

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 ESV

Hope IS BORN



BEREAN BIBLE CHURCH

Worship & Communion Service

Sunday, December 1, 2024

SERVICES & CONTACTS

Worship Services In-person & Online 10:40am & 6pm

 <https://www.youtube.com/user/bereanbarbados/live>

 <https://www.facebook.com/BereanBarbados/live>

Sunday School In-person 9:30 - 10:15am

 **ZOOM** links provided

Midweek In-person & Online Service (Wednesday)

Noon & 7:30 pm | ZOOM links provided

Youth Service in-person 7pm (Friday)

 **WhatsApp** 845 - 5752 or Tel: 426 - 4707

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www.bereanbarbados.org



Avoid the Experience Trap This Christmas

HOLLY LYNNE SMITH

My credit card dreads the months between August and February. After surviving back-to-school shopping and the onslaught of autumn and winter holidays, I wince at the thought of how much time I've wasted in the Target curbside pickup lot, waiting for another bag of seasonal kitsch to reach my minivan. By the time I'm buying treats for Valentine's Day, I frankly feel gross.

Materialism is soul-sucking, and Christians aren't the only ones to notice. In recent years, American culture has offered a solution: "Instead of buying things, prioritize experiences."

When Christians hear this advice, we suppose it sounds close enough to Matthew 6:19—"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal"—so we nod our heads and set to work drafting a list of "experiences" that will make our families' holiday seasons special.

"Experience gifts" can be a great option—especially if your home already feels crowded or if you aren't confident your recipient truly wants another toy or sweater or coffee mug. Giving experiences can also be an effective way to initiate quality time with your loved ones. However, prioritizing experiences over things isn't always the cure for materialism we might think it is, and Christians should be wary of several problems inherent in this philosophy.

False Dichotomy

The terms "experience" and "thing" are simply two vantage points to view a singular reality: God designed his image-bearers as embodied creatures whose actions are intrinsically intertwined with the material world. When people speak about experiences as gifts, what they typically mean is riding in a vehicle to a physical location that's lovely or novel, doing an activity that requires materials and equipment, and filling their stomachs with quality food and drink. And when we speak of things, we refer to books we read, clothes we wear, and instruments we play. Experiences depend on the use of things, and things are only enjoyed if they can be experienced.

False dichotomy aside, the more troubling issue with the trend toward pushing experiences over things is that we rarely deliver this claim as a neutral statement. More often, it has a subtle shade of self-righteousness.

We're tempted to believe that by embracing the pursuit of experiences—since this seems to stand in contrast to the pursuit of possessions—we've combated materialism. But what is materialism if not the manipulation of the physical world to suit our pleasure? And what do we typically seek through experiences if not our pleasure?

Honest Evaluation

The apostle James, describing how covetousness breeds sin and malice, admonishes believers who “ask wrongly, to spend . . . on [their] passions” (James 4:3). The truth is, we’re tempted to chase our passions through pursuing possessions and pursuing experiences. If we aren’t careful, both can distract us from Christ’s sufficiency and the responsibilities of discipleship.

It’s also not lost on me that every person I’ve heard declare his or her preference for “experiences over things” has been financially solvent and not lacking any “thing” necessary to support a safe, healthy, and comfortable life. If we have discretionary income that allows us to pursue experiences nonessential to our survival, we’d do well—rather than patting ourselves on the back for having overcome materialism—to recall that “everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

As ends in themselves, neither things nor experiences can satisfy the human soul. While Matthew 6:19 rightly acknowledges the vulnerability of our possessions to moth, rust, and thieves, so too are our experiences vulnerable to lost passports, food poisoning, and the eventual deterioration of our memories. Thankfully, Jesus doesn’t leave us in our dissatisfaction. Instead, he encourages us to “lay up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20).

Better Pursuit

So what does this mean practically? Is everyone getting “thoughts and prayers” for Christmas this year? By no means.

Things and experiences can distract us from our relationship with Christ, but they certainly don’t have to. To the contrary, at Christmas we celebrate that God’s Son took on flesh so that through our faith in his incarnate life of perfect righteousness, his death, and his embodied resurrection, he might redeem our whole, embodied selves with his Spirit. Now, whether we “eat or drink” (or create art or plant a garden or play pickleball), we may “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Rather than choosing gifts by prioritizing a pursuit of experiences, Christ invites us to give to one another by prioritizing a pursuit of love—and love is a virtue we can exercise through giving both things and experiences.

There’s no need to overcomplicate or hyperspiritualize the prioritization of love. It looks like moderating our consumption so we’re able to give generously to the church and to the “least of these” (Matt. 25:40). It can also look like giving a thoughtful token of affection that demonstrates your honor of and admiration for your recipient. It can look like planning an experience that will foster quality time and build positive, mutually shared memories. It can look like offering a material gift that practically supports your recipient’s personal aspirations or that fills her life with beauty. It can even look like buying a baseball and a couple of gloves so you can regularly have fun by playing catch with your kids.

He who chases pleasure through the pursuit of things or experiences will “fade away in the midst of his pursuits” (James 1:11), but “love never ends” (1 Cor. 13:8). This gift-giving season, brothers and sisters, let us be known by our love.

Worship & Communion Service

Hope is Born. December 1, 2024, 10:40 a.m.

1. WELCOME at 10:40 AM
2. ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sis. Esther Lord-Graham
3. SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
4. MEDITATION & OPENING PRAYER OF ADORATION & INVOCATION: Bro. Mark Murray
5. **CONGREGATIONAL HYMN 105:** O Come, All Ye Faithful (Key: A)
6. **CONGREGATIONAL HYMN 106:** Hark, the Herald Angels Sing (Key: F)
7. OT SCRIPTURAL READING: Exodus 28, verses 1 to 21 (read by Sis. Frances Patrick)
8. NT SCRIPTURAL READING: John 1, verses 29 to 51 (read by Bro. Richard Pierce)
9. PRAYER OF CONFESSION: Bro. Christopher Boyce
10. **CONGREGATIONAL HYMN 121:** Away in a Manger (Key: F)
11. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & OFFERTORY: Deacon Nicholas Williams
12. **OFFERTORY HYMN 107:** Angels We Have Heard on High (Key: F)
13. INTERCESSORY PRAYER: Deacon Jamar Watts
14. **SPECIAL MINISTRY:** Berean Bible Church Choir (How Great Our Joy)
15. **CONGREGATIONAL HYMN 112:** There's a Song in the Air (Key: G)
16. SERMON: Pastor Paul Garnes
17. **COMMUNION HYMN:** Behold the Lamb (Key: C)
18. DISTRIBUTION OF ELEMENTS
19. **CONTINUATION OF COMMUNION HYMN:** Behold the Lamb (Key: C)
20. **CONGREGATIONAL HYMN 103:** Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne (Key: D)
21. BENEDICTION

ITEMS FOR PRAYER



- Giving thanks for the birth of our LORD and Saviour Christ Jesus
- The appointment of Elders and the proposed building project.
- For those who are less fortunate, during this advent season.
- For comfort to those who are grieving
- For the persecuted church.
- For God's Word to be faithfully preached.
- Pray for the ministry and wellbeing of our Pastor and family.
- For healing for our sick members and grace for our shut-in members.
- For the Berean Churches, Grazettes, Dominica, Grenada and DR Congo.
- For the friends of Berean – The Gilmours, Haecks, Hulls, Moores, Montagues, Porchers, Rogers, Rudders and Taylors.
- For our unemployed members to find meaningful employment.
- For the peace of Jerusalem. Psalm 122:6-8

December Birthdays

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|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 3rd – Julia Lowe | 19th – Lester Inniss | 23rd – Frances Pierce |
| 4th – Joan Aimey | 20th – Maureen Branch | 24th – Maureen Burnett |
| 11th – Florence Gibbs | – Sonia Drayton | 25th – Stephen Peniston |
| – Chrystolene Harewood | 21st – Winston Clarke | 27th – Leandre Brathwaite |
| 14th – Brigitte James | – Carol Maycock | – Ricardo Licorish |
| 15th – Caleb Williams | 22nd – Sophia Samuels | 29th – Dolores Codrington |

Anniversaries

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|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1st – Elon & Michele Richards | 18th – Mitchell & Julia Sinckler |
| 7th – Bernadette & Clarence Holder | 19th – Sean & Kelly Hunte |
| 12th – Anne-Marie Cruickshank-Marshall
& Colin Marshall | 28th – Alfred and Sonia Drayton |
| | 31st – Beverley & Jefferson Wason |