



CHAPTER 24

Agree Together Not to Strive for Goals that are Merely Worldly or Materialistic

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("Rafe")

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It's Your CHOICE – Agree Together Not To Strive For Goals That Are Merely Worldly Or Materialistic

AGREE TOGETHER NOT TO STRIVE FOR GOALS THAT ARE MERELY WORLDLY OR MATERIALISTIC

There is nothing wrong with someone being popular. There is nothing wrong with someone ending up with material possessions. It is not money that is the root of all evil, but it is the **love** of money that is the root of all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). There is nothing wrong with a person having fame or notoriety. But it can be very wrong before the Lord and it can be very destructive to the marriage relationship if the husband or the wife is **STRIVING** to be popular, famous, wealthy, have material things, obtain peer recognition or public acclaim, and the like.

This brings us back to your **CHOICES**. If you make **CHOICES** which result in placing the attainment of popularity, riches, material things, peer recognition or public acclaim **ABOVE** spending significant quality time with your spouse, or **ABOVE** the needs, desires and pleasures of your spouse, then your marriage relationship will not become as beautiful, mature and excellent as it could be otherwise, and your marriage relationship may be in for trouble.

By way of illustration let me discuss briefly just one of these matters - striving for entrance into the "club" of the social elite. In many communities, particularly in smaller cities, there is a group that thinks of itself as being the movers and shakers, top drawer, the ones that really count, etc. It is sort of like the popular clique or the "in" crowd back in high school. It develops into a type of "us" versus "them" distinction. This "in crowd" actually does maintain some reins of power, but only over those who are **striving** for entrance, acceptance, and upward mobility within that group. The power brokers in that group really do exert significant hierarchical power over the wannabe's and strivers. Those seeking acceptance must deal with the anxiety of first trying to learn the expectations and demands of the top dogs within the group.

Then they must continually strive to please, copy, follow, and meet the expectations of those higher in status in that group. Yuk.

If a husband or a wife for some reason is one of those striving to be a part of the social elite or to climb the social ladder, it will probably lead to conflict in the marriage. There will be differences in priorities, and **CHOICES** will be made that subordinate the spouse in favor of the vanity of seeking to meet those silly social expectations.

Here is a truism. The power of the so-called elite is absolutely limited to only that group itself and upon the wannabe's clamoring to get "in" and climb up. If you and your spouse agree that you do not have a goal, individually or as a couple, to be a part of that shallow "club" then the apparent power of the bosses in the club is non-existent and there is zero control or pressure from that group upon you. That brings freedom. It also releases you to spend your time, important planning, and praying about how to climb up the ladder of excellence as a Christian husband or as a Christian wife. Instead of worrying about how to impress some self-proclaimed V.I.P., you are free to pray and plan even more urgently and enthusiastically how you can be the most interesting, charming, winsome and attractive mate for your spouse.

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Next I will discuss briefly the matter of money and material things. My precious wife and I have had two separate periods of true poverty. The first was our early marriage years when we were still in college and law school. The second was following a year of sabbatical from the law practice when we had answered the call to do missionary work in Japan. We gained the perspective of living in poverty the first time as newlyweds and as young parents. After a few years and after experiencing a newly built house, cars, and being a partner in a business, we went back to starting over from scratch (or as Pastor Ivan French says, we even "started from itch"). I am not in an "I have been more destitute than you" contest with anyone. I say this only to point out that I have some perspective about **CHOICES** that enhance the marriage relationship which do not depend on whether you have little or much. **DO NOT BE AFRAID OF BEING POOR.** The quality of your marriage relationship does not depend on having material things. I warn you not to make **CHOICES** in favor of material things that detract from your relationship with the Lord or your relationship with your spouse.

Now that Pam and I are in our middle fifties we can look back and consider the lives of our high school and college classmates over the decades. We became parents at a young age. We heard some of our friends make statements to the effect that they could not or would not have children until after they finished a certain graduate degree or until after they had purchased a house or until after they had certain debts paid off, and on and on and on. We know of some couples that became so wrapped up in the accumulation of material things and in their respective careers that they simply concluded one day that their careers were more important than having children or that they had become too old then to start a family. I know of the immeasurable riches and joy of raising children. I know how the joint experience of parenting children in dependence on God has enriched, deepened and broadened my relationship with Pam and has been vital to our shared dreams, goals and joint efforts. I also know that these benefits absolutely could not have occurred to the same degree otherwise. Furthermore, all of the investments of time, prayer and discussions through the years relating to raising our children and participating with them in life were all matters that directed our attention toward each other rather than away from each other in the direction of independent matters.

These types of benefits are available regardless of the your economic position. To make life **CHOICES** based on the attainment of a higher income or the fulfillment of some material goal is hollow and is looking in the wrong place for satisfaction, security, and joy.

In Chapter 23 I discussed practical "investments" for building relationships. This same principle of practical investment applies to the **CHOICES** that are made in favor of living life **NOW** in a way to enrich and enhance your marriage relationship. (Did you know that tomorrow **never** arrives? You always live only today). **CHOOSE** your spouse over riches. If the Lord blesses you with some degree of material success, keep your hand open and know that it is all the Lord's. Give Him your unqualified permission to take any or all of your possessions and to use any or all of it at any time for His purposes. All the while build your treasure in heaven and build the treasure of beautiful and loving relationships which are not dependent on the whims of the national economy or world market pressures.

Being materialistic does not mean that you are rich or have lots of material things. The materialistic person is the one whose focus, goals and attention are on attaining or keeping

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material things. Also, if a person's sense of well-being is greatly affected by money or material things, he is materialistic. Some of the most materialistic people I have met are relatively poor, but they are obsessed with getting money or things, or they are engulfed in envy because someone else has money or things. Such thoughts control their attention and emotions. The man who goes into a rage because his wife or child broke or damaged a material possession is materialistic. The cheapskates and the tightwads are some of the most materialistic people of all. They clench onto their money or things so tightly that their thoughts and emotions are consumed and controlled by their possessions.

As a couple please agree that you will not **strive** for material or worldly goals. It is your **CHOICE**. And be sure to be very thankful to your gracious Heavenly Father for the material things God places into your entrustment and be very generous to others with those material blessings.