Curbing the Plague of Materialism in Nigeria through Godliness and Contentment (1 Timothy 6:6)

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Abstract

This study examined, curbing the plague of materialism in Nigeria through godliness and contentment. Materialism is a virus that is eating the good virtues in our nation.It is a destructive vice that leads to kidnapping, ritual killing, prostitution, election rigging and greed. It is also the desire to acquire wealth, power, fame comfort and pleasure at the detriment of others well being. Godliness and contentment help individuals to avoid these vices and live upright lives. Historical method was used which enabled the researcher to trace the genesis of materialism from where emphasis was shifted from integrity , hard work and honesty to get rich quickly by all means. Primary and secondary data collections such as observation and books were used. Materialism has led to the untimely death of many people, lack of sanctity of life, lack of common good and insecurity in the country. Therefore Nigerians should be contented with what they have because a man's life does not depend on what he possesses (Luke 12:15). They should seek the well being of others by not killing to make money. The government should intensify effort on security so that the kidnappers and ritual killers will be caught and punished accordingly.

Keywords: Materialism, Godliness and Contentment.

Introduction

Materialism is a destructive vice confronting Nigerians, and an ugly catalyst that leads to greed for money, power and material possessions. Okorodudu, (2024) states that materialism is the devilish and covetous desire to acquire wealth at all cost. Many Nigerians want to make it overnight by acquiring money, cars,

buildings, land and fame by all means without recourse to societal norms. Ukeahusim (2022) avails that many Nigerians do not understand the negative effect of it and dare the consequences because of the joy they derive from it. These individuals love money more than their souls, their neighbour's well being and attach too much importance to material possessions, forgetting that we brought nothing to this world and we are going out from this world with nothing.

Ikeke (2024) posits that materialism is a belief system and a value some individuals live by which forms their lifestyle. The individuals that are materialistic are greedy and want to get rich quickly by involving themselves in ritual killings, cybercrimes, prostitution, kidnapping, rigging of elections and human trafficking. Godliness will make one to get money in legal way while contentment will make one to be satisfied with what he or she has because a man's life does not depend on the amount of what he possesses (Luke 12:15).

The Conceptual Framework

Materialism

Hornby (2020) defines materialism as the beliefs that money possession and physical comforts are more important than spiritual values. It is the acquisition of wealth and material possessions rather than spiritual, intellectual or cultural values. Ikeke (2024) defines materialism as individuals attachments to earthly possessions at all cost.

Okorodudu (2024) states that materialism is not the natural desire to acquire basic things necessary for existence, but the devilish uncontrolled attitude or desire to acquire wealth at all cost and live flamboyant lifestyle. Okobia and Osajie (2020) states that materialism is the incessant greed for money, power and glory. Materialism is a slippery and desperate path that leads to destruction and in ushering in negative impacts on well being, relationships and overall quality of life. The urge of material acquisition is so alarming in our nation as the wealthy are recognized in the society irrespective of the source of their wealth while the poor are abandoned to their fate hence many people decided to join the bandwagon.

Materialism is the desire for material acquisition of money, cars, building, powers and glory for selfish interest and at the expense of others well being. This kind of materialism does not regard ethical and spiritual values. The materialist priority in life is to acquire material goods by pursuing wealth at all costs. He loves acquisition and consumption of material things. He also values wealth, comfort and pleasure more than other things in life at the detriment of his soul.

Godliness

Hornby (2020) defines godliness as living a moral life based on religious principles. It is the practice of conforming to the laws and wishes of God. It is devoutness and moral uprightness and reflecting the nature of the kingdom of God in the course of everyday life. Godliness is the foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. Paul taught Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:6 that he should live a godly life as a Christian leader. Ukeachusim (2024) avails that godliness is the human relationship with God that portrays their inner life and shapes his character to live uprightly which is different from religious ceremonies. Godliness is the essence of Christianity and the secret of success in Christian living. A true Christian lives a godly life privately and publicly and godliness works with contentment.

Contentment

Hornby (2020) defines contentment as the state of being happy and satisfied. It is a peaceful ease of mind and a feeling of happiness and satisfaction. Contentment is fulfillment, pleasure, cheerfulness, gladness, gratification, comfort, restfulness, wellbeing, peace, equanimity, serenity, tranquility and self satisfaction. It is satisfaction with one's situation in life, it is also being satisfied with what you have and who you are instead of comparing yourself with others or wishing you had a different life. Contentment is a state of being in which one is satisfied with his or her situation and the state of affairs in one's life. If one is content, he or she has inner peace with his or her situation and is satisfied with his or her possessions, status or situation.

Akin(2023) posits that contentment is self-sufficiency and is void of worldly satisfaction which is momentary but the contentment that is internal satisfaction which does not depend on any circumstance. Paul instructed Timothy to be an exemplary minister of the gospel, free from the love of money.

Apostle Paul took pain to explain the excellency of godliness, contentment and evil of covetousness or materialism in 1 Timothy 6: 6-10. Godliness with contentment is a great gain for the little which a righteous man has is better than the riches of the wicked (Psalm 37:16). Godliness is a great gain, because it is profitable to all things and wherever there is true godliness there will be contentment. The godly and contented people are always happy. There is need to be contented with having food, cloths and shelter because those that will be rich through getting money from the wrong way will fall into temptation and many hurtful lusts which leads to destruction and perdition. Loving money inordinately pushes people to do all kinds of evil which will bring sorrow to them, because the love of money is the root of all evil.

The Manifestation of Materialism in Nigeria

There are different ways materialism is manifesting in this nation. Ikeke (2024) posits that the materialistic are those that all that matters to them is money, prosperity, fame and popularity no matter how they get them. They value comfort, pleasure and wealth above all other things. This nation is plagued with get rich quick syndrome, as so many people want to make it by all means at the expense of others. The quest for money has made many people ignore the societal norms of hard work, honesty, sanctity of life and moral values. Some years back in this nation people with ill gotten money were ridiculed and mocked but nowadays they are applauded and respected as the emphasis has been shifted from integrity, honesty, hard work, legitimate business to get rich quickly at all cost.

The manifestations of materialism in Nigeria are as follows: ritual killing, cybercrime, prostitution, kidnapping, moral bankruptcy and rigging of elections.

Ritual Killing:

Ritual killing is a sin against God and humanity. It is very rampant in Nigeria today because of the desire to be rich quickly without hard work. Onoguwe (2022) avails that ritual killing has contributed greatly to insecurity in Nigeria. As some people kill their parents, siblings, spouses, children, girlfriends or strangers for money rituals. Agha (2020) posits that organ harvest is on the increase now as they are used for protection, power,

and fame by occultic Nigerians and for money rituals. Ritual killing has sent many people to untimely graves and this evil practice is going on in some bushes, hotels, occultic churches and houses on daily basis because of lack of value for life and fear of God. Ishola (2021) states that incidence of ritual killing of Gbuyi Baoku and Olamide Odulaja 29 and 27 years old respectively, who were apprehended by the police for killing a woman and her son for money ritual. Several girls have been killed by their boyfriends and sugar daddies for money rituals. A boy was caught killing his mother for money ritual by a palm wine tapper in the bush. Akinyemi (2021) reported how a 24 years old man was caught with human parts in a nylon bag which he said it was for money ritual. Oluwafemi (2021) reports 17 different cases involving money rituals in Nigeria. So many girls that hang out at night for commercial sex partners have been killed for rituals. Ukeachusim (2022) states that the reason many Nigerians are indulging in ritual killing is because of love of money and to get rich quickly.

Cybercrime:

Nigeria anti-graft agency EFCC has succeeded in convicting 2,847 persons of cybercrimes across the country as of October 2022. Business Day (2022) states that in Nigeria, cybercrimes are committed daily in various forms such as fraudulent electronic mails, pornography, identity theft, hacking, cyber harassment, spamming, automated teller machine spoofing, piracy and phishing. The Nigerian senate has raised alarm over the country's annual loss of $500 million due to cybercrime. The senate said that cybercrime could prevent the digital economy gains. Samuel Olowu on 23rd November 2023 advised that Nigeria government should tighten laws to tackle yearly cybercrime loss of $500 million. Nigeria is experiencing a surge in cybercrimes as a result of the quest for quick wealth.

Section 14(1) – (5) of the cybercrimes prohibition, prevention act in 2015 outlines penalties upon conviction of computer related fraud. The penalties for the different instances range from 3 to 7 years or fine options ranging

from ₦5 million to ₦10 million naira but the practice continues because of materialism, lack of contentment and godliness. Nigeria has been ranked at number 5 by academic research project to gain insight into which nations produce the most cybercrime which is a bad stigma to the nation and a dent to her image

Prostitution:

Kunhiyop (2023) states that prostitution is derived from the latin word prostituere which means to expose something for sale. Prostitutes sell sexual pleasure in exchange for financial reward. It is engaging in sexual activity for money, in which affection and emotional investment are absent and no selection of sexual partners. Any man that comes is welcome because all she wants is money.

According to Okorodudu (2024) prostitution is the act of having several sexual partners for the purpose of commercialization. It is a situation whereby women offer their bodies in sexual act with their male customers for money. He further states that in Nigeria, prostitution has been on the increase as many ladies are daily engaging in the act because of materialism. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 says that the human body is the temple of God, and any one that deifies it shall God destroy. The prostitutes neglect the word of God and continue to defy their bodies. Most of them have contacted HIV/AIDS, other infectious diseases, used for money rituals and died untimely as a result of prostitution because of get rich syndrome.

Kidnapping:

Kidnapping is a planned evil act with criminal intent because of the quest for money. Okobia (2021) posits that kidnapping is a criminal act all over Nigeria which is a pointer to wickedness, violence and moral decadence in the society as the kidnapped victims are manhandled, abused sexually, paid ransom or killed failure to pay ransom. Some even loose their lives as a result of harsh treatment, kidnapping is a major security challenge in

Nigeria as many farmers are afraid to go to farm which leads to shortage of food supply and price hick of farm products. There are many kidnappers in every community today because of materialism. They get huge amount from their victims which make them to be rich overnight as such many people resort to join them.

Election Rigging:

Election rigging is described as electoral malpractice. It is electoral fraud caused by changing the results or figures obtained from voting by some politicians or the paid party agents, political thugs, returning officers or INEC officials. It is done as a result of money and materialism. Some people take bribe to rig election because of materialism and to enable the wrong politicians to manipulate their ways into strategic positions for wealth, fame and power. Election rigging has made wrong people to lead this nation bringing untold hardship, hunger and suffering to the masses. Election rigging has also led to poor governance, mismanagement of the national resources and embezzlement of national funds because few individuals received bribes to rig elections to get rich quickly at the expense of others.

The Greed:

According to Adjaino (2024)greed is the urge to have everything. It is a strong acquisitive spirit to acquire wealth. There is no end to the desire for material things, hence the individual encroaches on the right of others through stealing, kidnapping, ritaul killing and duping. The greedy individual neglects the well being and security of others. Proverbs 15:27 states that he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house. In luke 12:15, Jesus warned his disciples to guard against all kinds of greed, because life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. Therefore greed is one of the causes of materialism.

Moral Bankruptcy:

Okwu (2023) avails that morality which is an important ingredient of living in the society is abandoned today because of materialism. Okobia (2020) states that the social norms which hold society together such as love for one another, peaceful co-existence, sanctity of life and common good are being neglected because nobody cares about the moral virtues of the citizens. Therefore moral laxity or moral decadence is the root of materialism and all the vices in the nation such as fraud, prostitution, hire killing, kidnapping, drug trafficking, human trafficking and ritual killing. Furthermore, Many people lack the fear of God, contentment and have no regard for other people's well being and the quest for wealth by all means is an epitome of moral decadence in the society and one of the evidences of the rottenness and morally decaying society.

The Causes of Materialism

The root cause of materialism is the desire for comfort and material possession at all cost.

The causes of materialism are as follows according to Ukeachusim (2022)

1. The belief that acquiring wealth leads to success and happiness.
   Materialism values are often associated with low self esteem, where individuals are to compensate for feelings of inadequacy by seeking validation through possessions.

2. The materialistic celebrity
   The results reveal that celebrity worship enhance people's value for materialism by influencing their tendency towards wealth acquisition and compulsive buying behaviour. The celebrity serves as role models and sources of inspiration for many people which influence their life styles. Celebrities have a profound impact on shaping the attitudes, values and life styles of some people. Materialism are linked with celebrities as they are known for their expensive clothes, houses, and cars to satisfy their vain glory and impress others, imitation of celebrities influences materialistic values. Guardian (2023) avails that the unrealistic beauty standards

propagated by celebrities contribute to the feelings of inadequacy and the pursuit of money at all cost by many individuals.

3. Parental influence and societal expectation
   Ukeachusim (2022) posits that Nigeria is a society that worships money and influences people to be materialistic. Parent and society influence the youth to get rich quickly through foul means as they justify the crime committed by their children so long they bring money to them. Materialism is contributing to the increase in insecurity and immorality in this nation as the craving for wealth has made many people to abandon their moral values.

4. Influence of peer group
   Youths that lack home training can be influenced negatively by their peers. Some youths that had good home training can be spoiled by their peers as they introduce them to their ways of life such as cybercrime, drug trafficking and other vices that make them to get rich quickly. Okoroafor (2022) posits that some Nigerian youths are materialistic because they are competing with their mates who are living in affluence.

The Role of Godliness and Contentment in Curbing the Plague of Materialism in Nigeria

Godliness is living an upright life and contentment is being satisfied with what you have. In 1Timothy 6:6-7 Paul states that godliness with contentment is a great gain because we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we will leave this world with nothing because no matter one's possessions immediately he or she dies, he will not be buried with any of them and even if they bury him or her with money or one of his cars he will not make use of them. Termites will eat up the money and rust will finish the car. Godliness and contentment is a great gain because it will help an individual to live a holy life that pleases God which will make him to enter the kingdom of God and enjoy eternity with Christ. Godliness will benefit one here on earth and heaven above. Contentment will make one to shun evil, do good work that will fetch him money that will be used to acquire the basic necessities of life such as food, clothes and shelter without harming or killing others.Godliness and contentment will curb materialism by not been greedy for

money, through killing people for money, engaging in robbery, prostitution, and not attaching undue importance to money and seeking the welfare of others which will enhance security and peaceful co-existence.

Those killing to get money shall die violently, because he that kills by sword shall die by the sword. (Revelation 13:10) Exodus 20 :13 states that we should not kill, those killing human being for money or power shall face the wrath of God because life is in the blood and the innocent blood shed shall cry to God for vengeance (Leviticus 17:11 and Genesis 4 :10).

Conclusion

Materialism is seeking comfort and luxury at the detriment of others. It is a desire to acquire wealth, power and fame at all cost. The materialistic Nigerians engage in all kinds of vices to get rich quickly irrespective of the consequences. Materialism which is the love of money is the root of all evil as long as many people have been killed through kidnapping, ritual killing, duping, armed robbery and prostitution. Materialism should be shunned and godliness and contentment should be embraced because getting rich quickly through evil means leads to sorrow and untimely death.

Recommendations

1. Nigerians should be contented with what they have because a man's life does not depend on what he possesses (Luke 12:15).
2. They should look for money in the right way because God gives us power to make wealth
3. They should avoid any materialistic tendency that will harm others
4. They should avoid ill gotten wealth because it leads to sudden death
5. They should know that life is a seed and every one will reap what he or she has sown
6. They should seek the well being of others by not killing to make money.
7. Nigerians should stop applauding the wealthy thieves and killers
8. Unhealthy display of wealth in the public and social media should be stopped
9. The government should intensify effort on security so that the kidnappers and ritual killers will be caught and punished accordingly.

10. They should shun materialism because we came out from our mothers wombs naked and naked shall we return (Ecclesiastics 5:15).
11. They should stop trusting in uncertain riches but trust in the living God who richly gives us all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17).

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