

Part 51: Material Compensation

Choose a reader and begin with a prayer of gratitude for God's generous love for each one. Share something you have realised recently about your security. With the prevalence of low self-esteem, which we considered in previous parts, we focus here on one of the ways in which many people compensate for it.

Material compensation

Self-centredness or selfishness are often the result of a bad self-image, with a resultant urge and need to draw to oneself whatever one believes would make one adequate or even desirable. It also eases the pain caused by poor self-love.

In other words, if in my deepest self I feel inadequate, I may try to grab at anything that I think will add to my worth and make me feel better or more worthwhile. Those who cannot afford much may acquire unique and special things which others cannot get.

Owning things that others would want, but perhaps cannot have, does something to us that we enjoy. In being part of anything exclusive or limited to a few, we may secretly enjoy the envy of others and feel bigger and more special for it.

Creating a fortress

To avoid the anxiety of inadequate inner security, one may also get into a pattern of endlessly accumulating material wealth or other 'stuff'. Some collect junk and tell themselves that 'it will come in handy someday'. (Perhaps they are in fact saying that the more problems one is equipped to solve, the less vulnerable one is.)

So our sense of inadequacy or insecurity may demand that we be very secure materially, which can become an end in itself with no limit to what will be enough. Consider the following:

- The rich man who built bigger and bigger barns. (Luke 12:13–21)
- The command not to worry about material things. (Luke 12:34)
- The rich young man told to sell everything he had. (Luke 18:18–25)

Reflection

1. What are the things in your life doing for you now?
2. How would you react if Christ asked you to sell everything and follow him?
3. What would you do with your possessions if you heard that you had six months left to live?
4. How do different people affect your choice of clothes and accessories?
5. Where and when do the things you own make you feel good?
6. What makes you special in God's eyes?



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Journal and share what you feel able to.

At home, consider the fortress you create for yourself and how you use it to insulate yourself from insufficient self-love. Reflect on Isaiah 55:1–13 ‘Come and buy wine and milk without money or cost.’

As you live each day, reflect on what you use and actually need to live on and with. Consider too those things which you have, but don't use or need in your day by day experience. What are they saying to you?



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