

HILARIOUS GENEROSITY

Contentment, Generosity, and You

1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Life itself isn't all that complicated; we *make* it complicated. By focusing on non-essentials instead of essentials, we lose our way and forget our priorities. When we compare ourselves with others, we never measure up. When we take our cues from our culture, enough is never enough. When we strive for more, always more, our level of stress reaches unhealthy extremes. Mix together these complications and nonessentials, and contentment sprouts wings and flies away. So many of us live in squirrel cages of never-ending pursuits. The results are tragic: disappointment, dissatisfaction, and self-centeredness. When steeped in these pursuits, we start telling ourselves things that aren't true, such as, "If I only *had* more, I would give more." That statement alone reveals a lack of understanding. Becoming a faithful and generous follower of Christ does not depend on our *accumulation* of money as much as it does on our *attitude* toward money. (Pause and reread that statement.) As we will discover in this lesson, the less we depend on material things to make us happy, the more likely we are to model generosity.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

Hilarious generosity begins with contentment. It's being satisfied with and grateful for all we have and are able to experience. We must understand what contentment is . . . and what it is not. So let's take some time to dig a bit deeper into the biblical definition of *contentment* and discover ways to hang on to it in a world that works so hard at taking it away.

Contentment Analyzed (1 Timothy 6:6, 17–19)

The most formalized biblical teaching on contentment is embedded in Paul's words to Timothy in the context of encouraging wealthy Christians not to trust in material possessions.

In that instruction, the seasoned apostle linked contentment with godliness, elevating contentment to the highest virtue.

The net gain of combining a commitment to godliness while fostering a genuine sense of contentment brings about great spiritual, emotional, and physical benefits expressed through a generous and spiritually prosperous life!



Quotable

Contentment keeps you from chasing fads and fancies that promise more and more fulfillment but deliver nothing.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Here are some lessons we learn from Paul’s instruction to those who are wealthy.

Lesson one: *Guard against pride.* Few things are more intolerable than a person who has much wealth and parades it for all to see.

Lesson two: *Don’t find security in wealth.* We mustn’t trust in our money. We’ve all watched the stock market rise and fall and riches vanish like morning dew.

Lesson three: *Maintain the right perspective.* All things are given by God for us to enjoy and to use to benefit others, for His glory.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

What Contentment Really Means

The Greek root of the word “content” is *arkeo* and suggests the idea of sufficiency, that something is enough. When what we have—including our financial status, material possessions, and physical appearance—is enough, then we are free from turmoil over our lot. This Greek word conveys the idea of being genuinely satisfied with what we have and what we are experiencing. Our maintaining an attitude of contentment safeguards us from the inevitable stresses that result from the never-ending striving for more. Jesus celebrated a remarkable example of contentment one day while in the temple!

While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus said, “this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”
(Luke 21:1–4)

Contentment cannot simply be mustered. Rather it is formed within us by God’s Spirit.

Contentment and Possessions

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he was concerned for the Christians who tended to overinvest in earthly possessions while trading off the benefits of contentment. He wanted Timothy to remind his congregation that earthly possessions are temporary and of no lasting value.



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LET'S LIVE IT

Generosity rooted in contentment helps us keep focused on what's really necessary for ourselves—and for others. Generosity also helps us avoid serious snares that can entrap us in genuine heartache and potential ruin.

In contrast to those who understand the value and benefits of contentment are those who live with the express goal of amassing more and more wealth. The apostle Paul leveled a stern warning for anyone determined to tread down such a slippery and disastrous slope.

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. 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. (1 Timothy 6:9–10)

First, *we are to use our money for worthwhile causes*. We will benefit greatly from taking the time to sit down and prayerfully consider how to use the resources the Lord has blessed us with for worthy causes.

Second, we are to *balance giving money with giving ourselves*. Being generous with our time and our talent can greatly benefit others in need and usher into our lives a flood of joyful experiences.

Third, we are to *stay ready to share*. Rather than developing a suspicious edge in regard to sharing our resources, we can ask the Lord to prompt us to give to things that matter eternally.

Fourth, we are to *invest in eternity's future*. Paul urged Christians to invest in a future beyond this present life on earth (1 Timothy 6:19).

It really is more blessed to give than to receive!

So why not go there? God is not a pleasure squasher but a pleasure provider! And He simply desires that we not fix our hope on the uncertainty of riches . . . but rather put our hope in Him, the One who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Remember, the net gain of combining a commitment to godliness while fostering a genuine sense of contentment brings about great spiritual, emotional, and physical benefits. In other words, by embracing both godliness and contentment, the believer develops a greatheartedness expressed through a generous and spiritually prosperous life!



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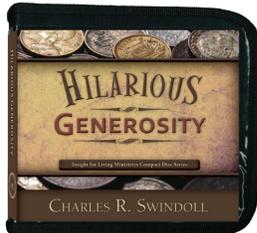
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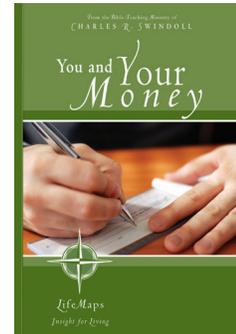
Tools for Digging Deeper



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