education
- Avoid “retail therapy”
- Find alternatives to gift buying...spend money on the poor in honor of birthdays and gift recipients
- When you can create instead of consume, do
- Share your stuff
- Live a life of simplicity and do things to rediscover a sense of scarcity (eat beans, rice and vegetables a few times a week, shop and bank in a less affluent part of the region, etc.)

If we have a blanket and a pillow, we are rich. If we have two shirts, we are rich. Untold millions around the world live on less than a dollar a day. In America “the average household headed by someone with a college degree has an income of about \$72,000 a year. If you live in that household, you are richer than 95% of the people on the planet. You are probably richer than 99.99% of the people who have ever lived.” Given our extraordinary access to wealth, a theology of stewardship calls us to find ways to release our resources for the benefit of the global church.” Albert Y. Hsu, *The Suburban Christian*, page 193

**For further resources, thoughts and discussion, join some of your fellow Christians at; <http://wapo.wordpress.org>**

## Stuffed

**Pastor Mike Bell**

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**Key point:** we are victims of the illusion of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Point #1.** Stuff cannot keep me \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Ecclesiastes 5:10-13)

**Key truth:** attempts at satisfaction from stuff will always be thwarted by “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”.

**Point #2.** Stuff is not real \_\_\_\_\_ and doesn’t last. (Matthew 6:18-24)  
(1 Timothy 6:17-18)

**Point #3.** The stuff I have is not \_\_\_\_\_ and I am not \_\_\_\_\_ to it. (Luke 18:22-30) (Luke 19:8-10)

**Point #4.** Stuff can \_\_\_\_\_ our souls. (Matt. 16:26) (Luke 16:19-31) (Luke 12:13-21) (Mark 4:18-19) (1 John 2:15-17) (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

“Our devotion to the newspaper and neglect of the Bible is the ultimate testimony to our interest in the short-range over the long range. We fail to ask how expensive clothes, cruises, face-lifts, breast implants, and liposuction will serve eternal purposes. Such questions are fit for theologians and pious old ladies, perhaps, but not for us-which would be true enough if only theologians and old ladies died, met their Maker, and spent eternity somewhere! ” Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions and Eternity*, Page 108.

## The solution:

**Action item #1.** Become convinced that God alone \_\_\_\_\_, that stuff never will, and that He must be the center of our lives.  
(Isaiah 55:2) (Phil 4:11-12) (Hebrews 13:5-6)

**Action item #2.** \_\_\_\_\_ from the system and the stuff. (Revelation 18:1-5) (2 Peter 1:5-9)

**Action item #3.** Recognize that redirected resources \_\_\_\_\_ make you become rich toward God. (Luke 16:9-11) (Isaiah 58:10) (1Peter 2:11-12)

“The way we live matters. It matters to God and it matters to others whose lives are affected. The point is not that a simpler style of life would eliminate hunger and poverty (it would not), but that a life given to God becomes focused on what God wills. Because God desires love and justice for the poor, we must desire the same. Because a life given to material excess violates God and those who lack the barest necessities, surrendering that life to God and, by grace, living a new way in Christ, is also what God desires. For most of us that means, among other things, spending less time and money on ourselves and becoming far more generous to those who are impoverished...let me add that God wants us to enjoy life, to have good times, and to spread the table well on special occasions. Jesus’ attendance at a wedding feast...His eating and drinking with sinners, and his acceptance of the woman’s gift of costly ointment tells us something about this. But these things find their proper place only if we are opening our hearts with great generosity to others and not allowing personal gratification to rob them of opportunities for life and livelihood.” Arthur Simon, How Much Is Enough?, page 131, 133.

## Individual/Family/Small Group Reflection

### Jesus said these words to the church in Laodicea;

15I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:15-17

**Read the following quotes from Crazy Love by Francis Chan. In light of the passage above and all that Jesus said about money and possessions, how do these comments strike you? Does this call for any action on your part?**

“The core problem isn’t the fact that we’re lukewarm, halfhearted, or stagnant Christians. The crux of it all is why we are this way, and it is because we have an inaccurate view of God. We see Him as a benevolent Being who is satisfied when people manage to fit him into their lives in some small way....He knows that He’s great and deserves to be the center of our lives. Jesus came humbly as a servant, but He never begs us to give Him some small part of ourselves. He commands everything from his followers.” Crazy Love, page 20

“Lukewarm people give money to charity and to the church...as long as it doesn’t impinge on their standard of living. If they have a little extra and it is easy to give, they do so. Crazy Love, page 67.

“Lukewarm people love others but do not seek to love others as much as they love themselves. Their love of others is typically focused on those who love them in return, like family, friends, and other people they know and connect with. There is little love left over for those who cannot love them back, much less for those who intentionally slight them, whose kids are better athletes than theirs, or with whom conversations are awkward or uncomfortable. Their love is highly conditional and very selective, and generally comes with strings attached.” Crazy Love, page 71

“Lukewarm people are thankful for their luxuries and comforts, and rarely consider trying to give as much as possible to the poor. They