



Countercultural Christians-Part 3 Contentment Instead of Materialism Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well I trust that you all had a fantastic Thanksgiving week. I hope you had enough to eat. I clearly had plenty. Actually at our house on Thursday we had a non-traditional Mexican feast for Thanksgiving. Which I can assure you, has all the ability to make you feel just as bloated as any cooked bird could ever do. So I had my fill, but hopefully and most importantly it was Thanksgiving in more than name alone for you and your family. Because we have, don't we, a lot to be thankful for, we do as a church, we do as God's people, we have a lot to be thankful for. I know I can safely to assume that you as an individual have a lot to which to be thankful for. We just have a lot for which to be thankful. And while I think most of us would readily to admit that, I got a lot to be thankful for. We unfortunately aren't left with doing all that thanksgiving with the kind of heart attitude that you might think would be left behind after all this giving of thanks. It doesn't leave us where we ought to be. And maybe it's the odd and bizarre cultural juxtaposition of Thanksgiving and the most sacred shopping day of the year. Maybe that's part of the problem. Because on Thanksgiving you wake up, get the paper, and of course it's chuck full of ads for stuff you don't have, right? And the newscasters and the commercials every seven minutes are reminding you of all the stuff you just need, and you got to have and you got to go out tomorrow. Get to bed early because it starts at four in the morning, and get out there and get all this other stuff. And maybe it's that juxtaposition of those two concepts that makes it hard for us to be left behind with that feeling that you'd think would come in the wake of giving thanks.

While the world conjoins Thanksgiving with this bizarre marketing assault, it's not the way it is in scripture. As a matter of fact the giving of thanks in the Bible is conjoined with an illusive Christian virtue that God expects us to have when we give thanks. It's the illusive Christian virtue called contentment. I mean really you would expect it to go hand in hand with thanksgiving but often it doesn't. We say, "God thank you for everything you've given me, now I got a few more things I just got to have." And that doesn't seem to make sense, at least from a Biblical perspective. If you have your Bibles, I want you to open up to Hebrews chapter 13 as we take this a little out of order we'll get back to the schedule next week. We're not missing verse 4 for those of you that really wanted a sermon on fornicators and adulterers on Thanksgiving weekend. I hate to disappoint you, that'll come next week. But I think this is a good tone setting sermon for the season that we're entering into that's all about shopping and presents and credit cards and all of that.

While the world is busy assaulting us and telling us we need new cell phones, different clothes and a new car for the holidays. Perhaps this could be the most important kind of virtue to focus on at this time of year. I mean it's a good thing for us to make the ambition of our hearts as Christians and before by the way we look at this passage and you think well this is some religious platitude that just can't be fully practiced in our day, not in the real world because you can't live this way in our world. Just recognize that all these commands are given for people and God assumes we're going to be living in the real world. He knows you're going to be invited to some party for which you'll need a present and you'll have to go buy it. He recognizes that your cell



phone is going to die and you'll need a new one. He knows that your mode of transportation at some point will wear out and you're going to have to go get another one. He's all about the real world. God is not checked out to the realities of the world that we live in, it not much different from the world the first century church lived in. They needed stuff to live and we need stuff to live. So just know that the principles and the Christian virtue of contentment it doesn't necessarily lead to a life in a monastery or a vow of poverty, as a matter of fact that's a bit of an abuse of this principle.

The biblical principal doesn't take you necessarily there, you can fully practice and apply this principle and live in the real world because the issue of contentment or it's antithetical problem of sin that we often call materialism really doesn't have anything to do with the amount of your paycheck and it's really not necessarily tied to the size of your home and you may not believe it but it's not necessarily connected to the kind of car you drive because materialism or contentedness in our hearts it's really a matter of our hearts. It's what goes on inside. You're either content in your heart which may or may not be reflected by an amount of money that you have or you're involved in something in your heart that the Old Testament called coveting and the New Testament like to call the love of money and that's going on and it's all something here. You can make minimum wage and have the problem or not have the problem. You could make a lot of money and either be contented or you could be covetous. There's no real necessary connection. So don't think that as we enter into this discussion. And also let me correct another problem when we talk about contentment. A lot of people think that God somehow just wants to keep us needy and poor and that's not the point either. You do recognize that commands about not loving money and being content really, not only do they bring honor to God, not only does it keep our priorities straight, it'll keep your heart out of trouble. Because the road as 1 Timothy 6 says of loving stuff is going to lead to all kinds of problems in your life. You want to avoid this because it's an addiction. You realize that. And it's an addiction that you and I need to avoid. It's not external, it's internal.

So we do some looking at the heart here as we read these passages. We're going to do some diagnostics as it relates to what's going on in our spirit. But the scripture says this as it relates to our hearts, verse number 5. Hebrews 13:5 says, keep yourselves free from the love of money. I mean we've got a great play on words going here in this text. We talked about in verses 1 through 3, we talk about loving our brothers, we even talk about loving outsiders, phileo, connected with these other words, and here we have another use of phileo as a compound. And don't love literally the word is silver, which for them was their coins were made out of. The problem with even reading that is it creates a caricature in our mind as somebody on a pile of silver coins kind of tossing them in the air, you know. Getting your paycheck in ones and kind of bringing it on your bed and kind of laying on it, you know. That's not the point, you realize. And yet it's a caricature which kind of frees us with impunity from the problem. But recognize it's not about loving a gold bullion bar or hugging hordes of cash. It's an issue with the heart, something in my heart.

And he says the inverted virtue, that's the sin, here's the virtue, verse number 5 and be content with what you have. That even sounds good, there's something good and peaceful and serene about contentment, the concept, the word. And now here's some of the solution, here's some of

the keys to doing it. Because God has said, here's something that overrides all of this, attraction to the material stuff that becomes an addiction. He says, I'm never going to leave you. This is a quote of Deuteronomy 31. And I never forsake you. A repeated often principal in scripture. Jesus echoed these "and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." I'm going to be with you. I will spiritually walk with you through this life. And then he says in verse number 6, the writer of Hebrews says that ought to lead to confidence in our hearts. So we can say with confidence, and now he quotes Psalm 118, and we can repeat the Psalmist lyrics and say, "The Lord is my helper, I won't be afraid, what can man do to me?" Rhetorical question, nothing. I'm going to be okay. That is a kind of lifestyle, characterized by peace as it relates to material things, it's called contentment. The sin is the love of money, covetousness, materialism we often call it. And we've got to avoid it.

Number one on your outline, before I fill this in; let's look at Jesus' parallel passage. Turn with me to Matthew 6, okay, because before I give you this word I want to show you where we're getting it. Matthew chapter 6, Jesus in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, and he's talking about materialism as we often call it, but he doesn't use the word coveting, he doesn't use the word greed, he doesn't use the word materialism, he uses a different word, which is the indicative feeling that goes with the problem. It is what your heart will feel like if you have the problem of loving money, which won't be characterized by lying on beds of cash. It's a heart problem and it feels like this. Are you ready, Matthew chapter 6? Are you there? Look at verse 25.

Matthew 6:25. Therefore, Jesus says, I tell you, do not. What's the word? Worry about your life. Circle that word. That's what materialism; the love of money feels like. It inevitably leads to a concern, a worry about the things of this life. Now for that agrarian society he goes right to the issues that are basic for sustenance in their life. He says, don't worry about what you're going to eat, bottom of verse 25. Don't worry about what you're going to drink. Don't worry about your body and what you're going to wear. Is not life more important than food and the body more important than clothes? Isn't it just more than that? Now for us, in our day, I mean Orange County in the twenty first century you could replace some of those things that we worry about that are related to material things, right? We worry about our housing, we worry about our retirement plans, we worry about our investments, we worry about the markets and all that. What are you doing? Isn't life different, more than that? Isn't it distinct from that? Your life does not consist of these things. Oh I know you have to interface with them, but when you're worrying about them it shows an undue interest in them and that reveals a problem and that is in scripture what we call materialism. It's the love of money. This is the indicative feeling we have. Okay so number one on your outline, just to be diagnostic about it. You and I, to define what we're fighting here, let's put it this way, we need to fight the anxiety of materialism because that's what it feels like.

1. Fight the Anxiety of Materialism

You're always worrying about stuff. Are my investments going to make it? Are we going to make it next month? Are we going to be able to retire when we want? Is this going to work out, is this investment going to be profitable? It's an undue concern for those things that takes my mind, and here's the word that is translated worry. It's often translated anxiety. I've given you this word study many times. It comes from the root word meridzomai, and meridzomai is the Greek word



to divide. And your mind is divided. It's like you can't concentrate on life over here because you're worried about what I'm going to wear, what I'm going to eat, what I'm going to put on, what my 401K is doing, what my investments are doing, are we going to make that new client work out, are we going to be able to get that summer home, what about vacation next summer, our minds are everywhere, they're scattered. Meridzomai, worry, anxiety, feels like that, our minds are pulled in different directions. And God doesn't want us to live that way. And he gives an illustration, don't misunderstand it, in verse 26, but the illustration is about brainless birds, bird brains, right? Birds that fly around in the sky, and they have no investments, they have no retirement plans, they don't even have a refrigerator. And Jesus says this, "Look at the birds of the air, they're not very bright" He says, "they don't sow, they don't reap, they don't store away in barns", now here's the principle, "yet your heavenly Father feeds them." They get it, at end of the day their bellies are full. God takes care of them. And he says, here's a rhetorical question. He says, "You are much more valuable than they are, I mean, aren't you?" Come on, think about this. God cares more about you than the sparrows hopping around at McDonalds waiting to get a dropped French Fry. He cares more about you and yet He makes sure they get their fill.

Now again don't take this principle the wrong way. It's not about being irresponsible. Great, I'm not going to do anything. I'm just going to live life irresponsibly. It's not a license to irresponsibility as we'll see. But it is a principle that if God loves the birds enough to take care of them, won't He take care of you? Why are you worried about it? And Jesus is trying to free us from this problem. And he says, worrying by the way, doesn't do much, okay. Verse 27, who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Worry is stupid and that's basically what the Bible is teaching. It doesn't do anything. Now action may do something and it may be helpful and prudent to do somethings but worrying doesn't. And most of our problem as it relates to the love of material things is that it causes our hearts to be worried. And we worry about getting all these things buttoned up. And the Bible says it just doesn't make any sense. Verse 28, why worry about clothes, he gives another illustration, look at the lilies of the field, they're growing they don't labor, they don't spin, and they don't worry about what they're going to wear, and yet Solomon and all of his splendor wasn't even coming close to being dressed like one of these. And he was trying real hard. If God knows how to clothe the grass of the field, which is here today gone tomorrow thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you. Now here's the real root problem. Underscore this phrase, oh you of little faith. That's the problem.

You don't trust me, God is saying through his son. You don't trust me. You don't have faith. You don't have confidence in God who, what's the context, cares about you. And you're worried about stuff? Why worry about stuff? Don't you know God cares for you? Isn't that the flavor and feel, we just read it in Hebrews 13. God will never leave you, he'll never forsake you. Why are you so concerned about all this? The concern of scripture for us, sorry pardon the pun there, is that we are people that don't have this concern. The issue and the objective for your life is that we're free from that burden of concern. And so we should take this command seriously and recognize that if we let our hearts be consumed with these issues of what about this, and what if that, and what if that doesn't work out, we will by necessity grab, because we don't have faith in God, grab these things, pull them close as our life preservers. We will put our faith in them and when we do, here's a passage for you to jot down, Ecclesiastes 5:10, you will never be secure enough in those. In other words you will learn to love money and you'll have to have more of it, to feel secure. And



the more you love it, the more you'll have to love it, that's where we get to this concept of addiction; you'll be addicted to having more. And if you love money, here's how Solomon put it in Ecclesiastes 5, you'll never have enough. And whoever loves wealth will never be satisfied. And some of you know what that's like. We certainly know people like that if we're not having that problem now, you'll never be satisfied.

So the issue is to change the trust in our hearts, to cast out and fight this fearful anxiety because the problem with money is you can't trust it, right? Some of us can stand up testify to that. Come to the microphone and tell your story. How many of us know the riches to rags stories of people that had it made and then it got unmade, right? That happening, I just heard one from the back here, someone telling me another story. I've known people who have lived on the top of the hill in La Canada and in a matter of time with everything going their way and all the money to spare, throwing \$100 tips around; they couldn't rub two nickels together in a matter of time. Why? 1 Timothy chapter 6 says money is uncertain. And that's the great principle, and by the way I'm quoting verse number 17. 1 Timothy 6:17, it says so don't put your hope there; put your hope in God. And that's the whole point of this passage. You want to free yourself from this obsession, this engrossment of material things; you just got to learn you can't trust it. It's not trustworthy. It's here today gone tomorrow. Not only in the span of your life will you take nothing with you, as it says in 1 Timothy 6, within the journey of our life it's here and then it's gone, right? We think we're doing great. "Whoa this is wonderful, look at the investment of our home, and it's going through the roof, well now not so good, actually I'm upside down, got the repo man around the corner." What's with this money thing, you can't trust it, it's not a constant.

How do we know we have this problem? Well I've gotten rid of the caricature of throwing money around and getting my checks cashed in ones and rolling on it in my bed, you don't have that problem. I don't know do I really trust money? I don't I trust God more. Well here's a symptom of knowing that you trust in stuff. Are you ready? Jot this reference down we won't take time to turn there but you know the Sunday School story. It's found in 2 Samuel chapter 24. 2 Samuel 24 and the first time you read this I'm sure like me you scratched your head and you said, "I don't get it". And you read it 5 or 6 times and you still say, "I don't get it." You've got to take the broad view of David's life in 2 Samuel 24 to start to understand the problem with this last and dark and unfortunate chapter in David's life.

David at the end of his life, when he's ready to had his kingdom over to his son, sends out the command to his commanders, and of course he's the king, he's got an army, you know a standing army waiting to respond to any problems. And he makes his commander go out and number the troops. Do you remember the story now? Go number the troops. And you remember the Bible says God got angry at this whole thing. For counting? The sin of counting? I don't understand that. You read that 10 times and go, "I don't understand." Why is God so upset with David counting his fighting men? Why? And until you get a big view of David's life and you start to see that the sin was not counting, there's no sin of counting what you've got, right? The sin was it was indicative of a sinful heart that no longer trusted in God the way it did in earlier days. Was he trusting in his armor when he went out and stood in the shadow of Goliath, try and kill him that day? Oh, he didn't even wear armor. Why? Well it really didn't fit and he knew that I come to you in the name of the Lord and the battle is God's. Didn't he write songs with those lyrics in the Psalms? The

battle is the Lord's. He says a horse and a chariot it's a vain hope, it's a vain hope, because the battle is the Lord's. Remember that? And here's Goliath saying, "You come against me with sticks and stones." And David said, "No I don't, I come against you in the name of Yahweh." Remember that? He came with trust in God, implicit trust in God. If he was going to win a battle, he said "God you're going to have to be with me. I'm trusting you." The end of his life though he's ready to turn the kingdom over and now he's saying, "How many men do we have?" If Egypt comes against my son, what's going to happen? How many men do we have? What's the army look like? What? What are you doing? He used to tell Jonathan, his best friend, remember this? This is from 1 Samuel 14 verse 6 what a great statement. He says to Jonathan, he says, "Don't you know that Yahweh can save, whether it's with many or a few?" He's like slapping John, come on, what are you talking about? God can do it. Aww let me tell you a story about the time I killed the big guy. Of course he knew that. The end of his life though he starts going, "Accountants, accountants how much do we have? Are we going to be safe?" [Vocalized wrong buzzer sound] Now again I know this is a military example but it slides right over into the financial world for you and me, doesn't it? The question is and I know Christian accountants aren't going to like this, but the question is how often are you accounting for what you have? How often do you asses and reassess your provisions? Put it that way. How often are you just poring over, how's it doing, what's going on here? If you are obsessed with the accounting of your stuff, you don't even have to be obsessed because I don't think David was obsessed with it. But if it is indicative of the fact that you're trusting more in your retirement fund than the God who will walk you into retirement then you've got a problem and you probably love money. The Bible says that's the problem. You shifted your faith from God to your 401K. You get that? And the Bible says that's not good. The symptom is how often you asses and reassess what we have. Be careful I know Christian accountants will e-mail me this week, you put us out of a job, but you know what? We go overboard in this regard and it reflects our trust in the wrong thing.

How do we fix it? We're suppose to fight the anxiety of materialism, how do we fix it? This one is a bit wordy. A bit philosophical but I think you'll catch the principle here. Let me give you a passage that you can do your homework on later. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 31. 1 Corinthians 7:31 Here's a statement again, a restatement of the fact that we're going to live in the real world. You're going to have to buy a present, you're going to have to buy a new phone, you have to buy a new car, you're going to have to deal with the things of this world. But Paul makes this distinction in 1 Corinthians 7, he says, "If you buy stuff it's as though it's not yours to keep. If you use the things of this world" he says, "as though not engrossed in them" Which is a good English word for that word. It's an interesting word. But don't be engrossed in them. That's the principle. Now here's what I want to say because the better stuff is better than the not so good stuff. How's that for a sentence? Homiletical award for that one, right? The better stuff is better than the not so good stuff. I mean I'd rather have the iPhone than that cruddy little Erickson flip phone, right? That would be better. So that's good stuff. And here's the problem, the better the stuff is the more attractive it is to us, right? I'd rather drive that midnight blue Porsche Carrera than my Tahoe. My used Tahoe. I would rather do that. There's more appeal to that, it's a more attractive car. It's a sexy car, right? I mean think about the analogies we use there, because those things, the better things in life, the 7000 square foot house on an acre overlooking the Pacific Ocean is a better house than the condo in Aliso Viejo. It's better, it's more attractive there's more appeal to that so here's a principle. If you want to guard your heart against the anxiety of materialism you have to

admit that the material things of this world are attractive in increasing measure and you have to, here's the protection, you have to create a dispassionate buffer around your heart. You have to create some kind of dispassionate buffer around your heart against, to guard you against, the attraction of material things. Now this will be balanced as the message unfolds because our passage is going to give us more to work with but I need to be able to say, "You know what? I can appreciate the fact that the iPhone is better than my Erickson phone but I'm not going to be, here's how Paul put it, "engrossed in it". What does that mean? Not going to allow my heart to go, "[vocalized panting] gotta have, gotta have" Which we've all been tempted to do with those new phones. Don't do that, have a dispassionate buffer. There are attractive things in this world that you can't be engrossed in. Are you catching the analogy now? You have to put a dispassionate buffer, doesn't mean that the things of the world aren't attractive, doesn't mean the material issues of the world can't engross you, they can, but don't let it happen. Put a dispassionate buffer. Is a kind of like, "okay whatever, yeah that's better." I'm not going to be a fool and I'm not going to deny reality I'm just going to have that dispassionate buffer around my heart. I'm going to protect my heart. Yeah, that's great but, you know, whatever. You know it is great, it's better, but I'm not going to be engrossed in that. It's a layer of self protection. A dispassionate layer of self protection. That's a little wordy, this one is simpler okay.

Second way I can fight the anxiety is the principle from Philippians chapter 4 verse number 6, remember that? Okay, here's how I put it. Replace anxiety with prayer, is that simple. Replace anxiety with prayer, it's really easy. It's simple, not easy. It's hard, I admit it. But when you feel the anxiety, what if, what's going to happen, are we going to have enough, what about this and we really need that, our kids are grown, we need a bigger house. When you feel the anxiety, replace it with prayer, because the Bible says, not just about the general issues of life, but about financial issues as well. Be anxious for, what does Philippians 4:6 say? Only the big things. Is that what it says? Be anxious for, nothing. That's pretty all inclusive. But in everything with prayer and petition with thanksgiving, that's an interesting line, let your request be made known to God. So take the energy of anxiety, because we're all going to be tempted to feel it and transition that into a purpose to pray. I'm going to pray. Are you concerned about your retirement fund? Are you concerned that you put all your marbles in your house and now your house isn't worth what it was worth. Here's the deal, okay? Take the anxiety that that may produce and turn that into prayer. God hears my request. I don't want to be living under a freeway underpass when we retire. So God, please don't let that happen. Take your concern and turn it into prayer. That's very practical. So dispassionate layer toward the lure of material things. When I feel the anxiety coming on I'm going turn it into a prayer request and make that prayer request clear to God. Which often has a purifying effect on your motives, right? Because sometimes we realize what am I worried about sometimes it's stuff that we really shouldn't be wanting. That's another sermon.

Thirdly, we need to restate the principle of this passage. And that is I don't trust in stuff I trust in God. We need to state that and restate it. I don't trust in stuff, I trust in God. It needs to come out of your mouth. I don't trust in stuff. When the reports come back on your investments I don't trust in stuff. I trust in God. Say it, say it before you open the envelope. Say it before you get the appraisal. Say it before you see if you're going to get a raise for next year. Just say it to God. I don't trust in stuff, I trust in God. My ultimate confidence is in what God does not what in or how much money I have. I don't have confidence in money. That needs to be stated and restated. Because if

you don't state the truth of that the feelings of the lure and attraction that says, "Come on, trust me" of money is going to take over. State and restate your ultimate confidence in God and your lack of confidence in stuff. Proverbs 11:4 is a great statement. It's the ultimate statement of it, but money ultimately is very limited in what it can do and we need to recognize that. Fight the anxiety materialism; keep your lives free from the love of money, that's another way to say it. How do I know if I have it? We've looked at that. How do I remedy it? A couple of simple things but here comes the real antidote to the problem. It's found here in the middle of verse number 5.

There's two things here for us in the bottom of verse 5 that will help us solve this problem. If I want to be free from that kind of engrossment in material things that love of money as the Bible calls it, that covetousness of the Old Testament, that materialism that we often talk about then you need to, two things be content with what you have and you need to affirm this statement. I know that God will never leave me and never forsake me. There's two things here. There is some kind of focus on the things that I have, a contentment in what I have and a focus on who I have. I have God and He's never leaving me. Let's jot it down this way, number 2 and we'll unpack it. You and I we need to celebrate, that might be a big word I'll try to justify it here in a minute. Celebrate what and who you have.

2. Celebrate What & Who You Have

Because you have some stuff and you have someone that should change everything about the fears of what if and I don't know if we'll have enough. You have some stuff and you have someone that is the antidote to the problem and the temptation to be anxious about stuff. Let's start with the first one which unfortunately is going to jar all you spiritual masochists and you know who you are. You like the dark side of Christianity. You like to feel bad. Here's a point that's going to make you feel good. I'm sorry but this is a positive statement because notice what it doesn't say and I know a lot of people read this passage and they read the wrong thing. They think it says be content with what you don't have, right? Be content that you don't have something. Be satisfied that you don't have the 7 thousand square foot house on an acre overlooking the ocean. Just be satisfied that you don't have that. Is that what it says? It's not a statement about doing something with what I don't have, it's a statement about doing something with what I do have. Be content with what you have. Now that's an interesting part of this. Part of the solution to materialism is a focus a Biblical focus and it's called contentment on what I have. And to up that word from satisfaction to something else that I've justified as celebration. Let me take you to 1 Timothy chapter 6, I've already quoted it, but let's look at that passage in context and see if we can't justify the word celebrate. I know it's a big word, but you and I need to have some kind of attitude toward the things you do have not a focus on the things you don't have and that's important, because materialism is all about getting you to think about what you don't have. Isn't that what the commercials are all about?

Hey, you don't have one of these but you need one. And they want to get your focus on the stuff you don't have. God is trying to get your focus back on the stuff that you do have and that is the incessant battle that takes place in our heart. 1 Timothy 6 look at verse number 17, I quoted it earlier and you wrote down the reference perhaps, but let's read the whole verse. Command those who are rich in this present world and before you roll your eyes, well that ain't me,



remember the context. First century church in Ephesus, now they're not all poor and begging, but you know, you probably got a lot more than they do and we've got a lot more than the rest of the country, right? The economy of California it's ahead of Great Britain, I mean you've heard all the stats. We are rich people, we got plenty of stuff, so let's at least let this passage speak to us. If we got more stuff than we need, that's what rich means. Those who are rich in this present world, stop being rich, and at least not enjoy it if you are. Is that what it says? It doesn't say anything about that. It does warn us against arrogance, and it warns us against what we've already dealt with, putting our hope in wealth. It's uncertain, don't trust in that, put your hope in God. Haven't we not dealt with that? That's the first thing, it's an attitude in my heart.

Then it says this, God, who I'm trusting in, richly provides us with everything for our, now circle the last word, what's the word? It's hard for you spiritual pessimists. What is it? Enjoyment. Enjoyment? God who richly provide us with everything for our enjoyment. Did you circle that word? In the margin of your Bible write this down, "2X NT". Two times in the New Testament. Only two times you'll find this Greek word in the New Testament. Enjoyment. You'll find that English word but the word that translates enjoyment is only in here twice. Now you're wondering where the other place is, right? We just read it not long ago. Keep your finger here because we're going to come back to the end of 1 Timothy. But turn to Hebrews 11 and I want to show you a startling contrast of the use of the New Testament vocabulary. In this passage we're told that God has provided stuff for our enjoyment, the stuff that we have, if we have more than we need God has provided that, that we might enjoy it. Now that word, I don't want you to think it's some kind of weird spiritual word that really doesn't mean what it sounds like it means. Let me show you the only other use of this word in the New Testament. It's Hebrews chapter 11 it's in the discussion about Moses drop down to verse 25. And Moses is discussed in verse 25 as choosing, it says, "He choose to be mistreated along with the people of God, that's the Israelites that he was suppose to deliver, rather than, now bracket this phrase, "to enjoy the pleasures" bracket that, there's the word translated, this is the only other place you'll find it in the New Testament, enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. Now that's why we don't like this word, because it's usually attached in our minds to bad things. We're picturing Moses, now he's got all the advantages, the nicest camels to drive, all the nice stuff in Egypt, and he's going to step out and say, "I'm not going to take that, I'm going to lead the people out of Egypt." And we say, "See there"

Now number one, it would have been sin for Moses to lay back on a cush life in Egypt when God had called him to lead the people of Israel out. Secondly we can assume there's a layer of enjoyment and pleasure in Egypt that was not godly. It was carousing in sin and drunkenness and all this other stuff, immorality; we can assume that was a part of it. But the feeling that you get when you read the phrase, enjoy the pleasures of, recognize that that's the word that Paul uses over here in 1 Timothy chapter 6 by saying God is provided stuff in your life that is for your enjoyment. Now again that's taking contentment to another level. But it's the concept of be content with what you have. Let's add another Biblical layer, let's enjoy what we have. Let's celebrate what we have because the focus of the world says look at what you don't have. And all I'm saying is, great you don't have the best stuff, I understand it, I don't either, but I got some stuff and that's the first thing in trying to solve the problem of having to have more. Recognize what you have. I have an old used Tahoe. I would certainly enjoy driving home a brand new Porsche



that would be better, right? But my heart has a dispassionate layer against those things, it's alright I don't have it, it's cool. But what I do have, should not be tarnished by what I don't have, right? What I want to do is I want to sit in my Tahoe because here's the great thing, it's not like my first car when I had to do this to [hand cranking gesture] get the window down. What's really cool about my used Tahoe is I got a button and down comes the window. It makes a little noise, [vocalized squeek], but it comes down. And that's cool and that's worth celebrating and I enjoy that. I don't have an iPhone, right? Most of you don't have the iPhone yet. It's easy to be attracted to the sexy allure of the iPhone but you've got a phone, don't you? Here's the deal, you don't have the iPhone but you got that old Erickson phone and it still works, so call somebody and enjoy your phone. Okay? See? You don't got the latest and greatest, it's okay. If you do have the iPhone, enjoy it and we won't feel the attraction to it. We'll try to maintain ourselves. You're not eating caviar, you're eating Spagetti-Os. Put some cheese and some pepper on top of those Spagetti-Os and they're pretty darn good. I know that sounds gross to you, try it. The point is you don't have the best stuff, I get it. You look at the guy down the street, he's got better stuff than you. Materialism is the focus on what you don't have as apposed to the focus on what you do have. And the temptation is to look at what we have, well it would be a whole lot better if I just had a new stereo in the old Tahoe. You know what I'm saying. Try and focus on the things you have, stop seeing the things you have as just an advertisement for something else that you don't have. Focus on what you do have and enjoy that because it's been given to you for your enjoyment.

One more passage, I said we'd go back to the end of 1 Timothy. Go to 1 Timothy chapter 4. And I jokingly talked about you spiritual pessimists but you do understand that it is a sin. Not only is it a sin, it is a doctrine of demons according to this passage. Look at the context here, there are false teachers out there basically saying, "God wants you kind of unhappy and in this case deprived of the pleasures of life." And Paul wants to point that out that's a big time sin. Verse 1, the Spirit, Holy Spirit capital S, clearly said that in latter times some will abandon the faith and they'll follow deceiving spirits. Does that sound good or bad? Sounds bad. Things taught by demons, that's really bad. Such teachings by the way come through hypocritical liars, they don't do what they say they're preaching and their consciences are seared as with a hot iron, these are bad guys. What do they teach? What are the teachings taught by demons? Well here it is they teach stuff like this. They forbid people to marry, see we dealt with this in 1 Corinthians 7. God wouldn't want us to do that. Here's the deal, that to deprive someone of that. And say well that's not godly that's wrong. And then he says, and they order people to abstain from certain foods, right? Usually the good foods because here's the truth, God has created them to be received with thanksgiving, interesting layer, by those who believe and know the truth. That is such a great passage, I love that passage. That means that prime rib was created for us. See, did you get that? When you walk into Ruth Chris you see someone eating your steak, you say it wasn't really created for you sir. It's not created for non-Christians. The good stuff is created for us. Those of us who believe and know the truth. That's just a great statement because I know that God creates and gives good things to His children and He'd like us to enjoy them. When you get a good gift to your kid at Christmas do you want him to go, "No I don't want that. That's not, I don't want to enjoy any of that". You do love your kids, right? You like to give them something they enjoy. God is the same way. And He'd love for you to enjoy the things He gives and the Bible makes it clear that the things that God has created, verse number 4 are good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with, here's a good word, thanksgiving because it is consecrated, set apart, by the word

of God and by prayer. God wants you to have the right attitude toward the stuff that he gives you. You might want to put in the margin, Deuteronomy chapter 8, because the fear is when He gives you good stuff you'll start focusing on the gift not the giver. The fear of Deuteronomy 8 is when you get all the good stuff you'll forget about God that's the temptation, but when He gives you a good gift and you can see the tension in God heart. He doesn't want you to love the stuff, but He loves you and when He gives you something, it may not be the best, but what He gives you He'd like you to enjoy. And that is one of the best prescriptions for keeping your heart from focusing on all the things you don't have. Celebrate what you have because God has given you a lot and He'd like you to enjoy it.

But more importantly and most profoundly back to Hebrews 13 verse 5. You need to celebrate who you have and I don't care like David said if you're mother and father forsake you, here's what you've got if you're a child of God. I'm talking to Christians now, you have God Himself. Do you realize that? You have God and God has promised to walk with you through this life and He puts it this way in Deuteronomy 31, I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. Now you're worried about your retirement, you're worried about having that kid and can we afford college, you're worried about can I afford the next set of tires on my car. Here's the deal, God loves you and He is not going to leave you when your tires go bald. He's not going to leave you when you're too old to work, He's not going to leave you when you're kids are in college. God is going to walk with you through all of that. And that's who you have. And if you have God you have the one who owns Psalm 50 the cattle on a thousand hills. And if you need a few head of steer at some point He can redirect those. The point is God owns everything, right? I made the mistake not to long ago we're at Disneyland and I handed my kid a 5 dollar bill. You can see how foolish this was because he said, "Dad I really want a corn dog and I'm hungry and my stomach hurts and I want a corn dog and I'm going to go over here and get a corn dog and a coke. Can I do that?" and I said "Fine, but we're over here and we're busy right now" It was like, I don't know, 200 yards away and I handed him a 5 dollar bill and I said, "Yeah, go." Der and of course he didn't know any better, he went with his 5 dollar bill runs through the crowd, he's gone for awhile and I'm sitting here dealing with the rest of the family and here comes my 4th grader back with big tears in his eyes and a 5 dollar bill. I said, "Where've you been". "I went to get in line, it wasn't enough." You know they went, beep beep beep, \$19.25 please or you know whatever a corn dog and a coke costs at Disneyland. And here's the deal, had I been standing in line with Junior, think about this now, and he gets to the front and hands him the 5 dollar bill and the guy goes, no I'm sorry \$19.25, he may not have it in his hand but Dad who's standing there, he's got a pocket full of plastic, Dad does, right? And they take that at Disneyland by the way. You think my son is going to get a meal? He's going to eat. He's going to be taken care of if he just sticks with his Dad. See the deal? And if you're thinking, I don't know I don't know if we'll have enough to retire, we have to live under a freeway overpass, right? Are you going to retire with God in your life? Do you think God is going to go, "blah, sorry, I'm sorry" No, God's going to take care of you. God will walk you through the rest of your life and he'll take your hand in His. I know that's poetic and it's a little Hallmark for you, but it's Biblical.

Let me give you a passage. Psalm 37 this one is worth turning to. Psalm 37 they're all worth turning to but this one we'll take the time for. Psalm 37 take a look at this text. Stick with God, He owns the planet. You're afraid about your future? Don't be. Look at verse 23 of Psalm 37. If

Yahweh delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm. Look at verse 24, though he stumble, now this isn't the prosperity gospel, I'm not pitching for a TV program, right? You understand that? I'm not saying that, this is not prosperity. There's going to be seasons of financial trouble. I guarantee it, we'll all have those. Okay? That's going to happen but here's the deal. All your investments may not come back like the guy says on the other channel. But here's the deal, you're not going to fall. You may have some things crash, and your house may not be worth anything, you may have to move into a condo, I don't know what your life is like, but you're not going to fall. Why? Here it is, underline it. Yahweh upholds him, with his hand. Do you see that? And now David testifies, I was young, now I'm old yet I've never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. Never seen it. God doesn't do that. Matters of fact invertedly verse 26, here's what I find is a pattern, they always are generous and they lend freely and their children will be blessed. Not the prosperity gospel but it's the principle of Jesus. Seek first the kingdom of God, Matthew 6:33, and all these things will be added to you. Don't focus on the stuff, focus on the relationship, hold His hand, focus on that relationship, know that He's going to walk with you through your kid's college education, through your next pair of tires, through your retirement, and say, "I'm going to trust God and let all the other stuff work itself out. I'm not going to be sitting there counting my money every night. I'm not going to be looking over my portfolio every week. I don't have to do that, I'm not worried about that". God will never leave you or forsake you. David says, "I've never seen God's people forsaken by God" They're not living under the freeway overpass, God takes care of them. You got to believe that, right? You got to know that's the truth of the Bible.

So what are you worried about? Why are you worrying about stuff? Verse 6, Hebrews chapter 13. Just to connect both of these quotes I guess we should read them both again. He's never going to leave us and never forsake us. That's the foundational principle. So we say with confidence, now it's something about my heart and I love that it's kind of like another layer on top of contentment. I've got confidence now and the confidence is future tense. The Lord is my helper. Not only now, but he says, "I'm not going to be afraid of what man can do to me, I'm looking ahead here and I'm seeing number one, God's not going to leave me, God is my helper and He's walking with me through the future, I'm not going to fear, that's the opposite of contentment and I'm not worried about what man can do to me. Which again is an issue I think in our hearts, it may be translated a little differently in our day but you're worried about the effects of "What If". And the point is you don't have to worry about that. You can look at the future with confidence and that should be the test, if the test of the other is doing diagnostics on my heart to see if I love money you want the test to see whether or not you're trusting God with your stuff then you should be able to, number 3, you should be able to be confident about the future.

3. Be Confident About Your Future

You ought to be confident about your future. You ought to be able to say, "I'm confident about my retirement, I'm confident about my kids college education, I'm confident about the needs of our family, I'm confident about our housing situation. Well but it doesn't look good, but you're trusting God and you're recognizing that God is your, circle the word, your what? Helper, do you see that? That's an interesting word too, without going into another word study here, it's not the common word in the New Testament for helper, it's a different word. It's a unique word. It's a

word that is used of someone who is ill and desperately wants to get healthy and calls out to a doctor. That's how it's used in classical Greek not used very often in the New Testament. And it's someone who's doing what they can to try and get healthy but they need the assistance of a doctor. And don't get this wrong this is not some kind of synergistic collaboration and we get credit for it. God is the one who gets credit for it. Deuteronomy chapter 8, but you are having God help you in life which assumes, let's put it this way, and I know that sounds synergistic, I'm not trying to say that. I'm not trying to say that God isn't the author of all things, He is, but here's the deal the imagery painted for us here is that you're not sleeping in and slacking off, that you are doing your part. You can be confident about the future not because now, oh great, I learned a message that we don't have to worry about the future and that's what our pastor said. Don't worry about your retirements, don't count your bank statements, and don't even reconcile the checking account. And let's sleep in the hammock all for the rest of our lives, because that's what the pastor said. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 6. You can be confident about your future because God will help you through this and by that the imagery here is it assumes that you're being prudent because I know what some people are saying some of you Christian accountants are ending your slouching period now, you're liking this section, teaching responsibility at this point. But here's the deal, the call to contentment is not a license to irresponsibility. The call to contentment assumes that I'm fully trusting God but I'm also doing the work. Here's what it says, this is not a contradiction the hyperbole if you will of Matthew chapter 6 is against the backdrop of good solid Old Testament teaching on work and prosperity. Let's put it in context in Proverbs 6 verse number 6. Proverbs 6:6, go to the ant, do your parents say this to you on your summer vacation? You sluggard. "Go to the ant, you sluggard!" Consider it's ways and be wise. It has, verse 7, no commander, no overseer, no ruler, and yet it stores its provision in summer and it gathers its food in harvest. Track this now, does that sound like a contradiction now about the bird brains flying around now? Tell them not to worry about it, they don't have a refrigerator. They don't store up anything there's no pantry for the birds, God expects you to be a little smarter than the birds. He expects you to be a few notches above the ant, right? And the ant is smart enough to do its work and to prepare for the future. I'm saying don't worry about your kids college education, am I saying don't save for it? Is that what Pastor Mike taught? No, you need to prepare because the ant is even preparing for the future. Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways, and be wise. Its got no commander, no one has to crack the whip over its back, yet its storing up its provisions, it's gathering its food. How long will you lie there lazy people, verse number 9, when will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man, you won't be able to resist it. You're going to be poor.

I don't get it, you taught the opposite this morning. Here's the layer of responsibility, I can say about my future, God is my helper. I'm going to give Him all the credit if anything works out, Deuteronomy 8, because He gives me the ability to earn wealth. That's what Deuteronomy 8 says. But being my helper in this thing, even though He gets all the credit for this, does not give me a license to lay back with my feet up on the desk. As a matter of fact, invertedly even in the New Testament teaches this, we ought to be distinct in how hard we work. You understand that right? The Bible says that when the rest of the world slacks off at work, we ought to be the hardest workers. Christians should be distinctive because of their hard work, their planning and their prudence. Do they trust in their planning and their prudence? Do they trust in their money, do

they trust in their savings? No, they don't and they're distinctive in that. That's the amazing thing, they're the ones that save and work hard and yet they don't even trust in that. See the distinction both sides of this track? And you and I need to say that's what the Bible is teaching us. We don't sit around and do nothing. We have to work hard. We have to plan, we have to save. We have to be prudent. Don't waste all your money on stuff you can't afford. That's a good reminder as we enter the holiday season, because that wouldn't be prudent. And if you want to trust God for your future, He's expecting that you're going to do your work. You want to be confident about the future? The confidence ingredient says I'm trusting in God because He is my helper, I'm not afraid of what man can do to me. I don't fear. Why? Because I'm working hard and I'm trusting God, those go hand in hand in scripture.

Let me prove it to you, one more reference. Go to the end of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 31 the classic passage on the noble wife. Remember this passage? The wife of noble character it says. How rare she is and how praised she should be. There's one line in Proverbs 31 about the noble wife, it's my favorite line in this whole proverb. It's a great line and it's the line about the future. But you can't read it without reading the whole context. Proverbs 31 it starts in verse 10, the wife of noble character. Man, she's rare who can find her, her worth is far more than rubies. And that's not saying they're not out there, obviously the guy who wrote this found her and he talks about her and he says stuff like this about her. She's a hard worker. In verse 15, gets up while it's still dark, she's a worker, provides food for her family. Look at verse 17, she sets about her work, how? Vigorously, her arms are strong for her task, she sees her trading is profitable, and her lamp doesn't go out at night. She gets up early she stays up late. She works hard. Wow, she must be a crass materialist that trusts in things. No she doesn't. Matters of fact, drop down to verse 26, I know this is a godly woman who speaks with wisdom. She's got faithful instruction on her tongue. Do you think she trusts in stuff? Do you think she loves money? No, she doesn't love money but she's a hard worker. She's diligent in her work and because of all of that, when it snows, verse 21, is she all freaked out? No, she doesn't have any fear for her household because she's done her work and she trusts in God. Verse 24, she's making linen garments and she sells them, that's great and here's the best line of all. Verse 25, she's clothed with strength and dignity and I love this line, underline it, and she can laugh at the days to come. I love that. Why, because she's trusting in her big bank accounts that she got from all this trading she does? No, because it's a collaboration if you will from a human perspective of her confidence in God that she's going through life with God but she's also if you will earning her allowance. She's working hard. And if she's got 5 bucks in her hand and life demands 50 she knows God is going to take care of it. But she's got her 5 bucks that she's gone about diligently working for. You see that? There's that principle of responsibility that always underlies the issue of contentment. She laughs at the future. She smiles, the NAS puts it, in the days to come. She laughs at the days to come. I mean that's great. Do you have that kind of confidence about your retirement? Ha, Ha, bring it on, retirement! Why? Because you're cocky and arrogant because you got a lot in the bank? No, rich people aren't suppose to be arrogant; they're suppose to put their trust in God not in their stuff. Are you tracking with all this? Put all this together in your mind.

The indicator that you're trusting God is always going to come with that layer of responsibility of working hard and you'll be able to look into the future and you'll be able to say I'm fine. It's okay, bring it on. And even if my investments tank, and even if things go bad, and the housing market

never recovers, my 401K is tanked, it's alright. I'm doing my work, I'm better than the ant, I'm prudent about my stuff, I'm saving for my kids college. Mike I'm not, then start, see? And then trust God. Don't put your trust in any kind of bank account and God will take care of it. Isn't this the principle of Matthew 6:33? We've quoted it a couple times; seek first the kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Maybe what you don't remember, that was all set up that discussion earlier in the Sermon on Mount was this statement, no one can serve two masters. Remember that? Because you'll either hate the one or love the other. Now that's the problem, you read Proverbs 31 or Proverbs 6 and you think they're serving both. You can't serve both because I know what a lot of people are going to take out of this sermon, that's great Pastor Mike, I'm going to do both. I'll trust in God and I'll trust in my hard work and I'll trust in my bank account. You can't do both. You're either going to be trusting in one and despising the other, or vise-a-versa. You cannot serve God and money both. So the question is, who are you doing to serve? If you serve God, he's going to have you get off the couch and do some work. And do some saving and be prudent about budgeting but he's also going to say trust in me and I'll take care of your future. You should be able to laugh at the days to come because I'll take care of you, you know that. And you won't be engrossed in the things of the world.

One last passage, have I said that yet in this sermon? No, I was wondering. I can't remember. 1 Timothy 6 one more time. We've quoted it several times now. Verse 17 but I want you to look at the two verses that follow; we haven't looked at those yet. 1 Timothy chapter 6, look at how this ends and this should be the focus of our lives because we can't serve two things here. Let's serve God. God will lead us to prudence. God will lead us to hard work. He'll lead us to trust Him. This is the focus, just for the sake of context and review look at verse 17 one more time. If you're rich in the present world, don't be arrogant. Don't put your hope in wealth, it's uncertain. Put your hope in God, he richly provides everything for our enjoyment. That's the kind of God we have. Stuff we have He wants us to enjoy. Verse 18, command them, those who have stuff, more than they need, to do good. That's the focus, even if you were study the first part of this passage. Paul calls Timothy the young pastor to flee from materialism and pursue righteousness, love, faith, patience. And so he's saying it here. Command those who have money, just be good, do good, be rich in good deeds. That should be your focus and to be generous willing to share. Part with that check, give what you've got, share what you've got and in this way, here's the real deal, you'll lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age so that they may take hold of the life that is, I love this, truly life.

You know my real frustration with the prosperity preachers? The focus is always on this life, right? It's all about getting it now. And I'm all for enjoying what we have now, let's enjoy, it's great. We got a big house, great, fantastic, enjoy it. Share it, don't get arrogant, don't have this insatiable addiction to get more. Enjoy what you've got. But here's the deal, it doesn't really matter if all of us in this room get the great big house, doesn't matter if you rent for the rest of your life. Doesn't matter if you retire with a flush bank account, ultimately what matters is that you do good and you do right and you're rich in good deeds because if you are you'll lay up for yourself. I love it this is the principle of Matthew 6. He says a firm foundation for the coming age so that you can take hold of life that is really life. You want to know about what really matters? How you're going to live for eternity. Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where the moths don't eat it, thieves don't break in and steal it, rust doesn't corrupt it and destroy it. That's



the right place to be and in our hearts I want to say it doesn't matter if I ever get the iPhone, right? Huh, sorry, stuck on the iPhone and the Porsche you can tell, try to get that dispassionate buffer in my heart against them. But here's the deal, if I never get either one of those it doesn't matter, that's not my quest, that's not what I'm all about. That's not what you should be all about. What we're all about is the next life. I want to store up a firm foundation for that place and I'm going to do that not by collecting as much as I can but being good, being rich in good deeds, being generous and willing to share. God can guard our hearts from the discontent the anxiety of materialism if we would focus on the right things. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and God will take care of the rest. Let's pray.

God, we enter into this season of shopping and malls and presents and gifts and giving and credit cards. I pray we recognize that you are not a God who has created principles for us that are so other worldly that they don't have an application in this life. Or that its some kind of partial application, you want us to be 100% and fully content, to be able to stand in your presence every morning when we get up and be able to say, "God that we are not engrossed into the things of this world. We're not addicted to getting more. We're content and enjoy and celebrate what we have and more importantly we celebrate who we have. We have a relationship with you our future is secure. If we would but do what we're suppose to do we would not only have enough for this life and not only do you promise to guard our steps and make our path firm but God you promise the most important thing that we'll lay up for ourselves a foundation in that next world so that we'll be able to enjoy life that's really life because all the riches of this world as Paul it, are passing away. And they come with a lot of heartache and God the next world and it's riches they don't. It's a great place to be rich. So God I pray that we be concerned about eternal riches and that in this life we celebrate the riches that you give us here. Be willing to share, be generous but we be people that always guard our hearts against that love of money. God let us be content, let us be generous people. Thanks for this time and this reminder and this season that is often so distracting for us. Keep us centered, keep us focused I pray, in Jesus name. Amen.