

Never Enough

1. Warm-up question: What's something simple (not serious) that you often feel you don't have enough of?

2. We want to live joyous, contented lives – what Jesus called abundant life. But we often fear we won't have enough of the “good things” in our life to live abundantly, so we become voracious accumulators. Fear is a powerful primal force. No matter how much we have, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that if I just had a little more, then I'd be happy and content. More money. More time. More health. More friends. If I just had a spouse – or a better spouse. ☺ If my family would just accept me as I am. If I had a better boss. Then life would be good!
 - a. But then along comes the Bible and says, “There are those who make themselves rich, yet have nothing. There are those who make themselves poor, yet have great riches.” Proverbs 13:7. What do you think that verse means?

 - b. Jeff shared a story about Lee Strobel, a famous Chicago Tribune investigative reporter who broke the story on the design flaw in the Ford Pinto. Once Lee was assigned to do a story about a poor family – Perfecta Delgado and her two granddaughters. Though they had fallen into grinding poverty, Lee says, “I never sensed despair or self-pity in their home; instead, there was a gentle feeling of hope and peace. Here was a family that had nothing but faith, and yet seemed happy, while I had everything I needed materially, but lacked faith – and inside I felt as empty and barren as their apartment.” Have you ever known someone who was very poor, yet full of joy and contentment? Tell us about them. Where did their joy and contentment come from?

 - c. Have you ever known someone who, like Lee Strobel, was very successful, but unhappy and discontented? Tell us about them. What drove their unhappiness and discontent?

3. When we see the disconnect between good fortune, on the one hand, and joy and contentment, on the other hand, it causes us to wonder, what does it really mean to have enough in life – or in any given situation in life? Let's take a look at what Jesus and the Apostle Paul said.
 - a. At a time when Paul was experiencing great hardship, he said, “I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need.” Philippians 4:11-12. Then Paul tells us the secret, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13. What do you think Paul means? If someone asked you to explain Paul's secret to deep contentment, what would you say?

- b. Jeff said, “When I awaken to the fact that I am a spirit being and I seek to connect my spirit to God’s Spirit through Jesus Christ, there’s a current of spiritual energy and power that begins flowing into and through me, enabling me to experience something transcendent that’s called *shalom*.” *Shalom* is the Hebrew word for deep inner peace and tranquility. Have you found that to be so in your life? In other words, at times when you’re closer to God and in touch with spiritual life, do you experience greater peace and tranquility? If so, why do you think that is?
 - c. Jesus warned us that, “In this world you shall have tribulation.” John 16:33. But he also said, “*Shalom* I leave with you, my own *shalom* I give to you, a *shalom* the world cannot give. This is my gift to you.” John 14:27. Jesus went on to say, “Those who believe in me, as the scriptures have said, out of their innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” John 7:38. Jesus says we access this gift by “believing” in him. What does that mean? Why is it that some people who claim to believe in him experience very little *shalom*, while others experience great *shalom*? Are there different levels of belief?
 - d. It’s good news to hear that the secret to abundant life is not tied to favorable circumstances in life because all of us are apt to experience times of hardship and deprivation in life. Based on the passages above, Jeff said, “Beware of prosperity preachers who try to tell you that, just because we’re believers, we get special exemptions from the hardships of life. God doesn’t promise that we’ll always have enough of everything. Rather, the promise is that we will always have enough.” Do you see the difference in these two statements? How would you explain the difference?
4. Our Scripture reading on Sunday was an example of what we’ve been talking about. Read I Kings 17:8-16, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. How would you describe the widow’s state of mind at the start of this story?
 - b. What kind of change in widow’s mindset had to occur for her to receive this miracle of sufficiency amidst famine?
 - c. Jeff said, “Ever since I discovered this Bible story years ago, one of the key mantras of my life that I repeat over and over again to myself on almost a daily basis has become: “***There will always be enough. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***” When I feel overwhelmed and ready to say, ‘There’s not enough,’ I stop and repeat my mantra, and that simple cognitive shift moves me from hopelessness to hope. The Bible says hope gives rise to faith and faith can move mountains. So this simple mantra can create a positive chain reaction in our life.” Think about an area of your life right now where you are experiencing significant hardship to the point that you might be tempted to say, “I don’t know if I have enough to get through this.” Imagine yourself applying the foregoing mantra in that area of your life. Tell us what’s happening in your area of hardship and what shifts inside you when you begin applying the mantra.

I Kings 17:8-16

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah, saying, ⁹'Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' ¹⁰So he set out and went to Zarephath.

When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.' ¹¹As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' ¹²But she said, 'As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.' ¹³Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For thus says the LORD the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the LORD sends rain on the earth.' ¹⁵She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.