



Rule 3 for Gaining Financial Happiness How Much Is Too Much?

Before I got married I often visited my wife's family and had dinners there with them. One time as I peeked into her father's room when he left his door open, I noticed something odd. There on his shelf was an old jar filled with seeds. Later I was told they were apple seeds that he collected after he ate the apples. This intrigued me a bit as I pictured him spitting out the seeds into the jar and gathering them that way. For years that same jar of seeds sat on his shelf and never did I see a developing apple tree in the yard. After he passed away some twenty years later, that same jar and I assume the same seeds were still there, awaiting their final resting place. Why my father-in-law chose to hold on to those seeds and the ancient jar for so long, I don't know but he did.

There is a tale told long ago of a fellow who buried a box of gold in a hidden place in his garden. He often went to the spot, pushed aside the large stone covering the hole and counted the gold, coin by coin. Satisfied that it was all there, he went back inside. This happened several times a day. A neighbor happened to notice this strange behavior and realized what the miser was doing and so later that night, he snuck into the garden, pushed aside the stone and stole the box with the gold. The next morning the miser got up to check on his gold and found the stone off to the side and the box gone. He screamed madly, "My gold! My gold!" A stranger passing by the garden heard the wails and checked to see what was wrong. The miser cried, "Someone has robbed me!" "Wait", the stranger called over. "You put your gold in that hole? Why did you do that? Why didn't you keep it in your house so it would be easier to get it when you wanted to spend some of it?" "Spend some of it. Why would I ever do that?", he hollered. "I would never dream of using up any of the gold!" "Well", replied the stranger as he pushed the stone into the hole. "If that's the case, then cover up the stone because it's worth just as much as the treasure that you had!"

What's the difference between hoarding and saving up for a rainy day? For that matter, how do you know when you have too much? You have a good idea when you had too much desert or you have watched too many YouTube videos or spent too much time at the beach. But generally it is tricky figuring out how much is too much. Old King Rehoboam didn't realize he had fallen into the trap of trying to hold on to too much. When he inherited the kingdom from his father King Solomon, the most "successful" king of his time, he faced a difficult crisis of faith. His father had levied excessive taxes on the people and demanded they work for free on his constant building campaigns. Now that Solomon was gone, the citizens wanted tax relief and freedom from the forced labor, so the people came to Rehoboam and asked him to lessen their heavy load. **"Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."** (1 Kings 12: 4 NIV) Rehoboam promised to consider the request/demand and get back to them in three days. He went to the elders and asked them what they thought. The elders told him he should do what the people wanted. If he did so, they would be grateful and become loyal citizens. Rehoboam turned to his buddies who grew up with him and asked them what they thought.

The young men who had grown up with him replied, "Tell these people who have said to you, 'Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter'-tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.'" (1 Kings 12: 10-11 NIV) Rehoboam went along with

the advice of his buddies and a civil war resulted. Three fourths of the country split away and Rehoboam's kingdom became a shell of his father's. Rehoboam's approach to life was wrong on two points, maybe more. First, he could not accept the fact that less was more. If he had just agreed to a drop in the taxes and forced labor, he would have still had more than enough to have a thriving and healthy nation, not to mention a successful rule. Secondly, he bought into the lie that he deserved what he had. In fact, when most of what he had was taken away, Rehoboam faced the hard reality that everything he had was a gift from God and it was the LORD's to do with as He pleased. When Rehoboam gathered his army to fight against the breakaway tribes of Israel and try to force them to return, God made it clear who was in charge of Rehoboam and what he possessed. **'This is what the Lord says: Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.'** **So they obeyed the word of the Lord and went home again, as the Lord had ordered.** (1 Kings 12: 24 NIV)

I was for years perplexed by the account of Gideon putting together an Israelite army to fight against the vast forces of Midian. The Lord whittled down the number of soldiers Gideon led from thirty-two thousand to three hundred. That according to God was enough. Sometimes, it is possible to have too much! You rely on your resources, your accumulated stuff rather than God. Happiness can become dependent on what you have gathered which we all know is temporary, rather than God, who is eternal. A crucial aspect to gathering money, possessions or even friendships is that you can't count on them to keep you happy. You certainly are never sure how long you will have any of the three. The Lord however can lift your spirits and bring you happiness regardless of what you have or don't have. The Psalmist understood well how lasting happiness works. **Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?" Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord. You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.** (Psalm 4: 6-7 NIV) Neither stuff nor even family members or friends can bring to the soul a supernatural level of happiness that is needed to rise above the ebbs and flows of life.

There is something called the Manna Principle that applies. When God brought the people of Israel out into the desert regions between Egypt and Palestine, He provided food for them but of course it was not natural. It was the supernaturally derived Manna. What is important for us is that enough of it was provided each day and the Israelites were not to store up any for the next day except for Fridays when they collected a double portion because they weren't allowed to gather it on Saturday. The Manna Principle is essentially, "so much and no more is needed" realization. Perhaps you have seen the trend lately among wealthy celebrities. They are choosing not to pass along their fortunes to their children. They might not have lived by the principle themselves, but they know how bad it would be for their own kids not to buy into it. So much and no more is needed. The principle is simple. You only need so much to be happy and any more than that could be bad for you and cost you your happiness. Too much is not always easy to assess and often we fight against the thought of it being the case, but if we reflect with God, we can discover what it is for us.

When you put your ongoing happiness in what you have or even what you hope you will have, you run the risk of buying into the lie of Satan. "You don't need God to be happy. You can get by on your own." All you need is some more friends, some more lovers, some more movies, some more clothes or some more money and everything will be great. More is not always better and sometimes it is much worse. I have a friend who had gout and the only way he could get rid of it was by reducing the high amount of protein he was ingesting. He loved meats; they made him happy, but having gout was worse than going on a reduced meat diet. I heard a quote once. "No one talks about money more than people who have too much of it." You really don't know what gives you happiness until something is taken from you and your reaction to the loss will tell you much about yourself. Try giving things away or getting rid of what you don't really need. Pray and let the Holy Spirit guide you on what that is. Do you remember when God asked Job to pray for his friends who mistreated him badly? Why did the Lord have him do that? It was so Job would get rid of his anger over what they said to him. Perhaps the best thing you could get rid of is your disappointment with others. It just might make you happier and create a better you!