

## ***Service to God through material contentment*** (Hebrews 13:5–6)

Our materialistic culture seeks to distort our perception of material possessions, wrongly suggesting that they define our worth, or offer certain security or joy. A love of material things or a preoccupation with them is spiritually dangerous (cf. Ephesians 5:3–6), but being content with whatever God has given is an acceptable act of worship or service to God for two reasons which are found in this passage.

### ***I. Material contentment belongs to true Christian character.***

#### ***1. Material contentment is defined from two directions: negatively and positively.***

Negatively, material contentment is not having a love of money (or, “things”). The love (or “desire” or “craving”, cf. 1 Tim 6:9–10) for riches is wrong, not the possession of things. Both the rich and the poor can have such desire and both can be content, both can be led into temptation, though the rich do have special dangers (cf. 1 Tim 6:17). Positively, material contentment is being content with the things at hand whether much or little (cf. 1 Timothy 1:6\_6–8; Philippians 4:11–13). The foundation for this has been laid in Hebrews (cf. 10:34; 11:15; 12:18–24), since the readers know that their true possessions are heavenly and eternal.

You can test yourself for the “love of money” by evaluating the basis for your choices and actions as well as your generosity and willingness to share (cf. 1 Timothy 6:18).

#### ***2. Making material contentment part of your character is an act of worship.***

It is worship because all obedience from the heart is worship. It is worship because the opposite (greed and coveting) is idolatry (Ephesians 3:5; Colossians 3:5). If you trust in things for security, joy, satisfaction, etc., rather than in God, those things have become idols. It is worship because it reveals the choice of whom you serve. You can submit to only one master (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13) and that master should be God.

### ***II. Material contentment expresses confidence in the Lord’s consistent help.***

#### ***1. The foundation for material contentment: the promise of God that He will never leave nor forsake His children***

The contexts where this promise is found in the O.T. (Joshua 1:5; Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; 1 Chronicles 28:20) show that this is a promise of God’s consistent help. There is no point in time when the Lord is not with His children to help, shaping even life’s circumstances for their good (cf. Romans 8:28). Both poverty and riches are tools of God in the lives of His children, in which they can be content.

#### ***2. The confession of contentment: “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (cf. Psalm 118:6–7)***

Israel at times trusted in “things” like money to buy help when fearing men, a trust which failed miserably. Only trust in the Lord was pleasing to Him. The audience of Hebrews could have feared men, having been made materially poor, but were content because they knew that they had a God who had not forsaken them. Cf. Matthew 10:28. They were storing for themselves treasure in heaven (cf. Matthew 6:20).

#### ***3. This contentment is an act of worship. because ...***

It actively acknowledges God’s goodness, faithfulness, and power. It proclaims God’s character to others. Contentment with whatever things that God has given, few or much, proclaims the goodness and wisdom of God.

Be content with what is at hand materially, but always be striving for to put God’s kingdom and His righteousness first in your life (Matthew 6:31–33). First, be a child of God, a citizen of heaven, a new creation in Christ, by trusting in Christ alone. Then pursue godliness, because godliness with contentment is great gain. Offer this acceptable worship to God with reverence and awe.

### ***Questions for further thought and discussion:***

- Explain the difference between desiring things and having things. Why is this difference so crucial to understand? What evidence exists in your life that you are free of the desire for things? Where might you be tempted in this area?
- How will understanding material contentment as an act of worship help in seeking that contentment?
- If you lost your job or it was endangered and you were asked why you were not afraid, how would you answer? What would be a good way of giving a testimony to the goodness of God in your life?
- How does your pursuit of godliness and God’s righteousness compare with the concern about or desire for “things”?
- How can parents begin teaching their children about the importance of being content?