

Materialism -- A Change for Your Dollar:

Attempting once again to pursue the timid middle-class ballerina as she walks to her car, the fairly well-to-do, attractive, young man looks through the driver's window of his Mercedes and asks her if she'd like a ride home. "No thanks" she says, "I have a car." "Yes," pipes the young man with a smirk "but mine is an eighty-thousand dollar Mercedes." She continues walking, content in driving herself home not impressed with what he thinks is making a good impression. As he slowly drives along beside her, trying diligently to entice her, she turns to him and says "So what makes your car so different from mine?" Exasperated he said, "It cost \$80,000!"

That was the scenario on a television show I caught a glimpse of one night.

But is it really that much different than real-life? I have to confess I fell into the same trap. I have a friend who has several (meaning more than five) Louis Vuitton purses, as well as the entire luggage set, among her other collection of designer shoes, handbags, sweaters and so on. I had my heart set on someday owning a coveted Louis Vuitton purse but had a price limit set that I was willing to pay for one. For months, I checked E-bay, Craigslist and so on until the day finally arrived. I got my genuine, authentic, original Louie! I was ecstatic as I filled it with all my stuff. Now mind you, I really don't even carry a purse. My cell phone, lip-gloss and drivers license/debit card is all I really need (and how much room does that stuff take up)? But now that I had this expensive purse, I managed to "acquire" extra stuff to put in it so I could carry it around.

I already drove what was considered a "luxury car" and now I had my Louie. Wasn't I "hot stuff?" Truth is, it didn't change how I felt about who I was on the inside. I didn't feel like I was better than anyone else, or more important. I was just me with this great deal on a really expensive purse. But to everyone around me, to people who didn't know me... what did *they* see? It's not that I cared what people thought *about* me. It's about what people thought *of* me.

I started to look at myself and materialism differently. I asked God to search my heart like in [Psalm 139](#): "*Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me... and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me the way everlasting.*" I know God wants us to prosper and to be blessed. But, call it coincidence if you want (although I don't believe in coincidences) within weeks of searching, the strap broke on my Louis Vuitton purse and my car got totaled in a wreck, and I realized something very profound.

The most important things in life -- aren't things. I knew it all along but...if I don't even carry a purse then why spend the money on one, let alone one so expensive, even if I got it at a great deal? If I can afford a luxury car why not drive a less expensive one and give the extra money to a charity? If a Louis Vuitton purse costs three hundred dollars, why not buy a nice leather purse for twenty dollars and donate the other two hundred and eighty to the battered women's shelter or an orphanage or whatever is on your heart?

Fact is, we drive these cars and have these over extravagant homes and expensive purses, clothes and "things" so the world will take notice, to prove that we "are somebody," that we have money, value. Well, I've decided I only want God to take notice and I only care about what He thinks. He already values me and thinks I'm somebody. Besides in the end, to me, it's all about pleasing Him anyway.

In today's economy, I am blessed to have a job, two healthy and happy teenagers who are great gifts, a supportive husband, and a wonderful, big, loving family. Jesus himself tells us in [Matthew 6:19-20](#), "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying you can't have nice things or enjoy the finer things in life, but when we trample someone to death for a midnight madness sale or shoot someone for an X-Box 360 or think a Mercedes is better or more impressive simply because it cost \$80,000. I think we all need to search our hearts. Mine is about pleasing Jesus. I plan to get the strap fixed on my Louis Vuitton purse and donate it. It will sit in the car until God tells me the person I am supposed to give it to. I am blessed and therefore, I want to be a blessing. *That* is the legacy I want to leave.

My life I no longer based in materialism. It is almost a new year. Why not make it your New Year's resolution to search your heart? I know I look at things so much differently now. It's all just "stuff." One day, they will be rusted, rotted and disintegrated, but the people that you could of helped, ministered to, listened to or encouraged will remember the difference you made in their day or their lives. Why not leave above the standard 15% next time you're at a restaurant or call the local grocery store and have pre-paid for gift card waiting for a someone who went above and beyond in their job? Be creative. big or small, before you make a purchase ask yourself how you could make it "a better purchase."

I challenge you to take the step to live a life of "true luxury" by giving and investing in contentment and sowing into others. You will see just how rich and rewarding your life will become.

I *am* rich beyond means, beyond measure and I don't need any "thing" to prove otherwise to anyone. "*I give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for me, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things*" [Psalm 107:8-9](#).

~ c. michelle bryant is a freelance writer and the author of the devotional book "God, are You Listening?"