

Great Gain

Rediscovering the lost virtues of godliness, contentment and modesty.

We know that we live in a time of materialism. Many times people are judged by the stuff they own. What kind of car do you have? What kind of house do you own? What kind of clothes do you wear? And people love to shop! What's so special about Labor Day and the day after Christmas? It's the shopping craze. Many are addicted to it. Their credit card statements testify of that. Incomes are growing slowly or actually stagnate for many workers, but more and more is being spent. Marketing specialists try to program people's minds to shop on impulse rather than on thoughtful planning and budgeting. They want to induce people to gratify themselves and to indulge themselves by buying more and more stuff. People don't talk about saving and self-denial, although they are Biblical virtues. If the economy is down, the blame is brazenly shifted on the consumer because he didn't spend enough. He is told to buy more "stuff," so that more jobs can be created. Some folks judge me because I don't own certain things that are so fashionable today. Worldly Christians sometimes even judge other Christians, who do not participate in fashion fads. The worldly Christian has not read up in his Bible on these subjects because he spent hours at the mall. A Christian financial counselor rightly calls this disease "stuffitis". Under this serious medical condition people think they have to have certain things although they have no need of them at all. They think that by "going shopping" you can feel happy and satisfied. Sadly, some Christians have followed this path of worldliness. Here's some news for you: **"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."** *1. Timothy 6:6-8.* Let's talk about contentment. Not many people talk about that anymore. Most people want to get you so dissatisfied until you buy their product, so you think you're satisfied again. Look at one of these "home improvement" magazines. Look at these pretty houses! If you look at them for too long, you get so dissatisfied with what you have, that you'll be spending hundreds and thousands of dollars for home improvement projects while you waste your time with useless work. If it isn't broke, don't fix it! Can't we be more content with what we have? Why not? Are you content? Are you thankful for food and raiment? The Bible says you can't carry anything out of this world. Your "stuff" is going to stay down here! Therefore, let's not waste too much of our time and attention on "stuff". It will rot, rust or get recycled! You need to get so right with God that your greatest gain is godliness and contentment. If you have a list of your life's priorities, where would godliness and contentment be? You can be content even if you don't have two cars, a cell phone, cable TV, brand name clothes, etc. Don't compare yourself with others. Don't look at how much "stuff" others have. The Bible says: **"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's."** *Exodus 20:17.* What your neighbor owns should not matter to you. If he owns much more than you do, then don't be disturbed, don't feel pressured, don't try to keep up with him. Let your neighbor keep up with his own "stuff". Rejoice in the fact that you enjoy a simpler life that is not "stuffed" with things. Jesus said: **"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the**

things which he possesseth.” *Luke 12:15*. Yes, Jesus says there is more to life than just boats, trucks, four-wheelers, hunting and golf equipment, brand name clothes and giant screen TVs. Some people really haven't discovered that yet. There is godliness and contentment. They are the greatest gain. Many of us need to simplify their lives. The Bible gives some answers: “Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right.” *Proverbs 16:8*. If you got rich by using crooked means than you're worse off than the one who owns little by doing honest work, according to that verse. **“Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner with herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.”** *Proverbs 15:16,17*. So the Bible teaches that it's better to have a simplified life with contentment rather than having your attic, garage and basement filled with stuff bought on credit card debt with trouble and strife. Let me add this verse, too: **“Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.”** *Proverbs 17:1*. That verse deals with food! Some folks just need to learn to sit still at a family table and eat together to enjoy some simple food. Maybe as simple as a dish of oats rather than ham, bacon and the other high cholesterol “sacrifices.” The Bible says that is “better”. If you have to live on less or on a strict budget, these Bible principles can prove to be a blessing to you. If you suffer from “stuffitis” it will certainly hinder you from serving God. According to *Mark 4:19* it is the **“cares of this world,”** the **“deceitfulness of riches,”** and the **“lusts of other things”** that choke you and render you unfruitful for the Lord. If you are too busy take care of your “stuff” the Lord can't use you. Maybe the Lord would love to send you on a foreign mission field, but since you are busy trying to establish your own personal kingdom you surely have too many irons in the fire in order to serve the Lord. You might not need a \$60,000 Humvee. That car costs more than many homes in Smith County. But people are willing to spend. There is so much stuff that is totally overpriced and people are willing to spend. Why? Could the reason for that be gullibility, manipulation, peer pressure, reputation, social status and wrong priorities? Can you be content with what you have? The Bible says: “Let your conversation be without covetousness: and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” *Hebrews 13:5*. If you have the Lord Jesus, you have a reason to be content. You will have to leave your “stuff” or it might have to leave you, but the Lord will not leave you!

What does Webster's 1828 Dictionary say?

Contentment - Content; a resting or satisfaction of mind without disquiet; acquiescence.

Frugality - Prudent economy; good husbandry or housewifery; a sparing use or appropriation of money or commodities; a judicious use of any thing to be expended or employed; that careful management of money or goods which expends nothing unnecessarily, and applies what is used to a profitable purpose; that use in which nothing is wasted. It is not equivalent to parsimony, the latter being an excess of frugality, and a fault. Frugality is always a virtue. Nor is it synonymous with thrift, in its proper sense; for thrift is the effect of frugality. *Without frugality none can become rich, and with it few would be poor.*