

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How to Be Content with What You Have

James 1:9-11 & 5:1-6

1 Lord Jesus told the story of a man who, early in the morning, hired some men to work in his vineyard. ¹ ² They agreed to work all day for a fair daily wage. As the day progressed, he realized he needed more men to get the harvest in. Every three hours he would go to town and hire more men. As the evening approached, he became desperate. He hired all the rest of the men he could find to work just a couple more hours to get in the harvest before nightfall. When the day was over, grateful to get the harvest done, he paid all of the men he had hired the same wage.

The men who had worked all day, from early morning to sunset, felt they had been cheated. The men who were hired and worked just a couple of hours were paid the same amount of money as they. However, what they had received was the fair daily wage they had agreed to before they started. The vineyard owner had just decided to be extra generous with the

¹ Matthew 20:1-16.

workers who jumped in during the last couple of hours to save the crop.

What's the lesson here? Be content with what God has provided for you. Don't compare the blessings of your life with how the Lord blesses others!

This lesson is hammered home in the Book of James, chapter 1, verses 9 through 11 and chapter 5, verses 1 through 6. ³

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wildflower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. ² ₄

Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has

² James 1:9-11.

rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. ³ ₅

Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you. ⁴

There are two types of people in the world; the haves and the have nots. This passage of scripture explains the blessings of each category and how to be content in which ever one you find yourself. ⁶

Just because you have been blessed financially more than someone else doesn't mean you are more special than they. You need to . . .

³ James 5:1-3.

⁴ James 5:4-6.

I. Realize the Poverty of Riches - v10

Realize the poverty of riches! ⁷

Verse 10 tells the rich that they are to take pride in their low position. ⁸ **The one who is rich should take pride in his low position . . .** ⁵

Who are the rich? In the original language, **rich** ⁶ means “to be full, satisfied; to have plenty”. ⁹

Take pride means to boast! ⁷ ¹⁰

Low position ⁸ literally means “to push down, be of low esteem; to be humble”. ¹¹

God is not as much concerned about how much money you have as He is about your attitude towards it and what you do with it! ¹²

It all belongs to **God** and He **holds you accountable as a steward**; a manager. To illustrate this concept, Lord

⁵ James 1:10.

⁶ πλούσιος.

⁷ καυχάομαι.

⁸ ταπείνωσις.

Jesus told a story about a rich man who went on an extended journey. ⁹ He gave each of his three servants different amounts of money to invest for him until he returned. When he did return, each of the servants cashed in what they had managed and presented the result of their labor to the master. Jesus ended the story with the master rewarding the successful servant investors but punishing the unsuccessful servant. ¹³ Material possessions, wealth, are a gift from God. **When God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work — this is a gift of God.** ¹⁰ God wants you to at least do something with what He has entrusted you. ¹⁴

God's word advises us on how to use money to please the Lord. We are to *give some to the poor.* ¹¹ ¹⁵

⁹ Matthew 25:14-30.

¹⁰ Ecclesiastes 5:19.

¹¹ Romans 15:26 - For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

We are to *give some to fellow Christians* in need. ¹² ₁₆

We are to *pay preachers* who share the gospel with us and others. ¹³ ₁₇ **We are to *share* our money also *with elders who preach* and teach. ¹⁴ ₁₈**

Chapter 5, verse 3 tells us that when you use your *money selfishly* it *will testify against you at the judgment*. ¹⁵ ₁₉ In verse 5 it adds that it will also *fatten you up for the day of slaughter!* ¹⁶ ₂₀

So, why is earthly wealth really poverty? Because it is only temporary! The following scriptures pretty much nail this down. ₂₁

¹² I Corinthians 16:1 - Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. AND Galatians 6:10 - Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

¹³ I Corinthians 9:14 - In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

¹⁴ I Timothy 5:17 - The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

¹⁵ James 5:3 - Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

¹⁶ James 5:5 - You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

Chapter 1, verses 10 and 11 tells us that **your physical life is just temporary**. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wildflower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business. ²²

Chapter 4, verse 14, says it's just a vapor; ¹⁷ ²³ and chapter 5, verse 2 says **you can't take wealth with you when you die!** ¹⁸ ²⁴

Lord Jesus told the story of a rich farmer who thought he could retire because his crops were harvested in such abundance. ²⁵ He even bragged, **You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.** ¹⁹ ²⁶ **But God said You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.**

¹⁷ James 4:14 - **Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.**

¹⁸ James 5:2 - **Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes.**

¹⁹ Luke 12:19.

Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? ²⁰ The moral of this story is in the final verse of this story, ²⁷ **This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.** ²¹ ²⁸

The perils of wealth are many. Matthew, chapter 19, verse 23 tells us wealth **makes it harder to get into the kingdom of heaven!** ²² ²⁹

Lord Jesus told the story of a farmer at planting season. His application in this parable was that *wealth chokes out the word of God* and makes it unfruitful! ²³

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In fact, the apostle says in First Timothy, chapter 6, verses 9 and 10, that the rich may even *fall into more temptations than the poor*, **People who want to get**

²⁰ Luke 12:20.

²¹ Luke 12:21.

²² Matthew 19:23 - Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

²³ Matthew 13:7 & 22 - Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants . . . The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.³¹ The rich young ruler's wealth turned him away from following Jesus!²⁴³²

Just because you have not been blessed financially as much as someone else doesn't mean you are less special than they. In learning to be content with what you have, you need to also . . .

²⁴ Luke 18:22-23 - When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

II. Realize the Riches of Poverty - v9

Realize the riches of poverty. ³³

The humble are to **take pride in their high position.**

The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position . . . ²⁵ Remember, take pride means to boast. ³⁴

Being humble before the Lord brings certain promises.

You will be greatest in the kingdom of God. Matthew, chapter 18, verse 4, **Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.** ³⁵ This is because *the Lord will lift you up!* ²⁶

Lord Jesus told the story of a rich man, living in luxury, and a poor man, who had been begging in the streets, in which both died. ²⁷ The angels carried the poor man to Abraham's side; supposedly heaven. The rich man went to hell; hades. They could see one

²⁵ James 1:9.

²⁶ James 4:10 - Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

²⁷ Luke 16:19-31.

another and talk to each other. From this story we conclude that the difference between the rich man and the poor man *wasn't their status in their earthly life but their attitudes towards it*. The rich man pleaded for his brothers to be warned of the plight they would have because of their attitudes about how they used their riches. ²⁸ ₃₆

So, how does the Bible tell us to act in a humble way?

Don't *think of yourself more highly than you ought to think*. ²⁹ Romans, chapter 12, verse 33, Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ₃₇

Then, Lord Jesus advised to *take the humblest position, But when you are invited, take the lowest*

²⁸ Luke 16:27 & 31 - "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' . . . He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced . . .'

²⁹ Romans 12:3 - Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ³⁰

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This is followed by Peter’s advise to *be submissive*, **Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older**. ³¹ ³⁹

Here are some biblical examples of humbleness.

The Canaanite woman said, . . . **but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table**. ³² ⁴⁰

The Apostle Paul said, **Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst**. ³³

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In the Lord’s parable, the prodigal son said, **I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I**

³⁰ Luke 14:10.

³¹ I Peter 5:5.

³² Matthew 15:27.

³³ I Timothy 1:15.

have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.³⁴ 42

In another story, Jesus says the tax collector made the same confession each of us should make, **But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner”**.³⁵ 43

Now that you know what you need to realize . . .

III. What’s It Like to Be Content?

What’s it like to be content? 44

Knowing that you obtained your money honestly. Not like the accusation in chapter 5, verse 4, **Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.** 45

³⁴ Luke 15:18-19.

³⁵ Luke 18:13.

First you need to know God commands you to be content. *He made you to be a content person!* ⁴⁶

Proverbs, chapter 15, verse 16, **Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.** ⁴⁷

John the Baptist told Roman *soldiers to be content with their pay.* ³⁶ ⁴⁸

The Apostle Paul told the Philippian believers that he was *content in whatever circumstances he found himself.* ³⁷ ⁴⁹

Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 5, tells you to **Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”** ⁵⁰

What is money for, anyway? ⁵¹

It's for *paying taxes*. Romans, chapter 13, verse 6, **This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.**

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³⁶ Luke 3:14.

³⁷ Philippians 4:11.

It's important to earn enough to *provide for your family needs*. First Timothy, chapter 5, verse 8, **If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.** ⁵³

There's an obligation *to earn money if you can* so you won't need to rely on support from others. Second Thessalonians, chapter 3, verses 10 through 12, **For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."** We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. ⁵⁴

God wants you to store up treasure in heaven **by being generous and ready to share with others in need.** ³⁸ ⁵⁵

³⁸ | Timothy 6:18-19 - Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

God owns everything and gives to you according to His good pleasure. Be thankful! 56

He has promised to provide your needs, but nothing more. That's an occasion for thanksgiving! 57

Often God does provide more than He promised. That's an occasion for rejoicing! 58

Whatever you receive, you will please the Lord by being content with it!

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