

## **#76 IDENTITY IN FINANCES: Advertisement Junky**

*By Dr. Stephen R. Phinney*

Did you know that advertisements rarely work unless they appeal to an addiction? The question would then be, “What is an addiction?” I wish I could give you more of a glorified definition than this, but it is “an additive to one’s life.” I know; we are used to hearing that it is some substance which actually causes a person’s body to be dependent upon it. The truth is that an addiction adds something to one’s life that is not needed.

One of the most used Scriptures in my counseling sessions is 1 John 2:15-16.

*“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16).*

God is giving us a clear warning about loving the world, or things in the world. He is so strong in this passage, He leaves us with the evidence of those who do love the world and its possessions, do not have the love of the Heavenly Father in them. Ouch! That hurts.

People who love the world are friends with the world. Those who are friends with the world put themselves in a hostile position before the living God. People who work to be friends with the world’s concepts, people, or systems make themselves a literal enemy of God. I know what you’re thinking, “You thought we were supposed to be friends with the unsaved in order for them to become saved, right?” Wrong. God does tell us to “befriend” our enemies, strangers, and even people we know for the purpose of leading them to Christ; but being friends means an exchange of identity or becoming familiar (family). This type of “friendship” is oneness. Those who become one with the world soon realize how wrong it is to become a friend with those outside of the family of God.

*“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).*

Advertisements appeal to our flesh. Our flesh is a graven mirror to the face of Satan. God wants us to hate our flesh and never become friends with it. As usual, no one says it better than Jesus:

*“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal” (John 12:25).*

Self-love is not a healthy action. When Jesus says, “He who loves his life loses it,” He is obviously showing us the error in “learning to love oneself.” The truth of the matter is that God commands us to “hate” ourselves in order to be able to embrace eternal life. Since Satan knows

this to be true, he works to get people to “learn to love themselves.” His goal is to set a mark of “perfection” in which the majority of human life will fall short. Once this happens, the human will do just about anything to measure up to that mark (plastic surgery, implants, lifts, reductions, dyes, tanning, weight loss, weight gain, buffeting the body, exercise, and the list only goes on from there). Satan is quick to project a “perfect” image that 90% of the world cannot measure up to – even if they had plastic surgery to reach their goal. Satan is the craftiest, or most subtle, created being in all of creation (Gen. 3:1). One of the primary ways he accomplishes this deception is through advertisements.

Here is how he does it. This world is Satan’s temporary dwelling place. He goes out into the world and recruits “perfect” model-types (who usually got that way through drugs and anorexia) and places them front and center on a billboard. He places some crazed message about how if you buy their product, “You, too, can look like Miss Anorexia.” And you know what? It works. People start picking up those cell phones and ordering products, which will only enhance the way they already look.

Advertisements would never work if the boundary lines of authority were at work in the lives of the people. Satan always goes from the bottom up! His little plan of going to Eve, first, was not by accident – it was strategically planned. Why didn’t Satan go to Adam first? Because he knew his advertisement would not sell him. Adam knew he was under the authority of God directly, and Satan knew Eve was indirectly under the authority of God through Adam. In Satan’s eyes, this was the perfect avenue to do his little billboard thing, which is exactly what he did. He took an already perfect image and added to it (remember our definition of addiction?). This became the first advertisement gimmick to man and beast. He has not stopped using this technique to this very day. If he can continue to cause a rebellion to authority figures, he can continue to appeal to fleshing friendships through his advertisements.

Imagine this for a moment. If every purchase had to be cleared for approval by an authority figure, how many advertisements of Satan would actually make the sell? Not many, my dear reader. If Eve would have taken the “apple” over to Adam and asked him if she should eat the apple from the “forbidden tree,” I am fairly certain the answer would have been – NO. Satan has formed an almost flawless system of control, and he isn’t about to change his manipulative ways anytime soon. Seductive advertisements typically encourage us to ignore, question, or come against those principles designed to protect us.

Like in the garden, advertisements cause us to focus on that “one thing,” which will make us look, feel, or be more successful. In reality, the opposite usually happens and we become in debt over this “life changing” product. Remember when Satan said to Eve, “*You surely will not die*” (Gen. 3:4). Well, he was right - kind of. Even though she did not die physically right there on the spot; spiritually, she died instantly. It was from this covert twisted truth that Satan was able to cause his advertisement to sell her. God clearly warned Adam and Eve that if they ate from the Tree of Knowledge they would die, but the two of them continued to eat. Satan was counting on Adam and Eve not “getting it” right away. It was a “good gamble” on Satan’s part, because it worked! It all started by an advertisement to Eve, then an advertisement from Eve to Adam, and from Adam to his soul. Most people tend to believe the “results” they see on the billboard, not in the bottle (product). Most advertisements are based on the assumed benefits and not on the hard facts. A good example of this is in medicines that have lists of side effects longer than the complaints. Some even have side effects like suicidal ideations, depression, feelings of rage... - and they still sell a billion of them. People go for assumed benefits, *not* facts. That is the power of advertisements.

## **ADS AROUSE DISCONTENTMENT**

An advertisement would not be a good ad unless it left us feeling discontent. Discontentment is at the base of all effective ads. The company wants us to feel as if something is missing in our lives if we don't have its product. This trick is as old as human life. Satan used the same tactic on Eve. He convinced her that she was missing out of something really important for her happiness. The truth being said, God had already blessed her with the fullness of joy.

Discontentment cannot be birthed unless the person has a feeling that more can fit into his bags of happiness. With that said, Satan works diligently to drain us of contentment. Once he does that – its billboard time.

## **ADS PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE**

Satan said, *"You will be like God"* (Gen. 3:5). Wow! Now that is an ad. Be God. How cool is that? As you have already guessed, Eve (and Adam) bought that one "hook, line, and sinker." One of the greatest temptations to mankind is being our own boss, or better yet, god - to answer to no one. Well, how better could it get? True independence is death, and Satan worked really hard to cover that little tidbit in his dialogue with Eve. As soon as Eve fell to this lie, she moved from being under God's pinion, to being a woman of opinion - which translates as "being your own pinion."

## **ADS PROMOTE HOARDING**

Have you ever taken the time to get to know a hoarder? They will tell you that the majority of their piles are a result of being hooked by an ad – a bargain. Not all those who are addicted to ads hoard. But those who do will reveal that it is usually from a loss of a loved one: someone died, divorced, or ran off on them. From that loss, the appeals and pull of the ads begin to be more convincing than ever before. They buy and store "stuff" around them – all in an effort to fill the empty space reminding them of their empty lives. Hoarders are a loud and visual picture of what Satan's world of advertisements can do.

The televised version of hoarders is not the true picture of this problem. For example: More than any other country in the world, Americans spend their hard earned money on renting "self-storage" units to neatly hide their hoarding. Not all hoarders pile it around them by filling their living space. Most, in fact, do it in such an organized fashion, the world rarely sees their nasty habit. Yes, it is one of the most selfish acts of man; but in truth, it is a real addictive problem for many.

## **ADS DEMAND HUMAN REASONING**

There is a big difference between human reason and God reason. Satan only appeals to human logic – NEVER God's logic. He (Satan) would prefer us to choose between good and evil according to our own minds (1 John 4:1). As long as this kind of human understanding is ruling our hearts, the ads will continue to appeal to us. As soon as we switch to God's logic and reason (His Word), "Satan's" ads cease from working.

## **BUT, I NEED IT**

This is probably the worst one in the bunch. The enemy not only appeals to our wants; but he appeals even more to our needs: food, clothing, water, shelter, and companionship. If he can successfully move us from trusting God for our daily bread to ourselves, then again, the ad will do its job. This is the enemy's way of allowing the buyer to justify his impulsive buying. Have you ever seen an ad that says "Don't buy this product unless God tells you to" or "Don't buy this dress unless your husband approves of it"? – I don't think so! Half the fun of buying impulsively is lying about it – at least that is what I'm told.

## PLEASANT TO THE EYE

I think when Satan was finished with his advertisement, Eve saw the food was good to eat (pleasant to the eye) and would make her wise, so she bought the product. That is the point about ads: If it doesn't capture the eye, then what is the point? Satan was right there when He (God) created Adam and formed Eve. He knows that the "eye is the window to the soul." Due to this truth, the eye must be used in order to get the bite. Eve biting into that fruit is, for us, purchasing the product. Times have not changed. The same old, same old is the same old Satan. His tricks have not changed at all.

The bottom line is the enemy is working himself to the bone to get us to find fulfillment in all the wrong places. Anything, any place, or any person aside from God will work for him. He doesn't care about the wrinkle cream, the new car, or even the ad for that favored Bible school. What he really cares about is stopping God's people (or any person) from depending on His voice and His voice alone. Idolatry is one of Satan's favorite hobbies. He loves getting others to depend on people, places, and things that have nothing to do with God. For God and Satan both know that when people bow down and worship an idol, their faces are directed toward him (Satan).

Advertisements are needed and key in keeping and maintaining a person's bondage to debt. For without all these fancy ads, we probably would not have debt. Are all forms of advertisements bad or "of the devil?" No, they are not; but even a good and integral ad can create bondage. My challenge, for each of us, is not to figure out the "evil" ads versus the "good." Rather, we need to put our focus on living out the biblical guidelines of God's miraculous plan of economy and learn ways to resist sales.

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