

Contentment

One of the things that all of us are looking for in this life is happiness and the contentment that comes with it. A lot of us look at happiness in a worldly light—thinking that we know that if we can only get what we want, we'll be happy and content with what we have. Truth be told, there are really no limits to the things that we want. And really, even if we could gain a measure of happiness through gaining worldly possessions, we would never be content, never be satisfied until we reached another level of wealth.

In the Bible, there are lots of examples of people who never seemed content with what they had. Adam and Eve just had to partake of the forbidden fruit. Israel just had to have a king rather than keep the government God instituted for them. Achan had to steal plunder from Ai in Joshua 7 and bring defeat to the army of Israel and death to him and his family. The painfully unhappy preacher of Ecclesiastes just needed more fame, money, women, and wisdom. Judas had to have 30 more pieces of silver. Simon the Sorcerer had to have the ability to pass miracle-working on to others. You can think of many more if you try. The problem with these people is that they thought obtaining a greater measure of something worldly would make them happy.

This is what the apostle John had to say about the temptation of the world—the need for more and more in order to reach a level of contentment that will never come:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:15-17)

I guess the difference is our happiness, we think, is caused by our gaining something, whereas the happiness we are promised from God requires that we give something away.

It was Paul who told Timothy in **I Timothy 6:6-10**:

“...godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many harmful and foolish desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Paul had nothing—but felt as if he had it all. His secret? In **Philippians 4** he says that he learned to be content in all of his situations, under all circumstances. He knew he had all he needed to be happy—and that was his close relationship with Jesus Christ. His life was filled with giving of himself and his resources so that he could one day live eternally with his Lord. Anything he gave up brought him that much closer to his goal

and made him the happiest person in the world. It was Paul who said in **II Corinthians 6:10** that he was poor, yet he made many rich, that he had nothing, but possessed everything. His giving life did spiritually bless many, and the knowledge he had that he was doing what God wanted made him know that he was the richest man in the world.

Again, it's all a matter of perspective. Happiness with contentment can never be achieved through obtaining worldly goods—at least not lasting happiness. Happiness and contentment can only be obtained by giving of oneself time and time again. By doing this, we are storing up treasures in heaven—knowing we'll obtain our reward for a life well lived.

—Johnny Stephens