

Drive in tailgate party 7th June
Be Content

As a kid I used to like Dennis the Menace (show and **comics**). One comic strip has a picture of Dennis looking at a catalog and saying, ***“This catalog’s got a lot of toys I didn’t even know I wanted.”***

The Wizard of Id has a comic strip where one monk is putting up a sign on the bulletin board in front of his church while a visiting monk watches. The sign read, **“Thou shalt not covet.”** The visiting monk said, **“Boy, I wish we had a signboard like that at our church.”**

Last week we looked at the directive God gave to Joshua, “Have not I commanded you to be strong and courageous.” And the three things God explained that help in that effort is to remind us to Trust what He has promised, to do what He says and to meditate on what He has written.

I said that God didn’t give us the 10 Suggestions to consider but He gave us the 10 Commandments to obey. They were not written on a white board but etched in stone with His very finger.

As we look at those commandments, the last one seems to be the least threatening; the less dangerous. Simply stated it says, **“You shall not covet.”**

Now we may think, *“That one isn’t that big a deal! Nobody gets too hurt by someone else’s envy or covetousness?”*

Well, despite that idea, the Bible clearly says it is wrong to covet.

When God gives this last command, He divides it into three categories.

Exodus 20:17, *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*

It is wrong to covet:

- (1) Your neighbor’s property (house), Ahab took Nabob’s vineyard
- (2) Your neighbor’s people (wife, male or female servant), like King David
- (3) Your neighbor’s possessions (ox, donkey, nor anything).

One good definition I heard for **coveting** is: ***“The overwhelming uncontrolled desire to acquire.”*** Another word for this would be, ***lust!***

We're not talking about an ordinary desire to have things. Desiring good things is by nature a rather common everyday occurrence for most of us.

And having or desiring material possessions isn't the issue. The issue is about our uncontrollable desire for more of what others have and therefore our inability to be content with what **we already have**.

Howard Hughes was a billionaire who demonstrated this uncontrollable desire or lust to acquire to the Nth degree.

Despite his billions, he wanted more; more prestige, fame and power. He moves to Hollywood, becomes a film maker and then a star. He wanted more sensual pleasures, so he paid huge sums to indulge every sensual urge. He wanted more thrills, so he designed, built and piloted the fastest aircraft in the world. He wanted more political power, so he started doing political favors and it is said that he had two U.S. presidents become his pawns. All he ever wanted was more. Yet, the end of this man's life was a pitiful sight. He lived in darkness, his arms covered with needle marks from drug addiction, his fingernails were inches long and had curled up in a grotesque way, his teeth were black and rotten. His hair to his waist, long beard. He lived like a hermit. He wore rubber gloves all the time and wouldn't leave his apartment. He died weighing 95 pounds as a billionaire junkie.

The side effects of an excessive desire to acquire: *Fatigue, debt, worry, conflict, dissatisfaction, depression and regret.* No wonder families are being destroyed today.

Now, the complete opposite of being covetous **is being content. And that is God's directive to us that I wanted to talk about today.**

Paul had learned how to be content even in the most deprived situations. From a dark dungeon jail cell awaiting his execution, Paul wrote this in:

Philippians 4:11-13, *“Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. **I have learned** the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”*

A little further on in this chapter he says in **Philippians 4:19**, *“And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”*

Contentment is something that may go against our ambitious natures but it is **a quality that can be learned.**

Here's are **four Bible lessons** on how to become more content:

1. Resist comparing yourself to others

2 Corinthians 10:12, *“Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!”* (Houses, cars, jobs, clothes, etc.)

Learn to admire without having to acquire.

Why do we compare anyway? Because that's the way society keeps score, *by possessions.* But your possessions have nothing to do with your **significance or importance.** You can be a millionaire and be a jerk, or you can be poor and be a wonderful person.

2. Enjoy what you already have

1 Timothy 6:8, *“So if we have **enough** food and clothing, let us be content.”*

What is enough? Well, it is talking about what you have rather than what you don't have.

You see, there's the trap of *“When and Then”* thinking:

“When I get married, then I'll be happy.”

“When I get divorced, then I'll be happy.”

“When we have kids, then we'll be happy.”

“When I get another job, then I'll be happy.”

Ecclesiastes. 5:19 says, *“And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.”*

Happiness should not be based in what we **will get.** Happiness should be based upon enjoying whatever **we already have.**

1 Timothy 6:17 says that God, *“richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.”*

Illustration: *A rich man finds a man lazily sitting by his boat.*

“Why aren’t you fishing?” asks the rich man. “Because I’ve caught enough fish for today.”

“Why don’t you catch more fish than you need?” the rich man asks.

“What would I do with them?” came back the fisherman.

“You could sell them for money. You could buy a better boat, go into deeper water, catch even more fish and make lots of money. Soon you could have a fleet of fishing boats and be rich like me.”

The fisherman asked, “Then what would I do?”

“You could sit down and enjoy life.”

“What do you think I’m doing now?”

3. Focus on what matters most.

1 Timothy 6:6-10, *“True godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. 7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can’t take anything with us when we leave it. 8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. 9 **But people** who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. **And some** people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”*

“A 45 year old man sat crying in a counselor’s office. For the last 30 years he had grabbed and strained and fought for success. He focused hard and ran through the corporate maze, never asking why, never observing how he was hurting his wife or kids, never realizing he didn’t know them, never admitting that he was destroying his own body with the stress of constant work.

*Now, he sits crying his eyes out in the counselor’s office. His wife has left him. The kids are grown and have nothing to do with him because they don’t know him. **Suddenly his financial assets and career mean nothing.** He’s alone in the world. Nothing means anything. He is cut off from his loved ones, living a hollow life apart from meaningful relationships with family or God.”*

You could apply this story to countless others, not just corporate executives but farmers, lawyers, businesspeople, doctors, and yes **even pastors**. All of us can get so caught up by the unquenchable desire to acquire financial success, or fame, or importance, that we lose sight of the relationships that truly give meaning and purpose to life.

It is in relationships, being with people, being with God that gives life meaning and purpose. It isn't a focus on self that satisfies! It is a focus on others that brings meaning to life. A focus on God and the people around us.

That is what it means when it says, "*True godliness with contentment is itself great wealth.*" Godliness is a focus on God and His will for our lives and contentment is a matter of seeing what really matters – what is right in front of you – what you already possess and - in the people who love you and you love back.

And when your focus is not on self and on others, the forth tip for bring content becomes so much easier...

4. Use what you have to help others

1 Timothy 6:17 continues along by saying...

*"Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. 18 Tell them to use their money to do good. **They should** be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. 19 By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life."*

Who's the rich here? All Americans no matter what you make. You are in the top 2% of income in the world.

4 precautions for us in these verses:

1. Don't become proud of your wealth and think you're better than others.
2. Don't put your trust in money. Security is not your bank account.
3. Use your money to do good. Don't waste it. Don't blow it.
4. Give cheerfully. Giving is a cure for materialism.

If the opposite of coveting is contentment, then it stands to reason that the opposite of **getting is giving**. And there is a connection between these two thoughts. Coveting = getting, Contentment = giving. People who live the second way are happy generous people.

Illustration - *This reminds me of a story I heard about a guy who died and went to heaven. When he got there, he saw a poor widow he had known*

driving a Mercedes. “What’s that?” Peter said, “The transportation you are given in heaven is based on how much you gave away, it was treasure they stored away here in heaven. That woman was very generous.” The man asked, “What about me?” Well,” Peter said, “You weren’t so generous, so you get a Moped.” He was pretty sad until he saw his former pastor come by on roller skates.”

IN CLOSING

Are you content?

If we do these 4 things we’ll be OK.

- (1) Resist Comparing yourself to others,
- (2) Enjoy what you already have,
- (3) Focus on what matters most.
- (4) Use what you have to help others,

2 Corinthians 4:18, *“So we don’t look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.”*

How about you? Are you content? What do you live for?

Is there a certain contentment about your life? A contentment that says I don’t have to work and toil for an over abundance of things, but I can be content with a good living.

Then spend some quality time in relationships, one, your relationship with God and then your relationship with family and friends.

Be content! Focus on what matters and then use your God given gifts and skills to further his kingdom through service and through giving!

Let’s Pray!