

It is now the time of year for hunting season. Now we aren't all hunters here, but I think we can all understand what makes a hunter happy. Often it is simply the experience of being outdoors in nature. Often a hunter will be content with the experience itself, but it doesn't hurt if he or she can bring something home from the field or woods. But if a hunter goes out with the intention of being a better hunter than all the others, he might be very disappointed when his neighbor brings back a bigger prize to mount. The key to contentment is being satisfied with whatever the outcome of the hunt is. In a much bigger way the key to contentment in life comes only from contentment God can give. God shows us godliness combined with contentment is great gain for us. By telling us to flee the love of money and to instead pursue godly living, God shows us the path to contentment.

How much time do you spend thinking about the things you want, but don't have? We often look forward to the next vacation, the next paycheck, the next opportunity to purchase a new toy, a new pet, or new phone. When we dwell on what we don't have we end up being unhappy and frustrated with ourselves and with those close to us. Dwelling on what we don't have prevents us from meditating on what God himself has given us. When we stop thinking about what we don't have and about what we do have, we see that God has given us everything that we need!

God promises to take care of our physical needs. He does this whenever he provides us with the food and drink we need for our bodily nourishment. He has given us food and drink for all our lives, no matter what stage of life, whether we are infants and children, adults in the middle of life, or elderly. If we cannot grow all our own food, he provides others who grow more than enough for all of us. When we cannot earn what we need to buy food, he provides others who will. God takes care of our need for physical nourishment.

When God promises to take care of our physical needs he also promises to give us clothing and shelter. In an imperfect and sinful world we need protection from the elements, the heat and cold, the wind and rain, the sun and night. All our lives God has either given us the ability to provide these things for ourselves, or others who will give us these blessings from God. Perhaps God puts you in the position to care for the physical needs of others; what a blessing to be able to personally hand out his blessings for others! There is a lot to be thankful for, but why is being thankful so hard?

When we think about what we don't have instead of what we do have, we end up complaining instead of being thankful. Instead of looking at the things we need for life and being content with them, we think about things we don't need. Instead of seeking ways to serve others and give them food and clothing, we complain about not having enough money for everything on our wishlist.

Yes we all fall into the sin ingratitude and unthankfulness. We really don't deserve food and clothing in our sinful state, but God has given us these things and even more. He gives us the forgiveness for the sins of ingratitude and unthankfulness, he gives us forgiveness through his son Jesus for all our sins. He gives us what we really need above all else: salvation. We all need eternal life, this is another need the God fills for the sake of Jesus.

It is easy for us to lose sight of how God takes care of our needs. When this happens we lose our contentment. God doesn't want us to lose our contentment. This is why he warns us about the love of money. Money itself is an odd concept. God didn't invent money and he never promises to give us money or earthly wealth like he promises to take care of our physical needs. When we have money it is an added blessing, a blessing to be used with good stewardship like any talent.

While money can be a blessing it can also be misused and abused. The devil knows this and will always be ready to help you put money first in your life in front of God. He knows it's an easy thing to do; to get us to put our own desires and needs before our serving and supporting God's people. The devil knows that we value our work because it gives us money. He can tempt us to put our work first and in the way of helping others; whether it's your spouse at home, or strangers on the street. Putting work first can come in the way of setting aside time to hear God's word and his other means of grace. Is it a valid excuse to say

you can't come to church, go to Bible Study, or a Vine and Branches because work always keeps you away?

The devil wants us to make money our only treasure. When this happens we run the terrible risk of losing our only true treasure. When we focus on money first we become wrapped up in all our physical wants and needs. We worry about our work and vacation schedules, we worry about having enough money for retirement. We can fall into worrying only about growing our investments instead of growing our faith. When we are focused on only our physical needs we find it easy and convenient to cut out giving our firstfruits in offerings to God. Every time we fail to put God first with our money, we harden our hearts against giving him offerings the next week.

When we focus on being happy in this life we lose sight of the true and perfect happiness waiting for us in heaven. We seek fulfillment in the here and now. It is tempting to think that once we believe in Jesus we don't need to seek any more spiritual enrichment, but God warns us that we run the risk of wandering from the faith when we seek only earthly fulfillment in our money and wealth, no matter the amount.

A hunter lightly armed with a shotgun for hunting waterfowl would run away from angry bear. The love of money is like that dangerous bear, it is something to flee from! But if that hunter would find a low-flying duck close by, that would be a target to pursue safely, a target, that if it were acquired would bring contentment and happiness. In a similar way God tells us to flee from the love of money to to pursue a life of godly living combined with contentment. .

As we pursue godly living we seek to remove jealousy and discontentment. When we are content with our blessings and maintain a thankful attitude, it removes the opportunity for the devil to tempt us to hate and despise other people who have more than us. When we are content with what we have, we no longer seek to please our own desires, but become free to help serve others.

Perhaps you are thinking, "it's easier said than done to be content." Realize, we have everything in our Savior Jesus. Even if we go without clothing, even if we go without food, even if we go without water and we die, we have everything in Christ. He promises to give us our new life in heaven where we will never have to worry about money or food or clothing. We will always be more than content.

As we realize that pursuing godliness revolves around our relationship with Christ, focus on him, your Savior! Pursue your relationship with God. Build up and strengthen your faith as you study God's word. Don't put in the back burner, but make and keep a personal appointment with God's word every day and encourage others to do the same. Pray to him continuously about all your cares and worries, pray to him out of thankfulness for giving you everything you need.

As we flee the love of money and pursue godliness we can be content; that is a great gain for us. When we are content we don't have to worry about our needs, we don't have to worry about, or ,love, money. We can be content, that is a great gain for others. In our contentment we seek to show love to one another.

1. What two things combined are great gain for us?
2. What does dwelling on what we don't have ultimately lead to?
3. What two things does God give us so that we can be content?
4. What Third thing does God give us that we really need most?
5. List several ways the devil tempts us with money.
6. How is loving money dangerous?
7. What do we seek to remove from our lives as we pursue godly living?
8. What would happen if we didn't have clothing or food?
9. What relationship is central to godly living?
10. How is godliness with contentment a great gain?

1. Agree or Disagree: Money is the root of all evil.

2. Discuss the temptation of money: Why is this one thing singled out in these verses?
3. Why does God sometime bless believers with money, even though it is a great temptation?
4. Fill the blank with something other than "money." The love of _____ is the root of all kinds of evil.