

“PRAYING FOR GODLINESS WITH CONTENTMENT FOR OUR CHILDREN ” BEWARE OF AFFLUENZA

One of my hobbies is to follow Global Trends. We are so fixated often as Americans on America we are out of touch with issues that most of the world is focusing upon.

This week many major world newspapers began to examine what is being called the “Super-Flu”. Here is what they are saying:

Overdue attack

Some¹ experts have been looking at the genetic structure of the virus which caused the 1918 pandemic, as well as a serious outbreak in Hong Kong in 1997 for clues which may help doctors combat such an outbreak. There were three flu pandemics in the last century, in 1918, 1957 and 1968. Even though the 1957 and 1968 outbreaks were less severe than the Spanish flu, they still accounted for **40,000,000 deaths between them (or 1% of the population)**. Researchers suggest that an approximate 30-year cycle between pandemics means **we are well overdue for another one**. (1% of America falling victim to influenza would mean 3,000,000 deaths!)

We need to listen because we have had our share of disasters with the flu or Influenza as it is properly called.

In the² spring of 1918, as the nation mobilized for war, Private Albert Gitchell reported to an Army hospital in Kansas. He was diagnosed with the flu, a disease doctors knew little about. Before the year was out, America would be ravaged by a flu epidemic that killed 675,000--more than in all the wars of this century combined--before disappearing as mysteriously as it began.

There is a super influenza coming that tragically will strike many people’s physical bodies. However as we all know – there is something far worse that a sick and dying body – and that is a sick and dying soul.

This morning I believe that an even worse epidemic is already being reported in Tulsa. However it is not Influenza – it is Affluenza. To catch the difference, please stand with me as we read Paul’s 1st letter to Timothy and the last chapter. Please follow along as I read all 21 verses.

¹ BBC World News, Health, 11-02-02.

² <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza/tguide/index.html>

What is Affluenza? It is so dangerous even the world has noticed. It is the habitual chasing of money and stuff. One gifted Christian writer calls it -- **Possession Obsession**. In September of 1997 PBS aired a special television program they entitled *Affluenza*. The topic was a warning against what the public sector has identified as the "modern-day plague of materialism." Here are the symptoms they observed five years ago:

- The average³ American shops six hours a week while spending forty minutes playing with his children.
- By age twenty, we've seen one million commercials.
- Recently, more Americans declared bankruptcy than graduated from college.
- In 90 percent of divorce cases, arguments about money play a prominent role.

Here is the PBS self-diagnosis questionnaire. As you think over these questions remember this is PBS not Paul, and yet they are saying the same thing! When the world points out our problems they are really bad!

Are You Escaping⁴ from Affluenza? Take this quiz and find out! Answer the following as honestly as possible.

1. My life would be happier if I had more money.
2. I often feel overwhelmed by the amount of stuff I have, and the amount of time it takes to pay for, maintain, and store it all.
3. My partner and I have different views on spending and saving, it's hard to talk about these subjects without arguing.
4. My children seem more materialistic than I was at their age. (If you have no children, answer this from your experiences with the children you know.)
5. I never seem to have enough "quality time" with my family and other loved ones.
6. Our family loves clothing with the fashionable logos on it, and we're usually among the first on the block to see the latest hit movie.
7. I hardly know my neighbors, I feel disconnected from my local community.
8. I very often feel rushed, with too much to do and not enough time to do it all.
9. I don't enjoy my job; I would quit if I didn't have to work for money.
10. I don't feel that I live my life in total alignment with my values and beliefs.
11. I don't know what the interest rates are on my credit cards or exactly how much debt I have.
12. I pay only the monthly minimum payment on my credit cards.
13. I do not put money into savings regularly.
14. I spend much more time shopping each month than I do being involved in my community.
15. I sometimes buy something because it's cool or fashionable, not because I love it or need it.
16. I know I have more "extras" in my life than my parents and grandparents did, but I don't feel as satisfied about my standard of living as I think they were.

What struck one author about this program was⁵ that it doesn't argue against materialism on a moral basis but a pragmatic one: Material wealth doesn't make us happy. Listen to some of the wealthiest people of their day:

- "The care of \$200 million is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it." W. H. Vanderbilt
- "I am the most miserable man on earth." John Jacob Astor

³ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.50-51.

⁴ <http://www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/escape/>

⁵ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.50-51.

- "I have made many millions, but they have brought me no happiness." John D. Rockefeller
- "Millionaires seldom smile." Andrew Carnegie
- "I was happier when doing a mechanic's job." Henry Ford

If Affluenza is the disease, what's the cure? If materialism is the poison, what's the antidote? Paul offers an answer. Look again at 1 Timothy 6:17-19:

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may **lay hold on eternal life**.

This morning we are going to do something very hard for us as people living on Earth – we are going to try to think about our Eternal Life instead of merely our Temporal Life. Let me explain. Temporal Life is everyday life. Life that has aches and pains, deadlines and pressures, hopes and fears, ups and downs. It is life getting up, going to school or work, and waiting for special things like dinners, dates, vacations, and events. It is a life that is framed by our body, our car, our job and our world we have experienced. In other words it is **LIFE**, as we all know it.

Now, when we were saved, and the Lord regenerated us by the new birth, we were born a second time. Our first birth put us in the Temporal Life; our second birth puts us in the Eternal Life. Both run parallel for 30, 40, 50, 60 or even 80 plus years. In fact most of us barely experience the Eternal part of Life. We know it is there, we hope in it for the future but we don't exactly know what to do with Eternal Life today as we are so completely overwhelmed by our Temporal or physical world.

What is the key to Vitality in our Eternal Life? Listen to God's Word – "Lay Hold on Eternal Life..." That is our next and final section of our study on Growing Godly Families – One Prayer at a Time. We need to be deeply engaged in earnest prayer that our children and grandchildren get and maintain Vitality in the Eternal Life.

Jesus in the Gospels explains signs of a Life dominated by the temporal. He spends many hours pointing out the symptoms:

- Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"
- Matthew 6:19-28 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on 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 and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. 25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your

heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

- Luke 12:13-21 Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." 14 But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" 15 And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' 18 So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." ' 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' 21 "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Vitality in our Eternal Life means we are alive and thinking and motivated by the fact that we are already immortal. We are thinking Eternally when we start seeing what our moments look like when they are observed from God's Throne. All of a sudden we see that our life span and our resources were all given us by Another who owns us and wants a return on His investment.