

# 1 Timothy 6:6–14 and materialism amongst Nigerian Christian youths

**Author:**Chidinma P. Ukeachusim<sup>1,2</sup> **Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of New Testament and Related Literature, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

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**Corresponding author:**

Chidinma Ukeachusim  
chidinma.ukeachusim@unn.edu.ng

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Increasing involvement of Nigerian youths in cybercrime and fraud, ritual activities, prostitution, human and drug trafficking, kidnapping, robbery and hired killings reveal the growing materialism of a significant number of Nigerian youths, including uncountable numbers of professed Nigerian Christian youths. There is the need to address materialism amongst Nigerian youths with special reference to Nigerian Christian youths. Paul's moral instructions to Timothy are still relevant for Nigerian Christian youths to emulate. Therefore, this study employs a redaction critical method of biblical exegesis to interpret and apply 1 Timothy 6:6–14 to the problem of materialism amongst Nigerian Christian youths. This study finds that materialism amongst Nigerian Christian youths is consolidating negative implications to their spiritual lives, families, to the mission mandate of the church and to Nigeria as a nation. This study argues that Paul has shown a model of how a Christian youth ought to be guided with regard to material possessions.

**Contribution:** This study explored the issue of materialism amongst countless Nigerian Christian youths that is consolidating negative implications to their spiritual lives, families, to the church and to Nigeria as a nation. The study recommends that Paul's instructions to Timothy about godliness and love of money are still relevant for Nigeria Christian youths to emulate.

**Keywords:** 1 Timothy; materialism; church; Christian youths; Nigeria.

## Introduction

Christianity in Nigeria is booming; however, it is confronting many internal and external challenges. Materialism is one of the major internal issues bedeviling the church and, especially, a very significant number of Nigerian Christian youths (Ajiboye 2018:1). Countless Nigerian acclaimed Christian youths are obsessed with material possessions (Ajiboye 2018:1), and this shows that most youths do not understand the negative implications materialism fosters in their spiritual life, their personalities, families, the church as a distinct community and Nigeria as a larger society. Some youths understand the negative implications of being materialistic but decided to neglect or dare its consequences. Hence, most youths focusing on the assumed positive results encapsulated in materialism's three facets, namely centrality, success and happiness (Segev, Shoham & Gavish 2015:85) are influenced to be consciously or unconsciously materialistic. Materialistic youths are not materialistic because of how much they have, but primarily because of their attitude towards money and the undue importance they allocate to material possessions (Deffinbaugh 2004:1). Most Nigerian youths, including some Christians, pursue material things with extreme strength, love and vehemence, believing and living their lives demonstrating that they have ultimate regard and value for materialistic possessions and no regard for their spiritual lives. Youths' materialism is demonstrated by their high value for possessions and more acquisitions and their flamboyant display of their acquired possessions. They are obsessed with investing their energy and time into acquiring, possessing and thinking about material things (Roberts 2011:20). Because many youths engross themselves in 'quick wealth' schemes, this leads them into scores of evil vices (Nnaemeka 2017:48). The youths are obsessed with material acquisitions to achieve self-actualisation, satisfaction and happiness, for materialism has a positive correlation with happiness (Ugwu & Ugwu 2013:1196). Nevertheless, just like elsewhere, the more materialistic the Nigerian youths are increasingly becoming, the less satisfied and happy they become (Likitapiwat, Sereetrakul & Wichadee 2015:111). In the long run, materialism ruins the

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materialist by increasing the materialist's depression and anxiety levels, making the materialist less satisfied with his or her life (UKEssays 2018:1).

The teaching of Paul in 1 Timothy 6 is one of the New Testament chapters that deals with money, finances and material possessions. In the context of 1 Timothy 6:6–14, Timothy and other Christians are given theological instructions about the dangers of falling under the spell of materialism (Martin 1988:3). Many contemporary Nigerian Christian youths misconstrue the true meaning of wealth, money and material possessions as theologically consolidated in the New Testament. The address of Paul to Timothy has been greatly less valued or ignored by the many contemporary Nigerian Christians. Materialism is therefore one of the destructive issues confronting the Nigerian Christian youths and a very significant number of professed ministers and other members of the body of Christ. Glaringly, materialism negatively impacts on the holistic goals of the mission-mandate of the church in Nigeria. Therefore, by employing a redaction method of doing biblical exegesis, this study seeks to contextualise, examine and apply 1 Timothy 6:6–14 to the problem of materialism amongst Nigerian Christian youths. The study aims to use its exegetical findings to persuade Nigerian Christian youths to embrace godliness with contentment in Christ Jesus.

## Exegetical study of 1 Timothy 6:6–14

Jesus and his disciples taught godliness as an underlining foundational doctrine of the Christian faith (1 Tm 6:3). In the first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy, godliness is identified and underlined as its keynote (Peloubet 1967:695). Consequently, in 1 Timothy 6:6, Paul uses the nominative common noun εὐσέβεια in its feminine singular case to inform Timothy of the type of Christian and leader he must be. Εὐσέβεια encapsulates humans' vital relationship with God that identifies the inner life of the soul as being distinct from the externals and ceremonies of religion. It is the essence of true Christianity and the secret of success in Christian living (Clapham, Heading & Horlock 1979:292). Εὐσέβεια therefore challenges Christians to lives of godliness, both in their private and public lives. Godliness in Christian faith needs contentment in Christ Jesus to yield its full gain. The Greek word ἀταρκείας is derived from the combination of the words *auta* [self] and *arkeo* [sufficiency]. Αὐταρκείας as a compound word means 'self-satisfaction', 'self-sufficiency' and 'contentment' (Akin 2003:335). Αὐταρκείας as used by Paul does not depict selfish or fleshly satisfaction that is only momentary. The Greek word ἀταρκείας refers to inward self-sufficiency or satisfaction as opposed to the lack of outward things. Contentment embodies 'internal satisfaction which does not demand changes in external circumstances' (Akin 2003:335). Paul in this context instructs Timothy to be a young man, a Christian and a minister of the gospel who would be an example to others by being free of the love of money, who does not only depend on God's promise and providence for his needs and desires to be met, but also lives in practical holiness, being contented in his lot in Jesus. Godliness may not yield immediate material gain, but as a spiritual virtue, it yields gain in and of itself that transcends

human understanding. The Greek adjective μέγας [great] defines the extent or quantity of gain one obtains from being contented. Εὐσέβεια is a spiritual virtue that, when coupled with ἀταρκείας, yields great gain. Timothy is to be inwardly contented no matter the circumstances that outwardly confront him. Timothy is to be godly, for godliness is profitable both in this present life and for the life to come (1 Tm 4:8). To Paul, a Christian's contentment should be 'in Christ alone, no matter whatever one's outward circumstances are' (Towner 1994:139). It is a virtue that Christians can manifest because they have yielded and subjected their lives and desires to be under the sovereignty of the Spirit of God.

In verse 7, using γὰρ, which functions in this verse as a coordinating conjunction, Paul introduces the statement that explains the two reasons for which Timothy should be contented. The first reason is that no human being at birth brought anything into this world, and the second reason is that no one can take anything out of this world (κόσμον). Consequently, the verbs εἰσπνέγκαμεν [bring in] and ἐξενεγκεῖν [carry out] are the emphases in this verse. With the verb εἰσπνέγκαμεν [bring in], Paul implies that at birth no one brought any possession into the world. Martin (1988) explains that:

[E]very person comes into the world without a penny in his pocket (in fact, even without a pocket to put a penny in) and all of us will leave this world without taking any material goods with us. (p. 1)

Although human beings came into the world through birth empty-handed, whilst they dominate the world, they acquire possessions which (by the implication of ἐξενεγκεῖν) can never be taken with them when they die. This shows the emptiness and the futility of being covetous and why Timothy should be contented.

Paul does not mean that Christians should not be wealthy; rather, by the implication of verse 8, a believer in Jesus Christ having διατροφῆς [food] to nourish his body and σκεπάσματα [clothing and shelter] should be content (Martin 1988:1). Paul, stressing this, means that there were people then who, even though they had food and resources for the nourishment and protection of their bodies (which were and are still the basic necessities of life), were obsessed with acquiring more worldly possessions. Paul condemns this by giving a sobering warning to Timothy, his son in faith and fellow church leader, to be careful so that he would not become covetous, which is inherent in a materialistic attitude. Paul may be persuading Timothy to be contented with having the necessities of life so that he can be happy, thankful and joyful in the Lord, for those who do not imbibe the virtue of being contented with what they have tend more to be less happy and grateful, even when they keep acquiring more and more possessions.

In verse 9, Paul refers to those who are not yet rich but who are yearning and are desperate to be rich. For Timothy not to be desperate like them, Paul tells him the consequences of wanting to become rich by any means. Paul is not against or condemning anyone who engages in good endeavours coupled with hard work to become rich. Rather, by the implication of the Greek noun πειρασμὸν [temptation], Paul

condemns anyone who is easily enticed to commit sin to make quick wealth and, in the process, become entrapped in materialism. The desperate materialists are enticed to commit nefarious actions to make money because of their dangerous appetite to become richer (Towner 1994:139).

Because of foolish (ἀνοήτους) and harmful (βλαβεράς) desires (ἐπιθυμίας) that tempt them to indulge in despicable dealings to become rich, they are vulnerable to falling into traps that predispose them to be captured and punished for the consequences of their nefarious activities. The weakness of the human nature is their desires (ἐπιθυμία). Humans' evil desires, if not subjected under the leadership of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, entice them into temptation (Verbrugge 2000:315). Both ὄλεθρον and ἀπόλειαν are nouns that mean ruin, destruction and death. When ὄλεθρον and ἀπόλειαν are employed together, they imply utter ruin and destruction of body and soul (Spence 1997:46). By the implication of ὄλεθρονκαὶ ἀπόλειαν, those who are vulnerably desirous to make 'quick wealth' will be plunging (βυθίζουσιν) into despicable dealings continuously until they are ruined and destroyed. Paul employs both ὄλεθρον and ἀπόλειαν to emphasise the intensity of the utter destruction that awaits those who are covetous (Brooks 2007:13). Those who are desperately obsessed with becoming rich and nurture foolish desires are more likely to indulge in hurtful ventures that would land themselves in destruction.

In verse 10, Paul categorically declares that 'the love of money' (ἡ φιλαργυρία) is the foundational root (ρίζα) of all evil (κακῶν). Paul does not say that money is the root of all sorts of evil. Rather, by the connotation of φιλαργυρία, Paul succinctly pinpoints 'love of money' to be the root of all sorts of evil. This implies that the warning about materialism is not exclusively for the rich (Sochor 2014:1). Both the rich and the poor can have undue love and value for material possessions. People who are evil commit wrong and harmful deeds to enrich themselves and their significant others because of avarice, demonstrated by their love of money. By the implication of φιλαργυρία, which generates ὀρεγόμενοι, Christians who are covetous must certainly err or be misled from their faith (πίστις). Απεπλανήθησαν refers to the 'wandering away' from acknowledgment of and identification with the true Christian doctrine towards believing and practising falsehood. Covetous Christians subject themselves to emotional torture that fills them up with many sorrows (ὀδύνας πολλαῖς). ὀδύνας πολλαῖς relates to self-imposed agony as a result of the consequences of evil done because of 'love of money'. Professing Christians who love money 'wander away' from the Christian faith; hence, they may do anything to become rich or richer. Indulging in foolish and harmful dealings because of the love of money earn the indulger self-imposed agony in the long run.

In verse 11, by the implication of the strong form of address ὦ ἄνθρωπε θεοῦ, Paul uses this interjectional vocation to persuade Timothy to be conscious that there are some things he needs to flee away from, and there are other things he needs to follow. Although Timothy is at this time a young man of God, he does not need to be 'walking away' from those things; rather, he

must be 'fleeing away' from 'those things'. The things he should flee from include the spirit of discontentment and a love for money (Martin 1988:3). Timothy, as a young man of God, should withdraw himself from false and greedy teachers. Paul uses the vocative case for the noun ἄνθρωπε and the qualifier 'God' (θεοῦ) in its genitive case to command Timothy to be a man of God who is to be consistent in living a godly life. Instead of embracing materialism, in this context, by the implication of the imperative present active 2nd person singular case of δίδωκε, Paul commands Timothy to be practising righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness. Paul knows that it will not be easy for Timothy to keep these inspired commandments.

Therefore, in verse 12, by the implication of ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως, Paul commands Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. Timothy is to be dogged in this faith by focusing on the prize of eternal life. Whilst engaging in this contest (ἀγῶν), what should matter the most remains the rewarding goal which is the prize (Verbrugge 2000:14). Consequently, in verse 12, Paul commands Timothy to fight the fight of faith, focusing on the prize of eternal life, which is the reward for which he must battle, and the good testimony he had, which he must continue having in the presence of many witnesses. Fight here does not denote physical combat with another person; rather, it connotes daily struggle encouraged by faith to carry out theological commands. Paul himself engaged in this godly exercise (1 Tm 4:7-8), which is obligatory for every Christian. Paul in this context recommends it to Timothy (1 Tm 6:12) and which he himself declares to have completed (2 Tm 4:7) (Verbrugge 2000:14). The commandments are not what the young minister can naturally do; they require discipline and faith for him to remain dogged. By the implication of ἐπιλαβοῦ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, Paul commands Timothy to focus on 'the eternal life' for which he was called and not on material possessions. Timothy should take a firm grip of eternal life to achieve joy from it and take hold of it so as to keep possession of it (Clapham et al. 1979:292).

In verse 13, Paul employs the use of παραγγέλλω, which means 'I charge' to tell Timothy that he is 'commanding' him before the presence of God who gives life to all and of Christ Jesus who had good confession before Pontius Pilate. Like Jesus, in whom Pontius Pilate found no fault and publicly declared his innocence before the witnesses of many, Timothy (who previously has had good report in the presence of many witnesses) is to be consistent in living a spotless and blameless life. Therefore, in verse 14, Paul tells Timothy to keep the commandment (ἐντολήν) he has given him without reproaching (ἀνεπιληπτῶν) or defaulting (ἄσπιλον) any until the appearing of Lord Jesus Christ.

## The reality of materialistic tendencies amongst Nigerian Christian youths

Nigerian youths are Nigerians who are aged between 15 and 35 years or little more below 50 years (Obilor 2020). Adedokun and Oluwagbohunmi (2014:155) note that 'Nigeria has a

youthful population of about 80 million, which is about 60% of her population'. In the same way, youths constitute an above average number of the church community in Nigeria. Many of the Nigerian Christian youths are increasingly becoming disillusioned with their Christian faith (Bamgbola 2016:1). For a gamut of reasons, many Nigerian youths who identify with the Christian faith nevertheless shun the godliness that Christian faith demands from its committed adherents. Amongst many challenges confronting the church in Nigeria, the Christian youths are increasingly becoming obsessed with 'love of money' encapsulated in materialism (Okoroafor & Njoku 2012:26). Nigerian youths being materialistic are characterised with having no regard for Christian values and with:

[P]reoccupation or insatiable desire for more and more material possessions, investing undue concern about material things which is characterized with distracting and devastating worrying which undermines Christian faith and diverts their spiritual energy. (Deffinbaugh 2004:5)

The problem of many Nigerian Christian youths being materialistic negatively impacts their spiritual lives, families, the mission mandate of the church and Nigeria as a nation. The realities of materialistic tendencies of Nigerian youths are discussed below:

**Increase in cybercrime and fraud:** Those who are involved in cybercrime are mostly the youths who are obsessed with money and other material things. Adeniran (2008:368) explains that, in Nigeria, cyberfraud has been indigenously called *yahoo-yahoo*. The increase in cases of cyberfraud in Nigeria is really alarming. Most cybercriminals are young people who are undergraduates, unemployed and school dropouts. Leveraging the accessibility, affordability and anonymity features of the Internet (Cooper 1997:5), cybercriminals in executing their nefarious businesses indulge in online fraud by 'selling of fictions goods/services, and buying what they will not pay for, or paying in no real value, money laundering, hacking and credit card scam' (Adeniran 2008:369). Cyberfraud in Nigeria exacts extreme negative effects on the Nigerian economy and security. Tade (2013:689) explains that 'the unbridled quest for materialism in Nigerian society has been argued as one of the factors influencing youths to innovate sinister ways of achieving success'. Since the advent of Internet fraud and increase in the number of 'Internet fraudsters', there has been an 'increase[d] number of arrests, prosecutions and convictions of "internet-fraud related-offences" recorded monthly' (Oladipo 2012). Although cyberfraud in Nigeria involves youths across different religions and ethnicities, it is against the commandment of godliness in the Christian faith (1 Tm 6:9-10).

**Ritual activities:** Ritual killing is increasingly being practised in Nigeria because Nigeria is a 'hyper-religious, hyper-superstitious, hyper-poverty, hyper-power conscious' (Aghawenu 2020:121) and materialistic society. Being materialistic, mostly the youths (including some professed Christians) being desperate to 'get quick money' engage in

despicable dealings of head-hunting and other forms of rituals for a gamut of reasons (Onoyume 2018:1). Ritual killing has contributed to increasing security problems in Nigeria. Some youths have killed their parents, siblings, spouses, children or strangers for ritual purposes (Aghawenu 2020:119), harvesting their body parts which are used to prepare spiritual defence for cultic Nigerians (Aghawenu 2020:119) and for money rituals. Decrying the trend of these rituals, Olusegun (2020:1) explains that 'the disgusting belief that money can grow from the sacrifice of human beings has sent too many innocent people to their untimely death'. Hence, some youths from Christian backgrounds indulge in nefarious dealings of killing their fellow human beings for ritual purposes just to make money. Ishola (2021:1) reports the incidence of Gbuyi Baoku and Olamide Odulaja, 29 years old and 27 years old respectively, who were caught by the police for killing a woman and her son for a money ritual. Akinyemi (2021:1) reports how one young man of 24 years old was caught with human parts in a nylon bag which he said were required for a money ritual. From 24 March 2014 to 12 April 2021, Oluwafemi (2021:1) reports 17 different cases involving money rituals in Nigeria. These days, the common reason for which countless Nigerian youths indulge in ritual activities is their obsessive love of money. Because of 'love of money', many youths (even some professed Christian youths) have resorted to engaging in foolish and destructive endeavours to make money (1 Tm 6:9-10). Although the origin of ritual killings in Nigeria can be traced to religion (Igwe 2004:1), it is against the doctrine of the Christian faith which dignifies and has high value for human life (Gn 9:6).

**Prostitution and human trafficking:** Many Nigerian youths have resorted to making money with their bodies as sex workers. Uncountable numbers of young Nigerian women are being trafficked within and outside of the federation to other nations of the world for sex work (The 77 Percent 2021:1) because of the obsession with making money (ThisDay 2020:2). Some who agree to be trafficked do so trying to escape dire economic situations in Nigeria, where it is hard to find jobs, and for other reasons (Human Rights Watch 2019:3). Because of the excessive love for money, many young girls (even some with Christian backgrounds) go into prostitution, not minding the spiritual consequences or health and security risks of indulging in such self-destructive ventures. Some end up being enslaved, beaten, sexually assaulted or dying as they try to cross the Mediterranean Sea, and some remain trapped in the country to which they have been trafficked. Prostitution is a self-destructive financially-motivated choice (Vanwesenbeeck 2013:11) amongst numerous positive options from which people earn money. It is morally, ethically and theologically wrong for any Christian to indulge in prostitution or be patronising prostitutes. Prostitution has ensnared many youths. Those who engage in sex work have had their lives ruined (1 Tm 6:10).

**Kidnapping:** In Nigeria, there has been several reports on the cases of kidnapping involving some youths who aim to enrich themselves from the ransoms that will be paid by the relatives of their victims. Between January to February 2021,

about 120 incidents of kidnapping (about 1181 victims) were recorded (Wanep 2021:1). On 8th May 2021, four young men between the ages of 20 and 29 years were arrested by the police for kidnapping a 13-year-old girl to make money (Adediran 2021:1). Osumah and Aghedo (2011:277) note that 'kidnapping is quite widespread and indiscriminate regardless of nationality, age or profession'. However, in Nigeria, most youths (including some professed Christians) indulge in the kidnapping business as a means to get money and, if possible, become wealthy without putting into consideration the futility and consequences inherent in covetousness (1 Tm 6:7).

**Desperation to become employed:** Youths constitute an above average number of Nigeria's total population; 70% of these youths (Christians inclusive) are either unemployed or underemployed (Adedokun & Oluwagbohunmi 2014:155). Siegel (2005:20) notes that 'when poverty is coupled with high levels of economic and social aspirations, the stage is set for criminal activities'. Criminal activities have increased in Nigeria because many unemployed or underemployed Nigerian youths, being desperate to find well-paying jobs, are most vulnerable to indulging in contemptible ventures without having regard for their Christian values, only concerned with achieving their desired economic and social aspirations. Materialistic Christian youths in Nigeria aim at attaining social and personal well-being with little or no effort; when it fails, their aspirations influence them to be tempted to do any nasty thing (Ayoola 2019:1) to make ends meet or to enrich themselves.

**Drug trafficking businesses:** Globally, drug trafficking is an illicit trade (UNODC 2010:1); however, drug trafficking remains a thriving business, causing 'a serious threat to human and national security in Nigeria' (Ukwayi, Okpa & Akwaji 2019:25). Drug trafficking is an organised criminal activity and a high-risk business. Still, uncountable numbers of Nigerian youths (including some acclaimed Christians) venture into this and other illicit businesses being fully aware of their negative consequences. Not minding the consequences for peddling drugs (Klein 1994:1), which include imprisonment and death, scores of Nigerian youths have ventured into drug business to 'make quick money' and be celebrated if they succeed. Many Nigerian drug dealers have been doomed in Nigeria and in other parts of the world where they were caught (Unnithan 2013:1). In desperately seeking to make money, countless Nigerian youths in diaspora have been killed or imprisoned in many prisons around the world because of their involvement in illegal business in foreign countries. Though professed Christians who indulge in shady businesses know that what they are doing is against their Christian values and against the laws of their country or the countries they are living in, because of their materialistic tendencies, they still do not mind the risks involved in engaging in those businesses.

**Robbery and hired killings:** In Nigeria, there have been several reports of robbery incidents and assassinations involving the youths. Some youths who for their love of

money engage in robbery and paid killings to make money have caused an extreme increase in the rate of crime in Nigeria. Amongst other high-profile arrests, the arrests of two armed robbers who were 22 and 25 years old, respectively, (Ndukwe 2021:1) reveal the extent to which the obsession with money and wealth promotes crimes in Nigeria. Indulging in nefarious acts like stealing from other people or taking the life of another to make money and acquire possessions are amongst the despicable dealings that Nigerian youths (including some professed Christians) become themselves involved in order to make money. Youths who engage in robbery do so to acquire wealth to purchase things that would become obsolete as years go by; this Paul describes as being foolish and destructive (1 Tm 6:9).

## Causes of materialism amongst Nigerian youths

### Natural tendencies for individuals to nurture evil desires

Sin was introduced into the world through the Adamic disobedience nature. Since then, naturally, human desires have been evil. Consequently, the unconverted and some covetous professed Nigerian Christian youths naturally are more inclined to be materialistic by tending to be discontent in their lot in life as Christians (1 Tm 6:6), nursing greedy desires and being selfish, which would later wreak havoc in their lives (Cournia 2019:1). Some individuals, even Christians, are naturally inclined to be materialistic without any external pressure. However, some youths are pressured into becoming materialistic, being motivated by their own self-will (1 Tm 6:10) and personal ambitions which predispose them not to be contented with their lot in life. They, on their own, identify with nefarious ventures and refrain from identifying with God, to whom their parents may have introduced them; hence, either in the long or short run they land themselves in trouble, ruin or death. Youths who are materialistic lack diligence with patience to earn their desired results; hence, they are ensnared into venturing into illegal businesses to make large amounts of money quickly.

### Parents' influence and societal expectations

It is a big concern that one of the many problems confronting Nigeria as a nation, the church community and the youths is the experiential issue of value crisis (Okoroafor & Njoku 2012:26). Currently, Nigerian society's value system is built on money and power (Fayemi 2016:1); hence, pressure from societal and family problems are amongst the factors that influence most Nigerian youths to be materialistic. Monetisation of values by materialistic parents and society, who are the determiners of acceptable standards of societal behaviour (Goldberg et al. 2003:278), are influencing the Nigerian youths to be materialistic. Materialistic parents are most likely to raise children that would be more materialistic. Some Christian youths who are materialistic were pressured into their materialistic tendencies by their parents and societal expectations. Because Nigeria is 'a society that is flamboyant, a society that worships wealth or money or possessions'

(Nwadiolor & Umeanolue 2013:31), materialistic parents justify the crimes or neglect the delinquent tendencies of their children as long as they bring money home. Materialism which contributes to an increase in immorality affects the mission-mandate of the church and results in the breakdown and deterioration of families and the larger Nigerian society.

### Peer group

Many children in Nigeria, lacking adequate parental care and control, have contributed to the value crisis that is increasingly being experienced in this era (Okoroafor & Njoku 2012:29). Parents failing in their parenting roles directly or indirectly abdicate their clout to their children's peers to be influencing their children positively or negatively. Peers influence themselves (Do Better 2019). Influencing peers introduce their insecure friends to their ways of life. Countless Nigerian youths are materialistic because they are competing amongst themselves or trying to match their friends who appear to be more blessed than they are. Because of the influencing power of the people one mingles with, Paul commands Timothy to withdraw himself from greedy people (1 Tm 6:5-10).

### Nigerian Nollywood films and social media influence

The Nollywood movies from the Nigerian film industry most often have an underlying theme of materialism, with flamboyant displays of riches which distort (Nnaemeka 2017:47) and negatively influence many Nigerian youths to be materialistic. As is the case elsewhere, Nigerian youths from a Christian background, who desperately desire to be as smart, fashionable and trendy as the media celebrities, are most likely to be materialistic (Do Better 2019). From the films they watch, they have seen the value of becoming and living rich. The negative impacts these films exact on the Nigerian youths have directly or indirectly bolstered the beliefs in 'ritual wealth' or 'blood money' (Igwe 2004:2). Social media is also replete with flamboyant displays of the wealth of Nigerian politicians, actors, actresses, musicians, wealthy businessmen and women. Nigeria being a materialistic society, many youths perceive these celebrities as their role models, and somehow, many Christian youths disregard their Christian faith and are pushed into nefarious dealings to get their own riches.

### Hardship fuelled by bad Nigerian political leaders and governance

Nigeria is a country that is richly endowed with natural resources that, if managed well, would have positioned the nation to be economically competitive with the richest countries in the world. But since its amalgamation in 1914 and her independence in 1960, the nation has had successive governments that have not been able to manage the nation's natural endowed resources effectively to improve or revive the crumbling Nigerian economy. Consequently, the nation has been experiencing bad governance consolidated by corrupt, religious and political exploitative interests which have in turn brought about extreme hardship in Nigeria (Adeniran 2006:1). The criminal tendencies of most Nigerian youths can be traced

to the failure of the Nigerian leadership system and the hardship consolidated by bad government (Adeniran 2008:370). Many Nigerian youths (including some Christians) are experiencing extreme hardship. Due to hardship and being motivated by evil desires, some undisciplined and ungodly youths are desperately venturing into despicable endeavors, so that they can provide for their needs, enrich themselves or achieve their selfish goals.

### Prosperity gospel preachers and the Nigerian Christian youths

Many greedy and materialistic preachers have continued to be making merchandise of Christianity through prosperity gospel because of their mindless quest for material possessions, which has been observed to be 'the greatest enemy of the church in Nigeria' (Dike 2003:96). In Nigeria, many who are in the church business do not love God nor were they divinely called to be church founders and leaders; however, they got themselves into the ministry being motivated by ulterior reasons. Materialistic preaching and lifestyles of the materialistic preachers are exacting overbearing influence on many Christians, especially the youths. Materialistic preaching and the materialistic preachers' flamboyant display of their wealth influence most Christian youths' hearts' affection to be enthused and twisted by their material desires and obsessions. Being materialistic, these professed ministers of God have invented and are advancing their theology of success that influences the youths to be 'focusing on profiteering and the promise of wealth multiplied beyond their wildest dreams in the shortest possible time' (Fayemi 2016:2). Their prosperity preaching, wanton affluence and flamboyant display of their costly possessions have contributed to birthing the idol of materialism in the hearts of the Nigerian youths.

### Lessons and recommendations

1. Nigerian Christian youths should recognise materialism to be a destructive sin and flee away from any of its appearances (1 Tm 6:11). Christian youths should learn to be contented in their lot in life in Christ Jesus.
2. Nigerian Christian youths are to guard themselves against every form of materialism, which is first nurtured at their innermost thought level, ensnaring them with wanton obsessions (1 Tm 6:9-10). Christian youths should redirect their energies away from indulging in nursing wanton greedy desires and indulging in nefarious ventures to achieve their materialistic goals.
3. Nigerian Christian youths should live daily being conscious of the theological truth that the true source of genuine blessings is God and that they should live their lives placing their trust and hope in him, being godly and contented of their lot in life in Christ Jesus and not on material possessions that are uncertain (1 Tm 6:17).
4. Every Nigerian Christian youth should be conscious of the temporary nature of this world and the negative consequences of ruin, destruction and death inherent in materialism (1 Tm 6:9).
5. They are to embrace Christian virtues, for godliness promises great gains (1 Tm 6:6), attracts God's blessings

and predisposes Christians to access eternal life (1 Tm 6:11). Christian youths are to adhere to biblical principles and promote the priority of spiritual matters.

6. Instead of flaunting wealth, Nigerian Christian youths should discipline themselves to be good stewards of God's gift of wealth. They are to participate in the mission-mandate of the church with genuine material wealth God has blessed them with. They are to focus on using their wealth obtained from honest ventures to do good (1 Tm 6:17–18).
7. Nigerian Christian youths should review the Christian theology they have been listening to and adhering to. They should refrain from listening and adhering to unbiblical theologies of most prosperity preachers. Nigerian Christian youths should refrain from identifying with materialistic preachers and their heretical doctrines (1 Tm 6:3). They are to learn by studying the word of God, so that they will be grounded in the doctrines that conform to godliness (1 Tm 6:3; 2 Tm 1:13).
8. Nigerian Christian youths should also shun negative peer group influences. Christian youths should not be associating with their peers who may claim to be Christians, but who are greedy and materialistic (1 Tm 6:9–10).
9. Nigerian Christian parents should learn from Lois, the grandmother, and Eunice, the mother of Timothy, who guided him in the way of the Lord (2 Tm 1:5). Although Nigerian parents are raising their children in a competitive and materialistic society, nevertheless, Christian parents should be good examples to their children by not being materialistic and by teaching their children to learn contentment in their lot in life in Christ Jesus. Parents should refrain from pressuring and pushing their children into becoming obsessed with material acquisitions.
10. The church has important roles to play in curbing materialism amongst Christian youths. The church must do away with delusive prosperity theology and be preaching sound biblical theology. Church leaders should take the responsibility of teaching the youths the right way to view material possessions (1 Tm 6:3–20). The church should be mindful of their worries (2 Tm 2:4), praying for them (2 Tm 1:3), helping and guiding the youths to stir up the gift of God upon the youths (2 Tm 1:6). They should focus on teaching the youths the gains of godliness and negative risks and consequence of being materialistic.
11. The church and the Nigerian government should tackle unemployment and poverty amongst youths. As future leaders, the church and the Nigerian government should help the youths by building or developing them to be equipped to take up leadership roles both in the church and in the secular world.

## Conclusion

Materialism in the context of 1 Timothy 6:6–14 contains the theological view of how Christian youths should view material possessions. Paul's teaching concerning materialism is therefore ever relevant because it provides the answer to the question on how Christians are to respond to material possessions. Materialism is a destructive sin. Materialism

diverts the attention of Christians from faith in God to obsessive love of material things and dependence on material possessions.

In Nigeria, it is experientially a reality that materialistic lifestyles amongst its youths (including Christian youths) are yielding multifaceted negative consequences to the individuals, the families, the church and the larger Nigerian society. Consequently, Christian youths are challenged to refrain from being materialistic so that they will not be vulnerable to the negative consequences of being materialistic. Christian youths are not to be obsessed with material possessions; rather, they should pursue Christian virtues and should seek satisfaction in God. Parents, church leaders and government leaders also have important roles to play in guiding the youths to refrain from being materialistic.

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## Author's contributions

C.P.U. is the sole author of this article.

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