

Money Can't Buy Me...  
(Greed vs Contentment)  
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We're in Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and 6.

The Beatles made the lyric famous: "I don't care too much for money, cause..."  
**What else can money not buy you? What can being obsessed with money cost you?**

Many cynical types have commented on whether money can buy happiness:

David Lee Roth said:

*"Money can't buy happiness but it can buy a huge yacht that sails right next to it."*

Clare Boothe Luce wrote:

*Money can't buy happiness, but it can make you awfully comfortable while you're being miserable.*

A well known ad states:

*Money can't buy happiness. But somehow, it's much more comfortable to cry in a Lamborghini than on a bicycle.*

Author Gretchen Rubin writes:

"In one striking study, people were asked whether they'd rather have a job that paid \$30,000 in year one, \$40,000 in year two, and \$50,000 in year three, or a job that paid \$60,000, then \$50,000 then \$40,000." **Question: Which option do you think most people pick? Which would you pick? Why?**

Michael Norton of the Harvard Business School and co-author of "Happy Money: The Science of Smarter Spending" writes:

*"One of the things [we] hear again and again when we ask people about money and happiness is a simple phrase: more is better. In general, we all believe that having more money is going to make us happier. And, while it's true that having more money doesn't usually make us less happy, it's also true that simply having more money doesn't guarantee happiness. After all, most of us have a friend, family member, or coworker who is relatively wealthy who certainly doesn't strike us as particularly happy.*

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=using-money-to-buy-happiness>

- He must have been reading Ecclesiastes! Back in Ecclesiastes 2 we learned that Solomon concluded stuff can't give meaning to life.
- He would have known, he had more money and stuff than anyone who ever lived!

Today in Chapter 5, Solomon seems to give two contrasting ideas about money. In 5:10 he writes: (*Today I'm using the New Living Translation several times for clarity.*)

*Those who love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness! (NLT)*

Yet, in 5:18 he said,

*It is good for people to eat, drink, and enjoy their work under the sun during the short life God has given them... in 19...And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it...(NLT)*

- **Was Solomon contradicting himself?**
- **How can we reconcile verse 10 with 18 and 19?**

Here's the point: Money is not the problem; it's the PRIORITY we choose to GIVE money in our lives that leaves us either GREEDY or CONTENT when it comes to material things.

Ecclesiastes 5:8–9 (ESV)

8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them. 9 But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.

- Solomon states what we've all seen in life. Societies are based on the hunger for money, and powerful people often oppress and take advantage of the poor to get RICH. Don't be shocked at greed and corruption over money.
- Look again at verse 10, which we read earlier:

10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.

- **What is that verse saying about living to accumulate money and stuff?**
- **If a person is fixated on money, how much money is enough?**
- Money brings other complications, look at verses 11 and 12:

11 When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?

- **What does verse 11 say is a reality of accumulating more money?**

12 Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

- **What does that verse mean?**

13 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, 14 and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. 15 As he came from his mother's womb he shall go

again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. 16 This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind?

- **What do those verses tell us can happen when we try to find our security in money?**
- **Let's talk about WORK, toiling for money. Jump over to 6:7:**

Ecclesiastes 6:7–9 (Reading it in the NLT)

7 All people spend their lives scratching for food, but they never seem to have enough.

8 So are wise people really better off than fools? Do poor people gain anything by being wise and knowing how to act in front of others?

- Those verses reminded me of a quote we hear from time to time:  
*"Too many people are buying things they can't afford, with money that they don't have... to impress people that they don't like!"*

- **It's great to work hard to provide a better standard of living for your family! In fact, the Bible teaches that. What are examples of taking our ambition too far?**

For years I kept this quote on my desk at work as a reminder:

*"A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child."* - Forest E. Witcraft

- God has equipped us to make a living. But, if we spend all our time and energy accumulating and never ENJOYING what we earn, what's the point?
- What is Solomon's observation about "scratching" for a living? Verse 9:

9 Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless—like chasing the wind.

- The only way we can ENJOY material possessions is through a relationship with Christ, acknowledging that they are a gift from Him.

Let's jump back up to Chapter 5 verses 18-20 to see what else Solomon said about putting money in its proper place.

Ecclesiastes 5:18–20 (ESV)

18 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. 19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. 20 For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

- **Verse 19: God doesn't just give us what we earn, what other gift does God give?**
- Solomon says it is "good and fitting" to ENJOY the results of our hard work.
- **Verse 20: If we keep money in it's proper place, what will God do for us?**
- **If you were teaching a Bible study on how Christians should view money what kinds of things would be important to communicate? What would you teach about contentment?**

Warren Wiersbe puts it into perspective:

*The person who loves money cannot be satisfied no matter how much is in the bank account—because the human heart was made to be satisfied only by God (3:11).*

*"Take heed and beware of covetousness," warned Jesus, "for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses" (Luke 12:15, NKJV). First the person loves money, and then he loves more money, and the disappointing pursuit has begun that can lead to all sorts of problems. "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10, NKJV).*

The writer of Proverbs 30 asked God to help him keep money in it's proper place:

Proverbs 30:7–9 (ESV)

7 Two things I ask of you;  
deny them not to me before I die:

8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me,

9 lest I be full and deny you  
and say, "Who is the Lord?"

or lest I be poor and steal  
and profane the name of my God.

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Money is not the problem; it's the PRIORITY we choose to give money in our lives that leaves us either GREEDY or CONTENT when it comes to material things.
- God has equipped us to make a living. But, if we spend all our time and energy accumulating and never ENJOYING what we earn, what's the point?
- We have to ask ourselves if ACCUMULATING money is coming between us and those we love?
- We can only ENJOY material possessions when we see them as God intended...as a gift from Him, and NEVER a BARRIER in our relationship with Him and those we love.
- As a wise person said: ""Money is a great servant but a bad master."