

[ARM Prison Outreach International](#)

"Ministers' Minute" Volume V Number 11

Voluntary Slavery to the Things We Own? Matt 6:19-24

Editor's Note: This "MM" is an email sermon, the 11th of 2006 --70th overall-- in a series we are sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message is a sermon I developed some years ago about the addiction of materialism. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and honor God. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, use it or components of it! May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

[ARM QUICK FACT:](#)

ARM's Branch Ministry in Thailand

ARM's Branch Minister in Thailand is Boonlerd Chompukeeree

Boonlerd continues to work in the area prisons. He and Joe Garman recently baptized inmates in one of the Thai male prisons in which Boonlerd works.

Daughters of Ruth: Things are going well as Boonlerd and family work with the girls. ALL SIX girls in the new home were recently immersed into Christ! Recent word from Joe Garman -- just back from Thailand -- is that as many as four more girls could arrive at anytime. We only have room for 13 in the rented facility. This is a fast growing ministry! We are planning our own home (much like Rapha House) soon.

Having raised the target goal of \$25,000 for half of the expected land price, and with an anonymous donor matching this \$25,000, Joe was able to purchase land on this recent trip! The Bible College (Lanna Christian College) in Chiang Mai is very close.

With the purchase of land, plans to build, and more girls coming soon we are trusting God for the needed funds to grow this new ministry of benevolence, evangelism, and church planting.

Donations may be sent to [ARM -Thailand, Rt. 5 Box 159, Salem, MO 65560](#)

[Voluntary Slavery to the Things We Own? Matt 6:19-24](#)

I couldn't believe my eyes! There in plain view were people walking up the front of the meeting room and presenting themselves to the evil-looking leaders who presided over the huge barrels sitting on the stage. As each volunteer approached, he would hold his hands out and receive what looked like a shiny bracelet. But the bracelets were not any kind of jewelry ... not at all. These were chains! And as I cautiously crept forward I saw a sigh that made me question my own eyes for a moment: attached to these chains was a huge padlock ... it was a crude sort of

handcuffs, it seemed. As the volunteers received their wrist chains, they all slowly shuffled off to the exit on the left. Shuffled indeed. For on their ankles were yet larger chains that were attached to the kind of iron ball we used to see in the cartoon and the comics. And then someone GRABBED AT ME! I recoiled for fear they thought I had come to receive MY shackles! I jerked in fear – AND LANDED ON THE FLOOR NEXT TO MY BED. WHAT A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE! **VOLUNTARY SLAVERY? IS THAT WHAT I HAD SEEN?**

And Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Matt 6:24

Matt 6:19-24

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

22 "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

23 "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (NAS)

People all around us – and some of us to some extent – are doing what was described in that fictitious nightmare: THEY ARE VOLUNTARILY SUBMITTING TO SLAVERY – A BONDAGE TO MATERIALISM. Allow me to illustrate thru BRUCE TOWNSEND'S HONDA GOLD WING.

'SUNGLASSES REQUIRED TO LOOK ON THIS GOLDEN MOTORCYCLE'

Hot Springs Sentinel Record (By G. D. Golden!)

Keep the sunglasses on for meeting Bruce Townsend and gazing up his chrome-and-gold, \$25,000 Gold Wing Honda. [\$25,000 in 1983 dollars!] This can be a blinding experience! [The jury is still out on WHO IS REALLY BLIND IN THIS STORY!] The accessories on his Honda include a voice- actuated intercom system, AM-FM cassette radio [remember, 1983] 40-channel CB radio, electric stand, gold plating, and chrome trim. These "options" add about 400 pounds to the bike's weight. All the gold plating is 24 karat.

Townsend, of OKC, spends up to six hours three times a week just "wiping down" his motorcycle. "That doesn't include polishing. Polishing takes 10 to 11 hours.

Christian stewardship is more than a portion of our means dropped into an offering plate. Biblical stewardship is far larger; it is LIFE-MANAGEMENT THAT RECOGNIZES GOD'S OWNERSHIP AND OUR STEWARDSHIP OF WHAT HE HAS GIVEN.

Let's look at some scripture that brings much-needed warnings against being enslaved to

material goods.

Luke 12:13-34

13 And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

14 But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?"

15 And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive.

17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?'

18 "And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'"

20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'

21 "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

22 And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.

23 "For life is more than food, and the body than clothing.

24 "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

25 "And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span?

26 "If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?

27 "Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these.

28 "But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you, O men of little faith!

29 "And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying.

30 "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

31 "But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you.

32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

33 "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys.

34 "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (NAS)

JOHN WESLEY SAID: "Whenever I acquire a little money, I use it and give it away as fast as I can, lest it find its way into my heart."

The longer we have anything, the more attached we generally become. We are "keepers" in this country. (Define "keeper" – 1) a wife to keep forever; 2) a person who can't throw anything away!)

- The phenomenon of 'storage units' in every small town in America – formerly a "big city" phenomenon
- Estate auctions illustrate the 'hoarding' nature in most of us
- Item found in an auction – 'slightly used toothpicks'
- Item found in an auction – 'many balls of string' and an envelope marked: 'pieces of string too short to be saved'

(Repeat Wesley quote)

The beauty of constantly receiving and continually sharing AVOIDS ATTACHMENT AND LEADS US TO UNDERSTAND 'GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD!' The frugal shopper who buys stuff on sale and uses coupons efficiently may have 15 BOTTLES OF KETCHUP IN HER PANTRY!

Most of us have at least a month of groceries stored in our pantries and freezers. That's not all bad, I'm not saying we should keep the cupboard bare. But can we really understand God's daily provision when we have so much stored up? THE RICH MAN IN LUKE 12 DIDN'T HAVE A FRIDGE AND A DEEP FREEZE!

Jesus plan was for us to receive continually and use and share each day. Be a channel of God's daily provision. Receive, use, give away, and see if God provides again tomorrow.

This plan avoids the slavery of managing, monitoring, and maintaining a BUNCH OF STUFF THAT IS NICE TO HAVE BUT STEALS OUR TIME.

We all have come to realize to some degree, at least, that material things cannot make us truly joyful and fulfilled. For instance: Who is more fulfilled? A man with \$6,000,000 or a man with 6 children? That's easy. Think about it. The man with \$6,000,000 still wants more.

Jesus spoke very plainly about the blessings we forfeit when we are tied up with the things we own ... things that may very well OWN US!

Consider these excerpts from James Dobson's [What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women:](#)

Last summer I examined a swing set which was on display in a local store. It was shiny and well-constructed so I purchased an identical model for my children. When the deliverymen arrived, however, they left me with a long box containing 6,324 pipes, 28,487,651 bolts, 28,487,650 screws and a set of instructions that would tempt Albert Einstein to swear and bite his nails. For the next 48 hours, I sweated to accommodate bent parts, missing parts, and parts from a 1948 Ford thrown in just to confuse me! Finally the wobbly construction sat upright, though by this time I had mauled the knuckles on my right hand while trying to force a half-inch screw through a 3/8" hole. However, the crusher came as I read the final line printed on the backside of the instructions; it said, "Please re-tighten all the bolts on this apparatus every two weeks to insure its safety and durability." What better example of materialistic slavery could there be? Along with everything else that I dare not forget, I now have to devote every other Saturday to this tin monster or else it'll gobble up my children! That, friends and neighbors, is the price of ownership!

16 But He said to him, "A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;

17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'

19 "And another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'

20 "And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'

21 "And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

22 "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'

23 "And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'

24 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'" (NAS)

The accumulation of material wealth is not a sin, per se, but the attachment to and priority of material things CAN diminish, if not replace our commitment to God! And that, my friends, is idolatry!

Col 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, (NAS)

The Philistines of the Old Testament are classic examples of idolatry.

1 Sam 5:1 Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

3 When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again.

4 But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.

5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day. (NAS)

We would not be so silly. But do we find ourselves worshiping inanimate objects today? Giving our precious time and energy to maintain and accommodate these objects?

And even if we do not fall prey to greed that is idolatry, we can waste our most precious commodity —TIME — by exchanging a portion of it for some item that we could have easily lived without. Consider more insight from Dr. Dobson:

Let me ask you to recall the most worthless and unnecessary expenditure you have made in the last year. Perhaps it was an electric can opener, which now sits in the garage or a suit of clothes, which will never again be worn. Do you realize that this item was not purchased with your money. In effect, you swapped a certain proportion of your allotted

[and limited] days on earth for that piece of junk that now clutters your home. Furthermore, no power on earth could retrieve the time that you squandered on its purchase. It's gone forever. We are investing our lives in worthless materialism, both in the original expenditures and on subsequent upkeep and maintenance.

A brief fable about the housefly illustrates clearly the situation reversal we humans have all experienced.

The fly cruised over the sweet tasting goo that was his for the taking. After a couple buzzes above the aromatic stickiness, he coasted in for a landing. Enjoying all the sweetness he could hold, he said, "My flypaper." But when his next effort to take off was thwarted by the adhesion of his feet to the paper, he thought he heard the flypaper say: "MY FLY!"

The key to freedom from greed and materialism is realizing –every day – that God owns it all and we are merely His managers and consumers. Being spiritually minded and generous with the material things which He entrusts to our care and control. Good stewardship, generosity, and unselfishness are all rolled up in TRUE SUBMISSION TO GOD.

It starts with making Christ Lord of our Lives and giving our bodies as a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (NAS)

We can be greedy like the Dead Sea and die. We can be generous, a virtual channel of God's blessings flowing thru us – like the Sea of Galilee and live. It is up to us.

There are two Palestinian seas and mankind is fashioned after these.

One is a sparkling sapphire jewel, its waters are clean and clear and cool.

Along its shores the children play and travelers seek it on their way.

But on to the south the Jordan flows into a sea where NOTHING GROWS!

No splash of fish, no singing birds, no children's laughter is ever heard.

The air hangs heavy all around and nature shuns the barren ground...

Both seas receive the Jordan's flow, the water is just the same we know,

But one of these seas, like liquid sun, can warm the hearts of everyone.

While farther south another sea is dead and dark and miserly.

It takes the drops the Jordan brings and to each drop it fiercely clings...

It hoards and hold the Jordan's waves until – much like shackled slaves –

The fresh water turns to salt and dies within the Dead Sea's vault.
But the Jordan flows on rapturously as it enters and leaves Lake Galilee,
For every drop that the Jordan gives becomes a laughing wave that lives.
For Lake Galilee gives back each drop, its waters flow and never stop,
And in this laughing, living sea that takes and gives so generously
We find the way to life and living is NOT IN KEEPING BUT IN GIVING!
Yes, there are two Palestinian seas and mankind is fashioned after these.

"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

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**In 2005, 127 ABA Bible courses was mailed from ARM every day!
In 2005, an ABA Bible course was mailed from ARM to a prisoner EVERY 11.3 minutes!**