

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Theme: Priorities

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Not As Important As You Think

Bill Brinkworth

Many are concerned about things that often are not as important as believed. As Christians, we need to be concerned about the priorities God desires us to have and make what He deems relevant important to us.

Webster defines "vanity" as "emptiness; want of substance to satisfy desire; fruitless desire or endeavor; trifling labor that produces no good; empty pleasure; vain pursuit." Vanity is a concern for things that are not that important. "Vain" is similar in that it is defined as "worthless, having no substance, empty, and unsatisfying." Many times, vain interests get more energy and concern than they deserve.

Here is a brief study on what the Bible classifies as "vanity" and "vain" in hopes that more Christians will realize what is truly important and what is not essential (vain) in God's eyes:

What the Bible calls "vain":

- **Ideas and popular trends of the world are vain.**

"And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them." II Kings 17:15

"They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." Psalm 12:2

- **The "end justifies the means" philosophy is vain.**

"The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." Proverbs 21:6

- **The wages of sin are vain.**

"He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail." Proverbs 22:8

- **The love of money is vain.**
“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.” Ecclesiastes 5:10
- **Foolish desires of youth can be vain.**
“Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity.” Ecclesiastes 11:10
- **Nations against God are vain.**
“All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” Isaiah 40:17
- **Ungodly wisdom of judges is vain.**
“That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.” Isaiah 40:23
- **Good works without salvation are vain.**
“Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.” Isaiah 41:29
- **False religion is vain.**
“For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.” Zechariah 10:2
- **Prideful wisdom is vain.**
“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.” II Peter 2:18
- **Cursing is vain.** God’s name should never be used lightly and without respect.
“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” Exodus 20:7
- **Over-beautifying the flesh is vain.**
“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” Proverb 31:30
- **Customs and traditions are vain, especially religious ones.**
“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.” Jeremiah 10:2-3
- **Philosophies of men are vain.**
“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Matthew 15:9
- **Religion without Christ is vain.**
“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” I Corinthians 15:14 Also: Titus 3:9, II Timothy 3:5-7.

What Is Not Vanity:

- **Hard work is not vanity.**
“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” Proverb 13:11
- **A godly stand is not vanity.**
“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,” Ephesians 4:17
- **Fear of the Lord is not vanity.**
“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.” Proverb 31:30

- **God's creations are not vanity.**

“For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.” Isaiah 45:18

The best word to define both “vanity” and “vain” is “emptiness.” No matter how much time and energy one spends on vain things, the results will be nothing of value. God has so much more to offer you than “emptiness”. Fill yourself with the desires of God. They will have value that will last forever.

“A man is rich based on what he is, not what he has!” — Author Unknown

Our Important Testimony

Bill Brinkworth

One of the most valuable assets a Christian can have is one's testimony. What others think of him is often what they see him do, how he reacts in certain situations, and how they believe a Christian should live (although their views may not always be accurate). Paul gave some advice on how to preserve that testimony in Ephesians 4. Some of his advice included:

- Do not live like the rest of the world and put the wrong value on things that are not that important (vs. 17-18).
- Do not lust after things of this world and be consumed with greed for them (vs. 19).
- Do not let your conversation with others be about lust for this world's things (vs. 22).
- Live a righteous life and strive to be a good example (vs. 24).
- Let your conversation be honest, and do not lie (vs. 25).
- If you get angry, get it right with those involved before the sun goes down (vs. 26).
- Do not get close to sin, and allow the devil to destroy your testimony (vs. 27).
- Do not steal; work hard for what you want (vs. 28).
- Be careful of the words you utter, making sure what you say helps others (vs. 29).
- Do not sadden the indwelling Holy Spirit by sinning (vs. 30).
- Do not allow the sins of bitterness, violence, anger, and evil speaking to be part of your life (vs. 31).
- Be kind to others (vs. 32).

As hard as we try, some will always see our example wrongly, no matter how we adhere to the above advice and other godly principles. Although it is impossible to please all the people all the time, we are responsible for trying to have the best testimony we can. Our example is not so much about what others think about us but what others think about Christ from our example. We are often all the unsaved will ever know about Christ. Will they determine that they do not want to be a Christian because of what is observed in our behavior, or will they consider being one because of how we live our lives?

“Your walk talks louder than your talk talks.” — Author Unknown

Beware of Covetousness

C. H. Spurgeon

Beware of covetousness. It is one of the most insidious of all sins.

Covetousness is like the silting of a river. As the stream flows down, it brings sand and earth and deposits all these at its mouth. Soon, unless cleared and dug out, it will block itself, leaving no channel for ships to travel. Daily deposits create a sandbar, which is dangerous to navigation.

Many people, when accumulating wealth, ruin their lives similarly. The more that is acquired, the more closely one's spiritual life is blocked. Instead of doing more for God, a person does less. The things of this world get in the way. The more that is saved, the more that is wanted, and the more that is wanted, the less one cares for the world to come.

"The greatest deception is to equate success with wealth." — *Author Unknown*