

THE CORE VALUE: We value _____ and expect a lifestyle of _____ to enable _____ and more _____ giving.

1. Contentment is a _____

2. Contentment is seen in how we _____

3. Contentment is a _____ to greater gain



The Take-Off

Everyone has a place where they can get away from it all and remember what matters the most. And if they don't, the need to. Some people find that place at the beach, some at the mountains. For some they find it on a trail or a road running or biking and for others it's in a gym surrounded by sweat and people.

The point is you need a place like that where you can be reminded that most of what we see isn't even necessary. Places like that inspire us, challenge us, and motivate us to be better. I've got a place like that, and it's...

Ikea.

That may sound crazy (and not very manly), but Ikea for me is a breath of fresh air in a culture that has exploded with the insanity of consumer spending.

Let me set the table a bit with some stats about American consumerism. Don't try to write these down, there are too many and I don't want you to miss any of these. They are taken from a book published in 2002 titled Affluenza.

- According to the United Nations Environment Program, Americans spend more for trash bags than 90 of the world's 210 countries spend for everything!
- Americans spend nearly \$6 trillion a year, more than \$21,000 per person, most of it on consumer goods. Spending by - or influenced by - children ages 12 and under is growing by 20% annually.
- We spend more on shoes, jewelry and watches (\$80 billion) than on higher education (\$65 billion)
- Shopping has become the most preferred activity of Americans with 70 per cent of them visiting shopping malls each week.
- Americans now typically spend six hours a week shopping and only 40 minutes playing with their own children
- There are now twice as many shopping centers as high schools in America
- Most Americans now have 3 or more credit cards and the average credit card debt per household is just under \$16k, twice the amount it was just 10 years ago
- The average supermarket contains 30,000 items, two and a half times as many as it did 20 years ago.
- To keep these largely useless items, homes have become twice the size they were in the 1950s, though the family size has shrunk. Typically, American homes now have 2,300 sq. ft. and three garages. But even this is not sufficient.
- The self-storage industry now has annual revenue of \$16 billion, making it bigger than the music industry in America
- America has the world's highest rate of divorce and, according to family counselors, "arguments about money are precipitating factors in 90 per cent of divorce cases."

For me, there may be no better sign of the sickening consumerism of our culture than the annual "December to Remember" Lexus car commercials. Here's one from a few years back.

[Lexus Stocking commercial]

I think that those commercials kind of slapped a lot of Americans in the face and gave us a wake up call about just how out of touch we've gotten with needs, wants, and excesses. So much so that Acura ran an entire series of commercials trying to capitalize on how sickening the Lexus commercials were.

[Acura "Season of Reason" commercial(s)]

So, Ikea is a booming industry because the same American culture that loves stuff is also becoming more aware of the dark side of over-consumption.

Ikea shows how less can be more, and honestly, we're fascinated with the possibility even if we don't think it actually is possible

[Ikea video]

My goal today is to help you see what matters most and to see how a simple decision to embrace our 13th value can help you live a life full of those very things.

The value statement is: **We value simpler living and expect a lifestyle of contentment to enable greater and more generous giving.**

A couple words of caution to frame this teaching:

- 1) We didn't say simple living, because that is something we may never agree on. That looks different based on individual situations. But simpler living is a commitment to take one step at a time toward less.
- 2) As tempting as it is to say and hear only financial applications, the reality is that simpler living is a spiritual truth, not a financial one. Contentment applies to many arenas of life that aren't green. So, let's learn about contentment...

1. Contentment is a secret

In Philippians 4:12, Paul writes that he has learned the secret of being content

That means that what we're talking about won't be common or even widely practiced

Your choice to embrace this truth could cause some people - even those who love you and Jesus - to scratch their heads and wonder if you've gone a little nuts

Let's define the word: the Greek word for contentment means "strong enough or possessing enough to need no aid or support; independent of external circumstances; contented with one's lot"

Think about the stats we shared earlier, about the reasons why our culture is so stuff happy

They have an internal need that drives their external greed

That's the opposite of this word

For our purpose, let's define contentment as "not needing stuff to think I have enough"

Here are a few observations about this secret that are critical before we move on:

- a. Contentment isn't possible without Jesus
 - i. One of the most misquoted verses in the Bible is Phil. 4:13
 - ii. We think it's about us being strong enough to accomplish anything (me being Mr. America)
 - iii. In the context it means that because I have internal strength - the void has been filled - I can handle any situation I find myself in
 - iv. Contentment is based more on Who has us than on what we have
- b. Contentment helps create margin in our lives
 - i. Instead of being so maxed out that we pop at the first shift in circumstance, we are flexible and can handle ups and downs
 - ii. Contentment is the opposite of over-extended, something so many in our culture are experiencing

We can easily see how counter-cultural contentment is, and that's one reason why Paul called it a secret, a word that literally means "the initiation into a Mystical cult"

We're not starting a cult, but if you embrace this secret, people might think you've joined one

But you'll be the one who is okay when the stuff goes away, because contentment is "not needing stuff to think I have enough"

2. Contentment is seen in how we sow

Paul shares some pretty powerful truth about this in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Can I just state the obvious at the risk of some of you getting a little freaked?

If you're not content, you're not going to give, because you still need stuff to feel like you've got enough, and so giving anything away is gonna make you a little uncomfortable

Why do people give a dollar at church? Because they're still afraid on the inside that they may need the \$20 later.

Stingy people aren't typically happy people.

Write this down: the measure in which we sow is directly linked to the pleasure with which we sow. In other words, if it ain't fun, you're not doing it, and giving away money isn't fun unless you really grab the truth that Paul lays down in vv. 8-11

Here's a great way to sum up those verses: we can sow generously because God supplies endlessly

Verse 8 says in all things at all times, having all that you need

Verse 10 says He provides seed and bread and then provides more

Verse 11 says we'll be made rich in every way

When we understand that God's storehouse is a never-ending supply of what we need, then we're free to give generously on every occasion (v. 11)

The result? Thanksgiving to God, not us.

3. Contentment is a springboard to greater gain

The last passage we'll look at is found in 1 Timothy 6

The context, according to verse 3, is that Paul is warning Timothy about false doctrine, and he lists a bunch of things that can go against what he calls "sound teaching"

The last thing he mentions in v. 5 is a teaching that godliness can lead to gain

- In the NIV, it specifically mentions financial gain
- There are some teaching that says the more you know God the more you'll prosper financially
- That's hard to reconcile with the life of Jesus, but that's not the point here
- The word for "gain" is from the root that means "to cause a thing to get on well, to acquire, to gain."
- The bottom line is that godliness alone doesn't lead to this
- Verse 6 says that godliness accompanied by contentment leads to this kind of gain

And so contentment is a springboard - a kind of launching pad - to a life free from bad things and full of good things.

The bad things:

- a. Ruin and destruction (v. 9)
- b. All kinds of evil (v. 10)
- c. Life apart from God and faith (v. 10)

The good things:

- a. Confidence to fight well (v. 12)
- b. Hope in God (v. 17)
- c. The freedom to enjoy His blessings (v. 17)
- d. The freedom to share His blessings (v. 18)
- e. A life full of what matters most (v. 19)

The Landing

- Let's wrap this up by remembering what contentment is: not needing stuff to think I have enough
- All the things that we could have - a life that needs more and more to try and fill a spiritual void - gives way to a life lived simpler so that we can give more and more to the things that matter most
- The salvation of souls and the advancement of God's kingdom
- When that happens, we find ourselves in the position of Oscar Schindler
- Motivated to be rich, he died poor because he gave himself to what mattered most
- [Schindler's list clip]