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for women ministers only

Greeting to you in Jesus' wonderful name. The name Jesus is connected to salvation. Jesus or "iescus" in NT Greek, and OT Hebrew "Yeshua" means "The LORD saves". Indeed Jesus came to save us from the bondage to sin and destruction. Many people are in bondage to destructive obsessions and sinful habits. The Gospel has the power to free them from these, as many former, born again drug addicts can testify. Some seemingly innocent children or computer games too can lead to bondage and we need to be careful. One case in point possibility may be the Pokemon game. We need to exercise according according to Loren Eaton whose article on Pokemon, sister Eva Fong has obtained from a Methodist journal below.

What in the World is Pokémon?

Kids everywhere know all about Pokémon. Most parents are still scratching their heads. So what exactly does the strangely spelled word mean and why are people from ages 5 to 25



chanting, "Gotta catch 'em all! Gotta catch 'em all!"

Here's Pokémon in a nutshell. On a mythic world, men dwell with exotic creatures of all shapes and sizes. While a few are familiar, much like the creatures we encounter today (foxes, turtles, fish, mice, birds and dogs), others are like nothing ever seen (fairies, sentient plants, living rocks, ambulatory sludge and mischievous ghosts). These are "Pokémon" and there are numerous varieties of them. They are captured and trained to fight by Pokémon "trainers" who pit their stables of creatures against competitors for honor and "trainer badges." The goal of all trainers is to capture each and every Pokémon in existence and become a Pokémon master.

The concept might seem a bit underwhelming, but youths have been fueling the Pokémon phenomenon for three years, to the tune of \$5 billion.

The Pokémon Phenomenon

Pokémon began in Japan with a boy named Satoshi Tajiri who liked to catch insects, save them in jars, and try to make them fight like giant B-movie monsters Godzilla and Mothra. One thing led to another until he formed a video game company and produced a game for the Nintendo Game Boy.

Hoping that it would boost sales for its flagging game system, Nintendo released *Pokémon: Red* and *Pokémon: Green* in Japan. It promptly sold 4 million copies, breaking scores of records.

Today Mr. Tajiri's video game has morphed into multiple versions for both Game Boy and Nintendo 64. The Game Boy versions alone have sold 12 million copies in Japan and 4 million in America. The popularity of *Pokémon* the TV show helped the WB network win the first Saturday of the 1999-2000 season among kids age 2 to 11. There's even a feature-length film slated for release later this year. The current *Pokémon* marketing flood includes comics, plush toys, posters, stickers, T-shirts, collectible figures, model kits, stamps, coloring books, key chains, pencil cases, bandages, backpacks, sneakers,

lunch boxes, CDs and even toasters which will brand characters' images onto your bread. But amidst this glut, only one spin-off has truly achieved superstar status: *Pokémon: The Card Game* (TCG).

Pokémon: The Card Game

Interactive card games came into their own in America in 1993 with the inception of *Magic: The Gathering*. The medium was novel. Kids were getting out of the house, leaving video games behind, and playing with each other instead of with an electronic box. But these card games weren't their parents' games. Hearts, clubs, spades, and diamonds weren't part of the formula.



Pokémon's co-creator, Tsunekazu Ishihara, saw the potential of these collectable card games and released *Pokémon: TCG*. Approximately 1 billion cards have already been sold in Japan. In 1996, Nintendo signed an agreement with Wizards of the Coast (creators of *Magic: The Gathering*) and commenced distribution of an English translation of *TCG*. The game's popularity exploded. Soon after shipping began, Wizards of the Coast was forced to ration the cards due to the incredible demand. A trading card league sprung up in which players earn points and collect trainer badges. And the *Pokémon Trading Card Game Tour* travels from mall to mall across the

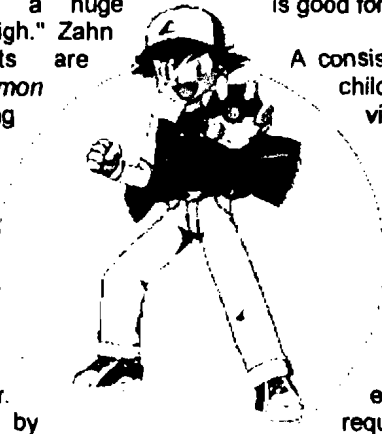
country, drawing 4,000 at a stop. This past summer over 44,000 swarmed to the Mall of America for the Tour with lines stacked up 3,000 deep.

The frenzy for *Pokémon: TCG* has grown so great that many schools have banned it entirely from campus. In Milwaukee, Wis., Burleigh Elementary Principal Bill Zahn issued a principal's proclamation entitled *The Pokémon Dilemma*, which stated that "*Pokémon* cards have become a huge problem here at Burleigh." Zahn also said, "Students are admiring their *Pokémon* cards instead of paying attention to their teacher." Janna Russell, principal of Bill Elliott Elementary School in Fort Worth, Texas, confiscates the cards on sight, keeping them until the end of the school year. The reasons cited by schools for banning the cards are a lack of attention in class, harsh conflicts resulting from trades gone bad, and theft.

Pokémon: TCG, A Discussion of Value

Controversy has swirled around *Pokémon: TCG* since its birth. Some claim it is overtly evil and occultic, and should be avoided at all costs. Others view it as harmless fun, even beneficial.

First, let's look at what's being said in the phenomenon's defense. "There is nothing sinister [about *Pokémon*]," says John Hooten, father of two avid fans. "It is a good activity. It makes them use their memories, it makes them put things in order, it makes them interact socially with other kids." Tammy, a mother and elementary school teacher, has no reservations about *TCG*: "I think it's great. There's a lot involved in it. First of all, the reading and the language is good for [kids]."



A consistent gripe of parents is, "My child just watches TV and plays video games all of the time. He won't go outside and he won't read any books." With the advent of *Pokémon: TCG*, fans have disconnected themselves from electronic entertainment and run outside with cards and sourcebooks in hand. Strategic thinking is encouraged. Winning a game requires knowing the strengths and weaknesses of other *Pokémon* and playing the correct cards against them. To know the strengths and weaknesses, one must read various books and study the *Pokémon*. And to get the cards to win the games, one must either buy a lot of booster packs (which are randomly seeded with powerful cards) or learn to trade with others. Since most children will not have the money to buy scads of cards, they tend to trade, learning negotiation skills in the process. The downside to this is that there will be some who will get taken advantage of.

Even though Pokémon are pitted against each other in combat, none of them actually die; once they've been "beaten about a bit," they faint and are out of play. The card is simply removed. There are no dramatic or stomach-turning scenes of graphic violence. The player simply pulls another card from his deck and continues playing. These cute little animals are a far cry from the rotting zombies, mangled motorists or butchered cowboys of video games *Resident Evil 2*, *Carnageddon* and *Rising Zan*.

All is not perfect in the Pokémon world, however. As just noted, the animals don't die, but the idea of a dogfight is at the core of the game. It's difficult to get around the concept that you are teaching your Pokémon to "smack the stuffing" out of someone else's Pokémon. But once again, the violence is not explicit, nor is it displayed. When someone plays *Battleship*, for example, he generally doesn't stop to think, "I'm firing at an enemy vessel, blowing it up, and killing thousands of men in the process." He just puts a red peg in a hole. With *Pokémon: TCG*, a player puts a card on a table.

TCG includes ghost and "psychic" characters. (Think of *The Wizard of Oz*, *Mary Poppins* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, not *Charmed*, *The Craft* or *Vampire: The Masquerade*.) Still, children who play *Pokémon* are introduced to bizarre supernatural forces that have absolutely nothing to do with God. (More on this in the section titled "Pokémon and the Occult.")

It also proffers the idea that Pokémon can "evolve" to higher forms. But it is not the same theory, which is being taught in high school classrooms; this evolving is not a matter of random chance, but of conscious choice. Players can decide whether or not they want their Pokémon to evolve and they can actually *devolve* with the use of certain cards. Pokémon evolution bears as much resemblance to Darwinian evolution as a sunflower does to the sun--same general color, similar names, but very different things.



Addiction and TCG

Pokémon's oft repeated motto states it plainly: Gotta catch 'em all! The continually emphasized goal is to become a Pokémon master (which really means collecting each and every species of Pokémon, ASAP). The *Pokémon Trading Card Game Player's Guide* states:

"You are a Pokémon Trainer. You have collected Pokémon for your use and must compete with rival Pokémon trainers in battle. You pursue that lofty goal of becoming the number one Pokémon master in the world. You will face many challenges in your quest. You may even falter on occasion, but your call to Pokémon Mastery beckons and you must not relent!"

Soon the collecting frenzy is due to expand even more; 100 new creatures are to be added with the introduction of *Pokémon: Gold* and *Pokémon Silver* for Game Boy, and these Pokémon will certainly be shifted over into TCG. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* put it well when it said, "The game programs you to collect things. . . . The average player's probably pretty keen to get his hands on as much Pokémon-related gear as he or she can afford." It's not hard to realize that the golden rule of Pokémon ("Gotta catch 'em all!") is in tension with that which God wants us to "collect." "Provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:33b-34)

Pokémon enthusiasts themselves readily agree about the compulsive nature of the game. Eric, age 13, told *Plugged In*, "It's highly addictive and I think it's fun that there's a world out there with imaginary creatures that you can control and are highly powerful." Justin, an employee at the Colorado Springs-based Complete Games and Hobbies, commented, "[The kids] are fans. They're fanatics. There's really no other word for it. . . . It's like the Beatles." When questioned about why his friends liked *Pokémon*, Travis Price, one such fanatic, replied, "Most kids get brainwashed into it. They really like the TV show so they start collecting the



toys first usually, like I did, then, when they found out cards had come out, they start collecting these You get really obsessed with it." His mother was quick to interject, "But you mean obsessed in a good way, wouldn't you say?"

Pokémon and the Occult



Some people have connected Pokémon directly with witchcraft and the occult, saying it is "entry level evil" and the names of certain

Pokémon are actually the names of demons. For example, the Pokémon Bellsprout, Weepinbell and Victreebel are said to be connected to the spirit world because the "bell" and "bel" sections of their names are similar to the name of the ancient Caananite god Baal. Of course, it may be that these creatures are named thus because they are actually shaped like bells. Name puns are very common in the game. Two jellyfish Pokémon are named Tentacool and Tentacruel. Two turtle types are called Squirtle and Wartortle. The names of three psychic characters form an obvious, if not groan-worthy, joke: Abra, Kadabra and Alakazam.

Author Berit Kjos writes that *Pokémon* presents children with "a tempting promise: . . . supernatural

power." Parents must decide for themselves if that overstates the case. However, this spiritual discussion does raise an important point. Even if one concludes that *Pokémon: TCG* itself isn't inherently occultic, many other card games are full of dark spirituality. And although claims that *TCG* is a ready stepping stone to these kind of games may be a bit overdone (*Pokémon: TCG*'s rules are quite different from *Magic: The Gathering*), there is some truth to them. Parents whose children are already fans of *Pokémon: TCG* should not allow games such as *Magic: The Gathering*, *Legends of the Five Rings (L5R)*, *Legend of the Burning Sands*, *Rage*, or *Vampire: The Eternal Struggle* into their homes. These games directly embrace wizardry, channeling, demonic possession, sorcery, black magic and vampirism.

"Let Us Hear the Conclusion of the Whole Matter . . ."

So, should children play *Pokémon: TCG* or not? It encourages reading, critical thinking and social interaction. But it also contains mild violence, can lead to other disturbing games, is very addictive and can easily cause strife between parents and children.

Additionally, the mere presence of ghosts and "psychic" characters

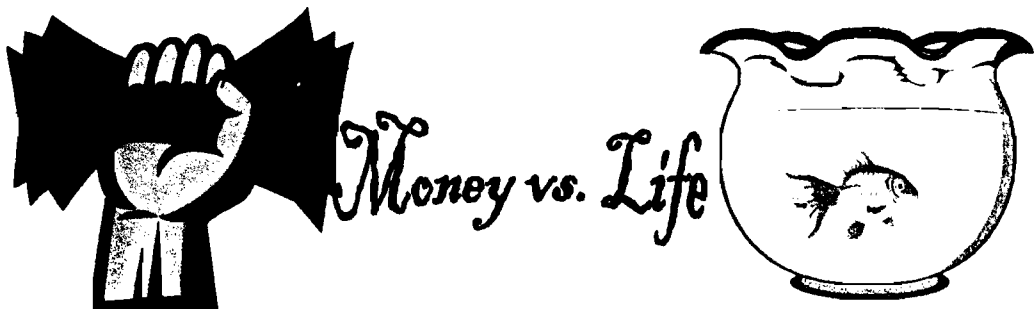
may effectively nix *Pokémon* for some families. In all cases, caution and moderation are key. If your children are already involved, look for warning signs of addiction (obsessive behavior, a consistent unwillingness to do schoolwork, disobedience when asked to leave the game to come to dinner, etc.). If they aren't into the fad yet, weigh it carefully before buying them a starter set for Christmas. Consider your child's personality, peer group, self-discipline and maturity. Prayerfully pondering your knowledge of *Pokémon* and your knowledge of your child should lead you to a wise conclusion.

May we exercise caution on this prevalent fad as Christians.

Pastor Martin Yee

MORE THOUGHTS TO PONDER ON..

- ❖ If people from Poland are called Poles, why aren't people from Holland called Holes?
- ❖ Why is a person who plays the piano call a pianist, but a person who drives a race car not called a racist?
- ❖ If horrific mean to make horrible, doesn't terrific mean to make terrible?
- ❖ Why is the man, who invest all your money called a broker?
- ❖ Why is it that if someone tells you that there are 1 billion stars in the universe you will believe them, but if they tell you a wall has wet paint, you will have to touch it to be sure?



Once upon a time, Money and Life were two good friends. They followed Master hand in hand wherever he went. Whenever Life felt that he had a need to be fed or provided with some comfort, Money would lend a helpful hand to procure the need. On the other hand, whenever Money had the need to feel safe and secure, or to grow as a matter of course, Life would provide the enterprise and the energy. Such were the close relationships between Money and Life that they were inseparable from each other and they could not imagine how each would have a possible or meaningful existence without the other. Unfortunately, something happened and favoritism by the master reared its ugly head. As a result, Money and Life ceased their friendliness with each other and contention became the order of the day in whichever home they dwelled together.

Master was on a journey to a foreign land when he met Criminal who had an eye on Money and a despise for Life. A row ensued.

Criminal: Hand over Money, or else...

Master: What?! For goodness sake, no way!

Criminal: OK, I compromise. You give me your Money or I take your Life. Make your choice.

Master: Money, I don't have with me; but Life, well, I have one to spare if you have the means to take it.

Throughout the row, Money and Life were standing on edge. The words of the Master preferring Money to Life gave a jolt to the latter. As the duel between Master and Criminal went on, Help came along. Albeit Life managed to escape the clutches of Criminal, he had become badly wounded in pride by his master's favoritism towards Money. Rubbing salt

into the wound, Money became arrogant. With his master's faithfulness towards him assured, he started throwing his weight around at every opportunity. He was no longer a positive and useful partner to Life. Instead, Life became enslaved under Money's beck and call. Life could have given Money the boot, but he chose to labour under the delusion of his low self-esteem and dependency on Money to enjoy his existence.

Hitherto, Money and Life are still often seen to dwell under the same roof. However, their stay together is tenuous at best. Money is satisfied to boss his way around while Life is forever under threat of being abandoned by the self-appointed boss. From time to time, Life would just seek comfort with the few pleasures that Money cares to procure for him.

John Lee

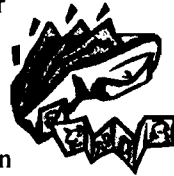


All About Money

On 12th February, a Singaporean tourist in Batam was stabbed to death when he resisted a robbery attempt. When we read the tragic news, a spontaneous thought might have floated up in our minds, “Aiyah, why so foolish. They want money, just give them. Money lost can be earned back. Why risk life, especially when you are alone in a dangerous situation?”



Wise thought! Sadly, such a thought did not have its chance of being delivered as a piece of sound advice before the event. Even if it had, would it really have an impact to make a difference at the moment of reckoning? It is easier to say “Discretion is the better part of valour” than to act on it. When you have a large amount of cash or valuables with you while being confronted by a robber, a contest of instincts takes place naturally. Between the instinct for preservation of life and the instinct for safeguarding your significant material treasures, one must give. Stand in front of the mirror, keep a straight face and with no stranger around to embarrass you, spit your thought to the “person” in front. It is not going to be an easy thing to do — naturally, because we are all natural.



In a survey conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies, it was found that “two in three Singaporeans would defend the country even if it meant losing their lives, but that about half would refuse to take a huge pay cut and pay heavier taxes in the interest of their nation.”



Regarding the survey results, our Deputy Prime Minister, BG Lee, was reported to be “not at all surprised that Singaporeans were less willing to support the country if it hurt their pockets.” BG Lee said, “You might ask, you might persuade him, but nobody offers such things up willingly; it’s against human nature.”

Human nature is certainly a tremendous force for one to overcome. By human nature’s dictates, it is more acceptable to sacrifice life than to sacrifice money. Following the rule of human nature, therefore, is to submit our lives to rule by money. We have a choice – Either obligingly acquiesce to the force of nature and lose our lives, or meekly submit to the force of the Holy Spirit and forsake our first love (money). “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Mt 6:24)

Money is important only as a utility, not a treasure. Many Christians say that it is the love of money that is evil, not money *per se*. Some among them pile up their money in investments, properties and bank accounts. If we equate money-worth with physical money, then you will realise that as investments rise and fall in value, money is gained and lost by quantum leaps according to vagaries of markets, the inherent flaws of the monetary system or just the greed of mouse-happy humans without any utility being put on it to serve real and necessary consumption. Without the gain or loss, we already have what we need for our standards of living; so the amounts churned out or washed away as gain or loss actually exist only on paper or in the minds to provide psychological thrill. They do not have any productive utility.

When money was invented, it was meant to be a medium for exchange, a convenience for trade. Manifestly, it has been abused. Instead of a medium for exchange, currency itself has become the object for exchange! Besides, more money is being stored away with its value rising or falling at man’s command and less money is being applied to its real function throughout the period from a person’s cradle to his grave.

Some people argue that what is invested or saved have the utility as a safeguard against inflation or a security for rainy days or old age. By this token, Microsoft’s Bill Gates is having an abundant degree of safeguards and security. He has built up his wealth through honest hard work. However, one may ask how much of his wealth practically serves real and necessary consumption. Imagine that a stormy day falls and he needs to use all of his accumulated wealth. He liquidates his stocks and converts his properties to cash. Would his billions be worth the same in the accounts book, be halved or quartered? Our combined wealth may still be minuscule compared with the Gates’. Nevertheless, in percentage terms and according to our familiar standards of living, much of the wealth is not utilised and will never be utilised for real and necessary consumption. Yet, for every two persons above the 80th percentile in terms of wealth, there are five fellow human beings in abject poverty living on less than US\$2 per day. What a waste to humanity that gigantic amounts of money’s utilities are just being locked away and subject to immediate vaporisation when the International Financial System decides “OK, time is up for a BANG!”



Even Bill Gates’ billions does not compare to the wealth of John D. Rockefeller Sr (1839-1937), a petroleum magnate touted as the richest man ever and who is probably valued at over \$200 billion today. Comparing such an immensity in human-assigned value with the real applications of the wealth to benefit people in need of manna (half the world population), it is not difficult to realise that much of man’s wealth is not useful except to feed man’s desire for “carnal security” instead of “eternal security” dependent on God. May we learn something from Job and Ezekiel:

Job 31:24-25,28 “If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security,’ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained... then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.”

Eze 28:2-10 (NAS) ... "Thus says the Lord God, 'Because your heart is lifted up and you have said, 'I am a God...' yet you are a man and not God, although you make your heart like the heart of God... You have acquired riches for yourself... and your heart is lifted up because of your riches--Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you... and they will draw their swords... and defile your splendor... and you will die... Will you still say, 'I am a god, 'in the presence of your slayer, although you are a man and not God, in the hands of those who wound you?' "

The truths that apply to international money and national money also apply to individual money. It is just a matter of scale. When we read Biblical advice like ISAIAH 55:1 ("Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."), it is easy to dismiss it as "unreal". Practical or impractical advice, it is in the mind and we are talking about the omniscience of God that has been tested through and through. Money was not and is not the only means for man's survival. Barter, entrepot, and subsistence still exist today although not widespread. Firmly established systems (whether regarding trading means, communication facilities like telegraphs, transportation modes, etc.) have been replaced. Even the Internet today will be supplanted by immensely more powerful mind-boggling inventions now already on the drawing board. The International financial system has gone through great trials and tribulations, through the highs and lows of man-made inflations and depressions. Nobody can foretell what will be, and what will happen to those who are inebriated by their desire for money over life. However, it is quite evident that money is not everything, being just an ephemeral utility that is to be put to its proper use before it is replaced by a different utility that will hopefully serve rather than enslave. No human invention can remain entrenched forever. At the advent of the automobile, you would be considered as crazy to imagine flying through the air. Telegraphy for a long time seemed indomitable, but now it is preparing its grave. By the next decade, the present face of the Internet will be totally unrecognizable when supercomputers performing 20 million billion calculations a second (same as human brain) become a reality. While it is said that change is a constant in life, life itself as God-given with its eternal dimension is not subject to change at will.



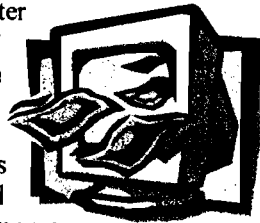
The so-called "New Economy" is not a guarantee of survival, especially for over-confident entrepreneurs who embrace the Internet as a wonder-tool for profitable trade opportunities and ordinary nine-to-five folks who follow the crowds in jumping onto dot.com vehicles with the illusion of making their money grow 100%, 1000%, ... overnight. If you fill your pockets with more money, the money must come from others' pockets. Money does not flow in one direction; it can flow in as well as out. Money can even fly



100%,
money, the
in one
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snap of the finger. (Call it “capital flight” if you want a more classy expression.) For example, when the Thai Government snapped its finger in July 1997 to float the Thai Baht, financial disasters visited many other Asian countries almost instantly. Faster than flying, in the “New Economy”, money can even travel at the speed of electricity; billions of dollars can circle the globe in mere seconds by just mouse clicks. How much faster it will be when Teledesic satellite network comes on stream next year to provide worldwide high-speed data connections.

The Internet Economy is not sustainable if it only encourages people to play with money, moving physical money from point to point instead of adding human labour to boost the utility of existing money so that more people can share the fruits of the labour. It is not flattering to the rich to declare how smart they have played the Economy at the expense of those who have been played out and sucked dry in the game. When highly trained financial experts around the world glue their eyes on computer screens and do nothing except buy and sell money, their “work” supported by money-crazed individuals and institutions, one can easily imagine the degree of wisdom man possesses in shuffling money from point to point adding no material to the “labour cost” they tag on in the process. It would be wiser of man to apply his labour to increase the production of real economic and life-essential goods or services and thereby add quantity to what each unit of money can buy. In this way, the labour cost would be more justifiable since it contributes to useful output.



The way man rationalises his economic activities is definitely out of sync with God’s will. God has a warning to those who worship wealth and neglect the truth. In the fullness of time, they will have to bite the dust:

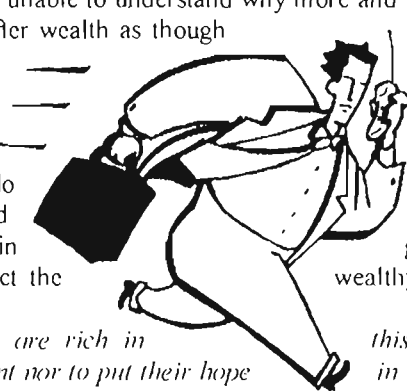


“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings--and that without us! How I wish you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!.. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless... Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children... I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with punishment, or in love and with a gentle spirit?”
(1 Cor 4:8-21)

"Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days... You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter." (James 5:1-3,5)

"They have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek... they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?" declares the Lord." (Jer 5:27-29)

I have no difficulty comprehending human nature at work in people who desire more money to support a pleasant livelihood or even flavour their lives with some amount of luxury. However, I am totally unable to understand why more and more people around the world are chasing after wealth as though it is fast-depleting Oxygen. It isn't that they do not have enough of a pleasant regular doses of luxury; in fact, they have enough security vaults. The only thing these people do not have must be time for non-money-making and non-self-centred pursuits to do good, be rich in good deeds ... as Paul advised Timothy to instruct the wealthy:



"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." (1 Tim 6:17-19)

After reading the Word of God, I cannot help feeling that it is not necessarily a blessing to be rich. Well, to those who are rich, I would say that it is perfectly alright if the wealth has been acquired "without trouble" and has divine approval (as I wrote in "Talking about Blessing" in the last issue of The Vine). On the contrary, if the wealth has been acquired through mental deftness at the expense of others instead of honest enterprise without selfishness, it is a different thing altogether. Be it noted that God does not absolutely clamp down on riches. "He sends [both] poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts." (1 Sam 2:7) Nonetheless, God makes it absolutely clear that wealth granted by His grace is not for boasting but for sharing:

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

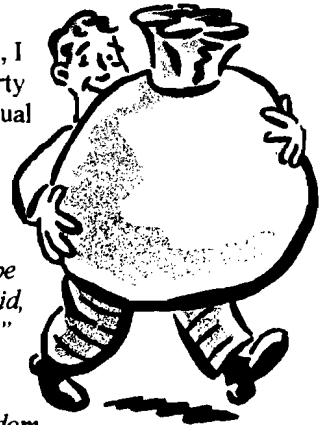
"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. (Luke 12:47-48)

To those who are poor and envious of the filthy rich, I would say, "Fret not. Do not envy riches because while poverty may give you a hard life, prosperity is fraught with spiritual dangers. God has his purpose for your life." No advice, however, is better than the assurance from God's Word that all is well if we place our hearts at the right place:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb 13:5)

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle. (Prov 23:4-5)

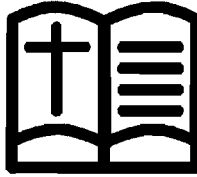
And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Luke 12:29-34)



The world is a kaleidoscope. world, it is easy for us to lose our daily by one influence or another, no time. There is a "psycho" effect all the time. Just as when we guard our restrictions, we should understand what it means when our heavenly Father guards over us daily and we fall into the temptation of rebellion. The Internet-created torrents of harsh persuasion are like waves relentlessly breaking on the shore. Where can we hide? If we can expect our children to feel safer close to us, we know we can feel safer if we are willing to draw ourselves close to our Father. Good bitter pill. God's advice is good advice even opinion. Natural opinion is that if one is rich, everything he wants. (Think: Does wealth distress?) God's wisdom is that poverty is "rubbish"?) Contemplate and decide for



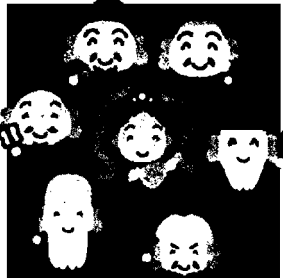
Living in this kaleidoscopic bearing. When we are bombarded what is unnatural becomes natural in on our minds. We have to be on guard children and they rebel against the advice is often like if it is against natural he can have give happiness or noble. (Do you say yourself God's Word:



The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. (James 1:9-11)

In fact just as we like to admonish our children whenever they disobey us, God our Father also gives us a good warning against disregarding His Word:

"If anyone ... does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth.... But godliness with is great gain. For we nothing into this world, and nothing out of it. But if we and clothing, we will be that. People who want to into temptation and a trap many foolish and harmful plunge men into ruin and For the love of money is a kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1 Tim 6:3-10)



contentment brought we can take have food content with get rich fall and into desires that destruction. root of all

If we punish our children for their disobedience, likewise our Father in heaven will punish us for our defiance of His Word:

A faithful man will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 28:20)

As mentioned above, God does not absolutely clamp down on riches. He has His unique plan for each person and His timing in rolling out the plan. He may grant wealth as well as take it away, in whichever order, to test our faithfulness to Him. He may even grant both for varying seasons just so that it fits into His overall plan to forge our characters by letting us have a taste of opposite circumstances to learn contentment. Philipians 4:11-13 provides some insight into this:

"... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

Yet, when God does bless us with skills to acquire wealth, the skills are not meant to be a passport to greed or complacency:

... Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions ... The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."' But God said to him, *'You fool! This life will be demanded from you. what you have prepared for is how it will who stores up himself but is*



You 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. I 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. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. (Revelation 3:17-19)



Wealth can indeed be a blessing or a trouble. It is a blessing if we make use of it according to God's will and maintain our faithfulness to Him. It spells trouble when we are enslaved by it and throw righteousness out of the window; for wealth *per se* "is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death... Whoever trusts in his riches will fall..." (Prov 11:4, 28) So if we have wealth, we ought to put it in its rightful place without insulating ourselves from God. **We should never let our moneymaking endeavours draw us away from serving God.**



On the other hand, if we are given poverty, we ought not fret and be overawed by our neighbour who grows rich (*See Ps 16-19*). The ultimate question is: Should one then seek wealth or poverty as a blessing? To each his own answer and responsibility after meditating on the following:

... Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God. (Prov 30:8-9)

John Lee

For Your Reading Pleasure



A new minister in a small Oklahoma town spent the first four days desperately calling on the membership, begging them to come to his first services ... He failed. He placed a notice in the local newspapers, stating that as the church was dead, it was his duty to give it a decent Christian burial. The funeral would be held the following Sunday afternoon, the notice said.

Morbidly curious the whole town turned out. In front of the pulpit, they saw a high coffin, smothered in flowers. The minister read the obituary and delivered a eulogy; he then invited his congregation to step forward and pay their respects to the dearly beloved who had departed.

The long line filed by. Each mourner peeped into the coffin and then turned away with a guilty, sheepish look.

For in the coffin, tilted at the correct angle, was a large mirror. Everyone saw himself.

From the Internet

Unexpected package- money in Bible



A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted.

As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautifully wrapped gift box.

Curious, and somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible, with the young man's name embossed in gold. Angry, he rose his voice to his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. Before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search through his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. His father had carefully underlined a verse, Matt.7:11, "And if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father who is in Heaven, give to those who ask Him?"

As he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words PAID IN FULL.

How many times do we miss God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected?

Author unknown

<http://www.spiritualwoman.com/dailyjoy/messages/2315.htm>

Often we run into error thinking we know what is really good for us. But if we will only learn that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Then only will we always seek what he wants for us. Because He sees beyond what we expect and He always seek to exceed our expectation. Remember Jesus never came in the manner that the people expected But His coming in the way God planned turned out to be the BEST THE WORLD CAN EVER HAVE OF GOD.

Karena

<http://www.spiritualwoman.com/dailyjoy/messages/2321.htm>

"My pastor ... stated that not only was the package not what the son had expected, but note the words PAID IN FULL. We are paid in full; our sins are paid in full. Are we going to be foolish enough not to recognize the packaging?"

Cheryl Lynn

<http://www.spiritualwoman.com/dailyjoy/messages/2325.htm>

