



Practical Christian Living

From Consumerism to Contentment

Icebreaker: *What would have been your favorite thing about living in the Garden of Eden?*

Last week we talked about sin in the garden and how the serpent tried to challenge God's command not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Satan was substituting God's way with an alternative that, although sounded good and pleasing, in the end resulted in emptiness and death. God had all their needs taken care of but Satan convinced them that what God had provided was not enough—they needed more.

That is the message of the world—Consumerism. *Why does consumerism breed dissatisfaction?*

- You feel like you never have enough. There is always something bigger and better you can buy.

Consumerism can become an entire worldview—something that effects the way we see everything. Because of that we have to address this early in our study because many of the other things we study are problems because people have developed a consumer mindset that has taken the place of God in their lives. In other words, when this has fully taken root, we begin believing that the world can meet our needs instead of God. But like Adam and Eve the end result will be emptiness and even death.

How does the world bombard us with the message that what we have is never enough?

- Advertisements, trends, movies, television, internet, etc.

How was the Garden of Eden before sin entered the picture?

- It was a perfect existence between God and mankind.
- They should have been satisfied—all their basic needs were met.

The Bible makes very clear that God is the one who supplies our needs. Because of that we should be content.

Phil 4:19

How many of your needs did Paul say God will meet?

- All

What is the difference between a want and a need?

- A want is something that is non-essential for the continuance of living life as a whole person. A need is something that only God can provide that is essential for life and spiritual development.
- Paul didn't say God will meet all your **wants**. Paul said God will give you what you **really need**.

What does the world tell us we really need?

- Definitely not God—they say God will mess you up or that God is out to get you or that he doesn't exist.
- The world says we need stuff. Once you get enough stuff you will be satisfied.
- The world says we need love and acceptance—the difference is how you go about finding it.

Matthew 6:28-34

The world says if you don't have what you want you better worry until you get it. *What does God say about worry? Why?*

- Don't worry—God will provide what you really need.

Jesus shifts the priority from chasing some really important things (food and clothing) to something of even greater importance. *What does Jesus say is the most important thing to seek out?*

- A relationship with God

What does Jesus say will follow if we make God our priority?

- The things we really need will be provided in addition to the greatest thing—a relationship with God.

Back to the way the world looks at this. The world says if you want clothes you chase clothes. If you want food you chase food. If you want stuff you better chase it yourself because no one else is going to do it for you. And don't chase just anything. Only the best is worth your attention. Following that line of thinking to the end makes stuff our "lord" instead of God. Stuff begins to rule our lives and we end up on an endless pursuit of things that will make us seem important or "somebody."

Gen 1:26-27

Where does scripture say our value is found?

- Our value rests in our relationship with God. We are made in his image and that makes us valuable.

What does it take for the world to say you are valuable?

- If you have the right income, job, clothes, cars, appearance, etc.
- In other words, you don't have any inherent value apart from your things.

Consumerism robs us of who we are and it steals away from us a healthy view of others. Instead of seeing others for who God made them to be we start seeing others for how they can benefit us, how they can help our cash flow, buy our product, compliment us, etc.

Moving from Consumerism to Contentment:

Philippians 4:11-13 shows us that contentment does not come from filling ourselves with stuff. Contentment is not based on circumstances or a series of good purchases. Contentment comes from resting in the fact that we have value that comes from God and that through God our needs will be met.

What are some things in your life you feel get in the way of seeing God and others in a healthy way?

What are the necessary steps it will take for you to find contentment in God alone?