

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

New Things Just Make Me Happy

Scenario:

A family in the congregation appears to be doing well financially. That is the thought, because they have purchased a new house, new vehicles, new clothes, new furniture, and the list goes on and on. They seem to keep the local restaurants busy with how often they are able to get food from them. They have multiple sources of income. The man of the house has gainful employment. The wife has a source of income from an early retirement. They are not selfish. If brethren have financial needs, they are often helpful. The man of the house has been expressing displeasure with his work because he is not, according to him, bringing in enough income to do what his family wants to do.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

A brother in the congregation hears this man speak of his displeasure with his current level of income and says this: "The eyes of man are never satisfied." To which, the man of this scenario responds: "Hey, new things make me happy. I grew up poor. I work now so that my family and I can have the best things we can afford. I will not apologize for that. I give much to the Lord and His work. I help out. I just want nice things. Abraham was rich. I want to be too. So, I am going to look for work that brings in more money. That's my business, not yours."

A Later Statement Is Made:

After a long, awkward silence, the man continues: "If Jesus asked me to give all my stuff to the poor and follow Him I would. He hasn't. You should be building me up in my pursuit to be a better provider rather than making me feel like I am doing something wrong because I want the best for my family."

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- Things are not always as they appear and thus we must be careful when judging things based on how they look (**John 7:24**). New earthly possessions can come from increasing debt. Increased possessions could come from gifts. Someone could inherit a lot. There are many ways someone could appear to be gaining possessions. That is not necessarily someone "doing well" financially. In this case though, there is more than appearances. There are clear statements.
- When I read "that is the thought", it doesn't sit well. Why is there a thought? Why the implication that it is a thought shared by many? There are things that are hard not to notice. New cars, new clothes, bags of food, etc. are hard not to see. There is a degree in which we should be aware of how our brethren are doing for certain good reasons (**I John 3:14-18**). The balance comes down to motives (**Philippians 2:2-5**). We need to be cautious though in how we concern ourselves with such things in not going too far (**I Thessalonians 4:11** and **I Peter 4:15**).

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- I have to wonder why they need to “eat out” so often. There could be a problem there. Is the wife working (I know she has retirement income, but maybe she has a job too)? If she is not, is she keeping the house (**Titus 2:3-5**)?
- Sometimes people think that if they give to help brethren in need (**I Corinthians 16:1-4**) abundantly that gains them something extra when it comes to areas of their life wherein they are not living faithfully. What does it matter if someone has a lot and is willing to give out of their abundance (**Luke 21:1-4**), but is not living aright? Would a murderer be okay if he or she gave a lot? NO, (**Revelation 21:8**)!
- Furthermore, think of the rich young ruler who loved his neighbor as himself, among other things, from his youth up. Still, his earthly wealth was his downfall (**Matthew 19:16-30**).
- To be a giver and helper can be a useless act (**I Corinthians 13:3**).
- This becomes a discussion because the man of the house is expressing his lack of contentment. He wants more. He has made this known. This is a reason to be concerned. We will address contentment in a moment, but before we even get to that there should be concern over a Christian being greedy of gain (**Proverbs 1:10-19, Proverbs 15:27, Proverbs 23:5, Isaiah 55:1-2, and Revelation 3:14-22**).
- When a person focuses so much on carnal things, there is no doubt that such will impact that person spiritually (**Romans 13:13-14, Galatians 5:16-17, and I Peter 2:11**).
- I also wonder why this family needs/wants multiple sources of income. There is a point wherein a Christian can be too busy for the wrong reasons. Consider a lesson preached here not long ago:
Outline: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/dontunnecessarilyaddd burdens2021.html>
Audio: https://www.wordsoftruth.net/dontaddunnecessarydistractions_2021.mp3
- Once you consider the responsibility side of a having job (**II Thessalonians 3:10 and I Timothy 5:8**), you have to ask why one would want a “better” job. Is it just more money. Why? This man makes the “why” clear. It is his wants, not a needs. Again, we will address contentment shortly. At this point though, why be a complainer (**Philippians 2:14-16**)?

Regarding The Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

- The statement that comes forth first is from **Proverbs 27:20**. This principle is taught in various words in other texts as well (**Ecclesiastes 1:8, Ecclesiastes 5:10-16, Ecclesiastes 6:1-7, etc.**).
- Before we proceed, and I write this with caution as the situation and setting is not clear, should we just drop a Scripture as a possible backhanded charge without any discussion in this situation as it is written? As an evangelist, I am thinking of being a teacher (**II Timothy 2:24-26**). It is easy to just drop a Scripture. However, teaching is much more involved. If the goal is anything other than teaching this brother, why say anything? What’s the motive in this approach? Again, this could be appropriate in certain situations. However, as written, what about pulling this brother aside and having a conversation? This man is struggling with carnal

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thinking so to think a Scripture drop is going to work is not wise (**Romans 8:5-8**). You cannot teach someone in that current state of mind (**I Corinthians 3:1-3**).

- So, new things make this brother happy. It is not necessarily wrong to be happy because of “new things” (per se). To judge such would mean you could never find joy in anything carnal. If you’re ever going to be happy because of a new shirt, house, whatever; you have to be careful not to be hypocrite (**Matthew 7:1-5**). We should know that we can be happy and thankful through some authorized carnal things in life (i.e. **I Corinthians 7:33-34** and **I Timothy 4:1-5**). *More on this latter.
- He is right about Abraham being rich (**Genesis 13:1-2**). However, his attitude was right (**Hebrews 11:8-16**).
- He brought up that he grew up poor. Obviously, this has something to do with his thinking. Why not help him with this? Why not help dispel the notion that being poor is some bad thing (**II Corinthians 8:9** and **James 2:5**)?
- As we have addressed earlier, doing some things right does not buy credit to do some things wrong (**James 2:10-13**).
- Why go on the attack? Maybe the bringing up of **Proverbs 27:20** could have been done differently. So what? The snap back doesn’t help. The defensiveness will only lead others to think you’re guilty of things.

Regarding The Later Statement That Is Made:

- It really stinks that there is a long, awkward silence in a discussion among brethren. That doesn’t sound right (**I Corinthians 1:10**, **II Corinthians 13:11**, and **Philippians 2:2**).
- In what appears to be a reference to the Rich Young Ruler (referenced earlier in these notes; **Matthew 19:16-30**); this person’s argument is that Jesus hasn’t asked him to give up everything. What he is apparently missing is what the Scriptures teach about contentment (**Proverbs 30:8-9**, **Luke 3:8-14**, **Philippians 4:11**, **I Timothy 6:6-19**, and **Hebrews 13:5**). THIS IS A HUGE POINT HERE!
- Jesus taught to be heavenly focused rather than on material things (**Luke 12:13-34**).
- Is it lawful to be happy because of something materialistic? It can be (**Ecclesiastes 2:24**, **Ecclesiastes 3:9-13**, and **I Timothy 6:17**).
- Having said that, our real joy should be in pursuit of spiritual things (**Matthew 13:44**).
- To be like Paul and know how to have little and how to have much (**Philippians 4:10-12**)? Being thankful goes a long way. This person needs to learn to be thankful (https://www.wordsoftruth.net/peacethroughthanksgiving_2020.html).
- No, we shouldn’t build one up in the pursuit of carnal things for reasons addressed already! Again, Jesus didn’t (**Matthew 6:19-34**).
- Covetousness [Strong’s # 4124; “greedy desire to have more”; (**Ephesians 4:17-19**) {greediness}] should NOT exist amongst saints (**Ephesians 5:3-5**).
- When it comes to “wanting the best” for one’s family; there is a lot to consider there. In this discussion, the best for any family is not to be so focused on material; worldly things (**I John 2:15-17**).
- The conclusion of the matter: **Matthew 16:26 & Mark 4:18-19**