

The world around us offers many “things” to possess and constantly tries to persuade us that we need more. But theft and coveting are sin. Desiring to get rich leads us into temptation and many fall into a trap that leads to ruin. We also have more than most of the world and are responsible to be good stewards of what we have. We have much and we are responsible for much. How do we deal with the offer of “things” around us and properly manage the possessions which we have in a manner that pleases God? How do we live righteously with our possessions?

I. *Living righteously with our possessions requires making a choice.*

Jesus said that we cannot serve both God and Wealth (Matthew 6:24).

1. *The choice must be made.* We cannot serve two masters and we do not naturally choose God.
2. *The choice which we must make is not to be rich or to be poor, but whether to strive for possessions or strive to be rich towards God.* Cf. Luke 12:16-21. Disciples of Jesus should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31).
3. *The choice of our master greatly affects our lives.* Wealth as a master leads to worry (Luke 12:25, 27, 31), never satisfies (cf. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11), does not make content (Philippians 4:12), and leave one poor toward God and empty-handed in eternity. As we trust God as our Master, worry is replaced with peace, desire with fulfilment, discontent with contentment. We become rich towards God and have treasures stored in heaven.

Making the right choice requires faith in God, which in turn requires knowing God. We trust God because of who He is.

II. *Living righteously with our possessions requires having correct values.*

1. *There are more important values than possessions.*
 - a. Select examples in Proverbs: it is better to be poor with little to eat, but have peace, than have much with hatred and turmoil (15:16-17; 17:1); it is better to be so poor that you must live in the corner of the roof than having a house with quarrels (21:9); it is better to have a good reputation than wealth (22:1).
 - b. Jesus taught that there are more important values than possessions: “a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). My life is much more than the type of phone I have or my car, house or clothes. The things we possess are just the extras. True living is being right with God, seeking His kingdom and His righteousness.
2. *When we value righteousness, we will avoid all kinds of greed.*

Jesus said: “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed” (Luke 12:15). Greed, or coveting, is idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). When we focus on getting more things rather than on what God values (like righteousness), we are worshiping other gods and practicing idolatry.
3. *When we value knowing God, we will have the contentment which possessions cannot give.*
 - a. Contentment is something which we must learn. It neither comes naturally nor with having more things. Paul learned to be content “whether living in plenty or in want” (Philippians 4:12). But how do we learn contentment?
 - b. Contentment comes when we truly believe that God is with us, providing exactly what we need for our best. Hebrews 13:5 charges us not to love money but be content with what we have. The reason lies in God's promise, that he will never leave us nor forsake us. God's presence means that He is caring for us, protecting us, providing for all that we need for our best. If we are regularly discontent with what we have (or don't have), we have probably forgotten this truth.

III. *Living righteously with our possessions requires developing generosity.*

Timothy was to command the rich “to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

1. *Generosity is measured relatively, not absolutely.* It is measured in relation to what we have and not by the amount which is given, like the widow who gave all, just two pennies (Luke 21:1-4) or the poverty stricken Macedonians who gave beyond what they could afford (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). Generosity is measured in relation to what it costs us to get what we give. We should work in order to give (Ephesians 4:28) and freely give what we have freely received (Matthew 10:8).
2. *Generosity done cheerfully and sincerely is loved and blessed by God.* He loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7) and promises blessing in portion to one's generosity. But the giving must be done with proper motives, neither under pressure (2 Corinthians 9:7) or for the praise of men (Matthew 6:1-4).
3. *Proper generosity makes us rich towards God.* Paul told the Corinthians that their generosity would result in thanksgiving and praise toward God (2 Corinthians 9:11, 12, 13). When what we do results in praise and thanksgiving to God, we are becoming rich towards God.

It all starts with making the right choice, to choose to serve God and be rich towards Him. We cannot serve two masters. If we choose to live our lives getting possessions, then we will not be serving God and will be poor towards Him.

We need to value the contentment which is found in trusting God. Neither riches nor poverty will make us content. We need to learn to trust God, that He is providing what we need from an eternal perspective. Peace comes from God as we pray and thank God in every situation.

As we learn to trust God and see His provision in all that we have, we can progress in developing generosity. As we learn that we have freely received, we should freely give.