

Pursue Spiritual Gain
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1 Timothy 6:6-19

- Opening question: **What does it mean to be CONTENT? What are some examples of CONTENTMENT? What is the OPPOSITE of CONTENTMENT? Describe what that is like?**
- Today's lesson is about the difference between GREED and CONTENTMENT.

Dale Carnegie said:

"Success is getting what you want..Happiness is wanting what you get."

Benjamin Franklin said:

"Content(ment) makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor."

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians told us:

...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. (Philippians 4:11-12 - NIV)

The GOAL for us as BELIEVERS in Christ, is to REPLACE GREED with CONTENTMENT by SEEKING SPIRITUAL GAIN more than MATERIAL GAIN.

- Let's begin in 1 Timothy 6. In verses 3-5 Paul is again warning Timothy about FALSE TEACHERS who teach that FAITH IN GOD is the path to MATERIAL WEALTH. He shows Timothy (and us) the truth starting in verse 6:

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

- **What do you think verse 6 means: "godliness with contentment is great gain?"**
- Possible Paraphrase: True riches come from honoring and focusing on God (Matt. 6:33); and resting in contentment that He will provide for our needs (Phil. 4:11-13; 19).
- If we are looking for GAIN, there is something better than FINANCIAL GAIN and here is the FORMULA: GODLINESS + CONTENTMENT = GREAT GAIN.
- **How does MATURING AS A BELIEVER change our perspective on our desire for material "stuff"?**
- The word CONTENTMENT here means "sufficiency" i.e., "I have all I need."

- Paul is making it plain that THIS sufficiency comes from GOD as the source!
- Verse 7: Says we brought nothing in and we'll take nothing out!
- Someone said, *As a baby we come into the world with fists clenched craving all we can get, and we leave this world with our palms open relinquishing anything we had.*
- **Verse 8: According to this verse, what does CONTENTMENT look like?**
- **Does that mean Christians deserve no more than just having basic needs met?**
- **What do YOU think verse 8 is saying?**
- Verse 9: Paul says "Those who are rich fall into temptation.." Right?
- **Does the Bible indicate that God is against His people having wealth?**
- **What examples from scripture would you give to make your point?**
- **Back to verse 9: Who DOES Paul say are susceptible to temptations, snares, and harmful desires?**
- Let's circle some key words: Verse 9 - DESIRE (twice); Verse 10 - LOVE and CRAVING; **What do all those words have in common?**

A fact: The choice between GREED or CONTENTMENT is not a money problem, it's a "HEART" problem.

Jesus said: Matthew 6:19–21 (ESV)

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- Verse 10 is a famous verse. **How is verse 10 OFTEN MISQUOTED?**
- **What is the difference between enjoying money and being a LOVER of money?**
- **What do we call LOVING MONEY?**
- GREED is so powerful, Paul says some might even "wander away" from the faith.
- That could refer to teachers who spread HERESY to gain wealth; or just believers whose spiritual fruitfulness has been *"choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life"* (Christ's words in Luke 8:14)"
- As we said, GREED is not really a MONEY problem; it's a HEART problem.
- Let's talk about how this works in real life.
- **What is the connection between the MIND and the HEART?**

The heart and the intellect are closely connected, the heart being the seat of intelligence. The heart is connected with thinking: As a person "thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7 KJV). To ponder something in one's heart means to consider it carefully (Luke 1:66; 2:19). "To set one's heart on" is the literal Hebrew that means to give attention to something, to worry about it (1 Sam. 9:20). To call to heart (mind) something means to remember something (Isa. 46:8). All of these are functions of the mind but are connected with the heart in biblical language. (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

- To repeat: *"The heart and the intellect are closely connected."*
- The MIND MUST FOCUS on something. Try NOT focusing your mind on anything!

- **Because of our sin nature, what do our HEART and MIND normally focus on?**
- **Example: If I say THINK ABOUT FOOD what do we think about?**
- **What does the Bible say about the nature of our hearts?** Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV) *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*
- **So, if I want to change the FOCUS of my HEART and MIND, how do I do it?**
- The only way to change the focus of our HEART and MIND is to REPLACE the object of our focus with something else.
- Instead of GREED and LOVE of MONEY our focus should be GODLINESS and CONTENTMENT. Being CONTENT means putting MONEY in its proper place.
- There's nothing wrong with having MONEY as long as MONEY doesn't HAVE US!
- The old saying: *"Money is a great servant but a bad master."* (Sir Francis Bacon)

The writer of Hebrews gave us this perspective:

Hebrews 13:5–6 (ESV)

5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Of course, preachers can fall victim to the LOVE of MONEY. Paul warned Timothy in verse 11:

11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

What about people who ARE materially wealthy? Paul had a word for them, verse 17:

17 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

So, What's The Takeaway?

It's not wrong to have money and material possessions. It's wrong when the LUST FOR MORE MONEY and STUFF begins to rule our lives.

John D. Rockefeller, was once asked the question, "How much money is enough?" His answer, *"Just a little bit more."*

On the other hand, Jesus told us in Luke 12:15

... "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (NIV)

Believers in Christ are to be CONTENT with what God has given us; not LOVERS of money and stuff who are DRIVEN by the quest for more and more of it.

William Barclay describes CONTENTMENT for a Christian this way:

“Contentment comes when we escape the slavery to things, when we find our wealth in the love and the fellowship of others, and when we realize that our most precious possession is our friendship with God, made possible through Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 6 leaves us with a challenging thought and several questions:

- No matter how much we have...one day it will all be gone! (verse 7)
- Am I content with what God has given me? (verse 8)
- What is the focus of my heart where money is concerned?
- How far will I go to get more money? (verses 9 and 10)
- Do I love people MORE than money? (verse 11)
- Do I love God’s work MORE than money? (verse 11)
- Do I freely share what I have with others? (verse 18)

[Partial source: Life Application Study Bible]

How we answer these questions will show us what we TREASURE. And, as Jesus said, “... where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”