

How Much Is Enough?



ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES IN A WORKER'S career is a period of unemployment they didn't expect. Around our ministry we refer to these events as forced sabbaticals, times when people are out of work when they don't want to be. They may be the result of layoffs, dismissals, illness, injuries or other unexpected events, but they are almost always disconcerting.

A few years back, two workers facing such an episode in their careers came to see me on the same day. Since money's a big issue in any period without work, I always ask them when the panic point hits, which I define as the time when they are no longer able to pay their weekly or monthly bills. Understanding where they are on a fiscal scale often helps me understand what kind of help they need—and how much they're able to hear what God might be saying to them during this time.

The first worker, a manufacturing worker barely making ends meet, told me "this week" was his panic point. We talked candidly about immediate needs, and moved forward from there.

Two hours later, a senior manager walked into my

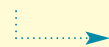
office. The answer to my "panic point" question stunned me because he was as distressed as the manufacturing worker. "If I didn't change my standard of living at all," he said, "I could go on for years with what I've saved."

I wasn't stunned at the amount of his net worth: I already had a good idea of that. Rather I was stunned by how distraught this worker was at the idea he'd be drawing money out of his savings instead of putting money into it. As he put it, his "security was slipping away now!"

At first I was tempted to describe the first worker's plight in an "if you think *that's* bad" discussion. I remembered, though, that money has little to do with the hold it has over us; it's what the money represents: control and security. While the manufacturing worker's fiscal plight was more serious than the senior manager's, the impact was the same...neither felt secure.

At the end of our initial discussions, both workers looked at me with the same plea: What should I do?

How would you have answered them?



Scripture Passages

Genesis 25:27-34
Genesis 27:2-10

Genesis 27:18-24
I Timothy 6:6-12

Study

How much is enough? How would you answer that question?

What goes into your thinking about the answer to that question?

Years ago, Abraham Maslow drew a pyramid he thought represented the needs of human beings. While the pyramid continues to be edited by anthropologists, sociologists, and human resource professionals, Maslow was reasonably accurate in the list he composed. We need to have food and shelter; we need security; we want to belong or to be accepted by those around us. Maslow listed more, but these we can agree on as important.

Experience teaches us that our definition of “enough” begins with the basics. But what happens after we satisfy one level? Why? (For help with this answer, turn in Scripture to Ecclesiastes 5:10.)

Where is our focus as we try to determine how much is enough?

How is the question of “enough” similar to the question of finding balance in our lives?

What did we discover was the key to ordering our world when it comes to activity? (See preceding study “Finding Balance in a Demanding Workplace.”)

How might that help us in sorting out how to control our fiscal lives?

Below are Scripture passages that offer insight into God's view of enough. Describe what you think those verses teach us.

Proverbs 30:8

Matthew 6:11

I Timothy 5:8

I Timothy 6:6-11

Isaiah 58:4-11

Matthew 25:37-46

Leviticus 19:9

These Scriptures teach us many things, including the following:

- We have an obligation to meet the needs of our family, including extended family.
- Our definition of enough begins with an understanding of what God wants us to do and what resources we need for that.
- Enough should be defined by needs, not wants.
- Our security comes from God, not plenty.
- What God gives us is not merely for our consumption but is also a tool to use to meet the needs of others.

Unless we understand that money and possessions are merely tools God gives us to do His work, we surrender ourselves to chasing after the wind.

Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- Godliness without contentment promises an eventual erosion of that godliness.
- Needs can be met, but wants are a never-ending vat of quicksand drawing our focus away from God.
- We must see our resources as tools God gives us to do His work.
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