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REMEMBER: we are disciples on a journey.

- We're doing this series because we need to be challenged, and I am hoping you accept the challenge.

Review: God's problem with His people...

- God has always responded the same way: with warnings and promises.
- In Malachi, it's personal. Rather than loving and trusting God, they robbed Him.
- Bring the whole tithe.
 - Where? Into the storehouse. Why? "Food in my house" means God is honored, and people are cared for.
- People are the same today. The reason the New Testament deals with the same issues is that there's still the same two competing kingdoms.

THIS WEEK: GODLINESS AND CONTENTMENT LEADS TO WEALTH/GAIN.

- Because of what God has done for us, revealed to us, and how we respond.

1 Timothy 6:2b-10 (NIV) These are the things you are to teach and insist on. ³If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and **who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.** ⁶**But godliness with contentment is great gain (wealth).** ⁷For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ⁹Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For 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.

- **Notice how scripture defines wealth (gain):** Godliness with Contentment
 - Compare that to the world's version. (See **1 John 2:16**)
 - This isn't a *means to* great wealth but *is* great wealth.
 - David's love of God's Word: it is wealth, and it is freedom.
 - Paul's desire to know Jesus better illustrates this, too.

GODLINESS IS VALUABLE.

- Defined and valued as great wealth (See **Psalm 119:72**). How?
 - Godliness must be chosen. (See **John 1:10-14**)
 - You cannot be truly godly unless you understand who God is. (See **Philippians 3:7-8**)
 - Who God is is revealed in the story of God through the Bible and Jesus, God in the flesh.
 - With devotion/obedience to the faith, the person the faith is directed around is God. This reveals God's perspective and imparts His characteristics.

DEFINING CONTENTMENT: WHAT IS CONTENTMENT?

- A self/inner sufficiency. "I have what I need in Christ. He is enough," and, "I have confidence that I will have enough."
- Contentment is a choice we have to make because we have a sinful nature. (See **Colossians 3:1-4**)

THE INNER BATTLE FOR ACTUAL, PRACTICAL CONTENTMENT (See Galatians 5:16–17)

- The world/sinful nature/enemy says: “You need more, then you can be content. You need more to be content.”
 - **But contentment says:** “I accept that God knows what I can handle, and He will give me enough to make it and serve Him with it.” (See **Ecclesiastes 5:10**)
- The world/sinful nature/enemy says: “But that person over there has more.” The trap of comparison.
 - **But contentment says:** “What I have, I don’t deserve. I am thankful. I compare what I have to my need rather than what another person has.” (See **1 Thessalonians 5:18**)
- The world/sinful nature/enemy says: “I don’t trust God to determine what I have or don’t have; I only trust myself.”
 - **But contentment says:** “I know God loves me. He knows my future and what He has in store for me. He knows what I can handle based on what’s eternally valuable and how He made me.” (See **Proverbs 30:7–9**)
- The world/sinful nature/ enemy says: “You don’t have enough for the future.” It’s not about more, it’s about enough.
 - **But contentment says:** “I will have God with me. He’s enough, and He will supply.” (See **Philippians 4:10–13**)
- **In every case, the world system—designed by our sinful nature and the enemy—leads us to forfeit God’s presence for something we think will be better.** (See **Psalms 127:1-2**)

AS A DISCIPLE, I CHALLENGE YOU TO:

- Work hard. Remember the world sphere in the journey series. Consider supply and mission space. Godliness and contentment are not apathy nor laziness.
 - Tithe to the storehouse. Give your first fruits to the Lord.
 - It’s an act of worship, surrender, and thankfulness. Obedience is better than sacrifice (than just a ceremony).
 - It’s an antidote to greed which is idolatry (See **Colossians 3:5**)
 - Praise God for what you have. Your needs are supplied—don’t take them for granted. Make a thankfulness list.
 - Live within your means. Budget. Don’t be apathetic or lazy. Practice contentment when you make your decisions. Budget personal generosity.
 - Invest in what really matters. I keep the idea of opportunity cost in mind. “If I do that, it means I am pursuing something that will not satisfy at the expense of relationship with God, His blessing, and relationships with others.”
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QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Luke 3:7-14, 1Timothy 6:6-9, Proverbs 30:7-9,15-16, and Philippians 4:11-13

Ice Breaker: Have you ever played the “Bigger and Better Game”? Start with a paper clip, and find someone who will trade you for something bigger and better. Keep going for a set amount of time or a goal you have in mind. What do you think you could eventually trade up for?

- Reflect on the sermon. What was new, challenging, or a good reminder?
 1. Read twice: Luke 3:7-14, 1Timothy 6:6-9, and Proverbs 30:7-9,15-16. How do these passages speak to our relationship with God and our relationship with money and things?
 2. When you think of contentment, what do you picture? A) When you think of “great gain,” what comes to mind?
 3. What appetites are more at play in you at this time? What do you hunger and thirst for? A) What leads to dissatisfaction or the longing for more in your own life? B) How do you practice saying, “no, I have enough” to yourself?
 4. Godliness involves loving God and people more than money and things. What does that look like in your life, home, and work worlds?
 5. Gratitude is a building block for contentment and combats comparison. What ways do you nurture gratitude and thankfulness in yourself? How do you help your family or circle of friends practice gratitude?
 6. What impact would pursuing contentment have on your holiday plans this year?

Passages to prepare for next week, The Challenge of Generosity Week 3:

Proverbs 18:16, Proverbs 11:25, Romans 2:6, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Galatians 6:9, 2 Corinthians 9:6-8