

Am I A Disciple Or A Consumer?

By Richard L. Smith

During this Christmas season, it is worthwhile to consider this question:

Am I a disciple or consumer?

Do you find meaning and purpose in God or Mammon? Do your lifestyle, buying habits, and use of money reflect more "treasures on earth" or "treasures in heaven"? This is something to think about.

I encourage you to evaluate your relationship with money. To help you, here is a list of some symptoms of consumerism or Mammon worship: discontent, ingratitude, victim mentality, autonomy and rebellion, fulfillment in shopping, addiction to TV viewing, media celebrity worship, addiction to whatever is new (technology, clothing, services, for example), or basically living just to consume.

With respect self-evaluation I suggest the following practical activities:

1) Evaluate where and how the ideology of consumerism enters your heart. Watch less television. Read less advertizing. Learn to use the mute button on your TV during commercials. Download the software AdBlock for advertisements on your computer.

2) Recognize that we have a *spiritual* problem. Repent, if necessary, of the idol of self formation through consumerism or the idolatry of Mamón. Follow 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10: "turn" from idols to God, "serve" Christ and His people, and "wait" for His return. Here is the text:

For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Study the Bible concerning money. Focus, for example, on the Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels, or Paul and learn all you can.

Study your culture. Learn about how consumerism affects every area of life, especially in movies and music, and particularly among young people.

Serve in and with the church among the disadvantaged.

Finally, develop the spiritual disciple of simplicity with regard to money. I have provided a handout called "The Cure For Consumerism" to help you think about this more.