

More or Less

Part 2 – All About the Money

Intro

Over the course of the next month, we will [as a family] address the [what seems like] mirage of contentment. We will look at past, present, and future hopes and how this idea of contentment guides our emotions and lives when reality crashes the party of expectation.

How do you find contentment when where you are is not where you want to be?

All of us experience disappointment. Things don't turn out or happen like we had planned them in our minds.

Disappointment is simply a reality of life. How we deal with and process these disappointments is what changes our perspective and defines the overall quality of our lives. But it doesn't come naturally. As we saw last week, contentment comes through a process of learning from the different situations and circumstances of life. Being content is learned over time. It is the hardest [and easiest] thing you will ever learn to live within.

Contentment – Deciding to be satisfied with where you are and what you have.

One of the areas of contentment that most of us struggle with [at some point in our lives] is in the arena of finances and material possessions. We think we're content, and we might actually be - until we see a bigger, newer, better version of what we already have, and our contentment is rattled. Houses, cars, phones, clothes, you name it.

This is the natural reaction of the human condition. Feelings of discontent is what is natural. Jesus tells the crowd a parable to illustrate this very reality.

Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Contentment is a choice, a decision, that is practiced and guarded time and time again.

Take care, and be on your guard.

Discontent sneaks up on us in ways we had not anticipated. If we are not *on our guard*, we can outgrow contentment without even realizing we have done so.

50% More – 10 Years Ago

How many of us this morning are making 50% [or] more than we were making 10 years ago? Maybe you were making \$30,000 10 years ago and now you are making \$45,000 plus. How many of us 10 years ago were thinking [and saying] – *if I could just make \$45,000, then I would be set...I would be content?* And now that you have the extra 50%, how many of us are truly content with what we currently have? And how many of us are in the same [or even worse] financial position than we were 10 years ago?

Financial contentment has little to do with the amount of money we make and more about the desires of our heart.

Unfortunately, and very accurately, living within one's financial means is [almost always] an indicator of our level of contentment with our place in life.

Driving Motivation

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."
Hebrews 13:5

Financial striving for *more* diverts our attention onto *how* we can make more and get more. It's everything we think about. It's in everything conversation we have. Every inner dialogue is consumed with *more*.

When our minds are focused on the acquisition of financial freedom or abundance, our hearts are dragged along with it. We don't simply think about how to get enough or make more. Instead, our hearts begin to long for and drift toward future financial successes and possible, potential opportunities.

And there is nothing wrong whatsoever about doing good work, putting in a hard day, or displaying great work ethic. Actually, these are encouraged in the Christian life. We are to be people of purpose, people of productivity, and people of commitment. We are not slackers, free-loaders, or half effort kind of people.

This issue isn't necessarily the activity, but the heart that is driving the activity. Because, at the heart of it all is the heart of it all. The question we must ask ourselves is – *what is your motivation for financial stability, freedom, and excess?*

For some of us it's fear. Whether a conditioning of our past struggles and life, or uncertainty of the future unknown.

For others it's pride. We want to feel like we have more than those around us.

For a few it's greed - a pure need and desire for more. We have not found contentment in what we already have.

Whatever your driving motivation, they all have one factor in common. Trust! Which is why Jesus added – ***I will never leave you nor forsake you.***

He connected contentment and the love of money with a promise of His presence and provision in and for our lives. We don't have to desire more from other things in life, because we already have enough in Him.

So when we grow discontent in the financial, material, occupational realms of our lives, we are likely mistrusting: ***1) our own ability, 2) the ability of other things to satisfy, and 3) God's goodness and provision.***

We are simply not trusting God for our future.

We have shifted our thoughts and placed our hopes upon those other things (clothes, recognition, finances, marketplace status) to define and fulfill us. The greatest way to combat financial greed, materialism, and the love of money is to claim dependence upon the God. Trusting in the Lord, with everything we have and don't have, is the only way to be content with anything in life.

Trusting God's Provision

So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Hebrews 13:6

True contentment is not found in financial status – because it can disappear in a moment. True peace is not found in the drive for *more* – as it only creates a sense of stress and pressure to provide. True contentment is only found in trusting God for His promised provision. His promise of ***I will never leave you nor forsake you.***

But sometimes it feels that way – like He has left us...high and dry.

Don't allow past financial fears or lack of discipline drive your current level of contentment because of your lack of trust in God to provide for your future.

Unfortunately, most of the time, our current need for more is not a lack of God's promised provision, but a result of our past lack of discipline.

We often fail to realize that our current pressures and future uncertainties are a direct result of our previous lack of contentment. Contentment breeds contentment. A desire for more only creates a desire for more. To learn contentment means to *let go*. But we try to fool ourselves into believing *once I get [there], then I'll choose to be content*.

Contentment never comes in the pursuit. It's found in the surrender.

Learning to surrender our hearts and place our trust in God's ability to be enough.

It's never really about money or material things. It's not about houses, cars, positions, and status. It has never been about having things, but more about what things have you. It's always been about, and will always be about, the heart. What has our attention and what has captured our hearts?

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21

Maybe some of us today need to stop blaming God for our financial position in life.

Possibly some of us need to quit striving in our own power and strength for provision.

And probably all of us need to pick up our dependence for life, happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment from the feet of things we have hoped in for far too long and place our dependence for all things at the feet and provision of God.