

Count the Hidden Cost

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July 3, 2011

I've been on three Mexico missions trips with Pastor Nick. The poverty is unbelievable.



I was helping to replace the roof on a house. I pull off this tattered blue tarp in preparation, and as I'm heading up the ladder, I look in the window and I see this single Mom and her two daughters and she has a baby in her lap. My wife is pregnant at the time and seeing this little baby girl really struck me. *This* baby is no different than *my* baby. It didn't choose where it would be born. This family has nothing.



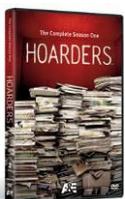
Those tin storage sheds you can buy at Sears would be an improvement over this house I'm working on. Dirt floors. Plywood pieced together. No plumbing. You want to bring them your possessions. Somehow make their life better. I just wanted to rent a truck, load it with all my stuff, drive it down there, and smother 'em in it!

In the back yard is this hole dug in the ground, rickety bench with an old toilet seat. That's their family bathroom. Nothing around it for privacy, no walls, completely exposed. Sitting on that thing ... you'd feel a breeze!

But here's the thing: they weren't sitting around feeling sorry for themselves. The kids were laughing and playing. The eldest daughter was singing and washing dishes in an outdoor basin. They were so excited to cook chicken and tortillas for us. They invited us into their home. I watched them having dinner with their neighbors. Sharing. Spending time together. And in that moment, I realize, *they* don't need my truckload of stuff as much as I need to haul back *their* freedom from stuff!

My storage shed and I, we have a problem they don't have! Jesus said ...

But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. - *Matthew 6:20-21 NIV*



Our stuff ("treasure") speaks volumes about the condition of our "heart". Have you seen the show Hoarders? It's about people who are suffocating in their stuff ... their "treasure". I love this show ... I *should* say, "*My wife* loves it when I watch this show"; because when it's over, I immediately start organizing and tossing stuff out.



The “hoarders” have almost always suffered something traumatic in their past, and use stuff to build a wall and block people out. A lot of hoarders will justify themselves by referring to their stuff as a “collection”. Funny thing, the dictionary doesn’t differentiate between hoarding and collecting ... but it does sound *nicer* that way. “I’m a stamp hoarder.” “I’m a baseball card hoarder.” “I’m a porcelain thimble hoarder.”



Are you an American? Because, here’s the thing: if you’re American, then ... you’re a hoarder. We think of hoarding as this. But, hoarding is on a continuum, from severe hoarding to not-as-severe hoarding. And for us Americans (in the land of excess), we all fall somewhere on that scale. We all have more than we need ... *much more*.

If I brought that mother and her daughters from Mexico, and let ‘em look in the most cluttered closet in your house, I’m guessing they’d come to the conclusion that you’re a “collector”. James, the brother of Jesus, actually talks about hoarders.

Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. – James 5:2-3 NIV

In NT times, if you were a hoarder, there were basically only three things you could hoard: food, clothing, and ... bling. That’s why James says “your wealth has rotted”, because food rots; and “moths have eaten your clothes”, and “your [bling] is corroded”.

Jesus and His brother are making the same point: our security should be placed in that which is eternal.



Have you ever driven past an old abandoned farmhouse?

It’s incredible to see the end result of such a grand possession. Think about the upkeep, the hours of labor and the personal sacrifices. Do you think they had an eternal perspective, or do you suppose they were constantly caught up in the urgency of the moment? Was *this home* their security?



Whatever we accumulate will eventually deteriorate!

How silly we must look to the Lord. With just 100 years of perspective, the temporary nature of that residence is so obvious to us. Just think, from His perspective, watching us vainly obsess over our temporary possessions.



Ever stay in a Motel 6?

If you were going to stay there for a few days, how likely would you be to spend any time or money redecorating and refurbishing the room? And I don't mean Ikea ... I'm talkin' *Pottery Barn!*



The first thing I'd replace is that paneling! I actually like the comforters; but, they don't match the carpet so they both have to go! And that sink should be granite! Granite is all the rage!

You wouldn't even be tempted ... that room is NOT your home! You're only there a few days ... it's a temporary residence!



And this, right here, this is our Motel 6! When we get all wrapped up in our houses and cars and clothes ... it's just "Motel 6"; we're going to check out just as unexpectedly as we checked in.

... you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. - *James 4:14 NIV*

Jesus doesn't say it's a sin to enjoy your stay; He just wants us to keep in mind that we're only here for a blink compared to our true, eternal home.



So, it's vital that we count the cost; because it'll always cost more than money.

1. There's the lost time.

Everything we buy is one more thing we have to think about, talk about, fret over, clean, repair, and ultimately drive to the landfill.

[The time is short] those who buy something, [should live] as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, [should live] as if not engrossed in them. - *1 Corinthians 7:29-31 NIV*



I wish there were two price tags on every item: how much money and how much time. Family Boat: \$25,000 ...

... and 1000 hours of hard labor! Washing, vacuuming, waxing, maintaining, and repairing. "I just wanted to spend time with my family, and now it's *costing* me time with my family?!"

And that brings up the second hidden cost.

2. The lost relationships.

Remember when Jesus went to the home of Mary and Martha ... Stewart?

[Jesus] came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" - *Luke 10:38b-40 NIV*

If Martha could miss the opportunity to connect with the Son of God (who's sitting in her living room), how much more do we fail to see those opportunities with just plain ol' people?

"Kids! Company's coming! Tanner, arrange the couch cushions! Emily square up the place mats! Mason fan the magazines! We can't let them to see how we really live!"

Ever want to have company over but "couldn't" because the house was too messy? The floor was too dirty? In Mexico, her floor *was* dirt ... but she didn't miss an opportunity to open her home.



Nothing wrong with a clean house; but, making it *too* organized and *too* perfect falsely projects an unobtainable, inhuman standard. And that can actually make your friends feel less comfortable. It's not about *how* organized or disorganized you are; or *how* clean or messy your house is. Whatever your standard, if it blocks your relationships, you're focus is on the wrong thing.

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." - *Luke 10:41-42 NIV*

It's clear where Mary's heart was because we can see where she stored her treasure. She chose to value the important over the urgent and the eternal over the temporary.

All I'm saying is this: let's be good stewards and count all the hidden costs before we collect and redecorate our motel room.