

# Lessons in having it all

Someone once wisely said, “Money can’t buy happiness, but we’re all willing to give it a second chance!”

Most of us are conflicted about money. We are often appalled by the incredible salaries that various CEOs, sports figures and entertainers make. Yet, when we look at their personal lives, they don’t seem to be any happier than most of us. In fact, many seem more miserable.

Jesus said to leave everything and follow him, yet the Gospels tell us that various women followed him and looked after his needs. Someone had some money. St. Paul, who left everything to follow Jesus, always seemed to be taking up some kind of collection. And the church that proclaims the Gospel of total trust in Jesus is also good at taking up collections.

If the “love of money is the root of all evil,” money itself seems to have a positive side to it.

What’s the answer to all of this? Part of the answer is found in a quote from the writings of Arne Garborg. He writes: “It is said that with money you can have everything. But you cannot. You can buy food, but not appetite; medicine, but not health; knowledge, but not wisdom; glitter, but not beauty; fun, but not joy; acquaintances but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; leisure, but not peace. You can have the husk of everything for money, but not the kernel.”

A powerful quote, isn’t it? Money can buy distractions, but money cannot buy joy. Most of us would agree that a certain amount of money is better than no money. Life is certainly easier with money to afford a place to live, a car, food, some creature comforts, and so on. Yet the world is filled with people who have multiple homes and cars and abundant food and creature comforts of every kind - and are still anxious, depressed, worried and unhappy.

What’s missing? What’s missing is love! To have everything, and to do everything, but not to be loving, is to have nothing at all. The romantic illusion tells us that we will be happy if we are loved. That’s exactly wrong. We will be happy if we are

loving. If we get married to be loved, we will be disappointed. If we get married in order to love the other person, we will be fulfilled.

If we are loving, then we will share our wealth and knowledge and food and comforts. The sharing and giving will bring us joy, not the accumulation. The stingy and the misers seem to live unhappy lives. Donors and philanthropists seem to live happy lives.

We can literally buy anything in our society - sex, drugs, comforts, and entertainment of every sort. We cannot buy love and joy and peace. They are found only in being loving, and being loving comes from identifying with the power of God - who, not surprisingly, is all happy precisely because God is all loving.

I think Dr. Joyce Brothers got it right years ago: "When you come right down to it, the secret of having it all is loving it all." When we love everyone and everything, nothing is separate from us. We have it all. We are like God.