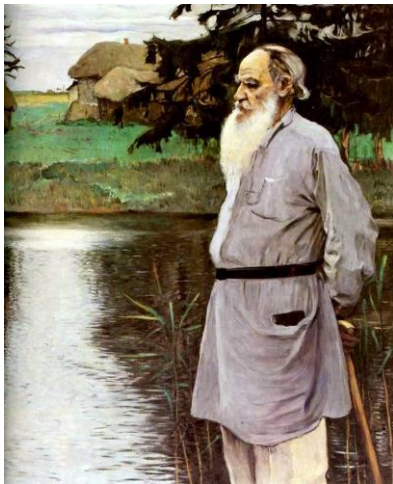


**THE LOVE OF JUST A LITTLE MORE**  
**A Devotional Meditation from**  
**Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Matthew 4:1-10; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; James 4:1-7**  
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Is money the root of all evil? That's how you might have heard it said if you have spent any significant time in church. That phrase comes from a word of advice the Apostle Paul wrote to his protégé, Timothy. The context is in 1 Timothy 6:6-10 –

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, So we cannot take anything out of it. But having food and clothing, with these things we shall be content. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil—some, longing for it, have gone astray from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:6-10 TLV)

Paul is careful to say, “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.” Money itself is neither good nor bad, but whether it is used for good or bad depends, like so much else, on the heart attitudes of the people who possess it, or want more of it. In fact, “wanting more of it” is the real problem, which is why Paul exhorts us that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Wanting just a little bit more is the issue. Are we satisfied with what we have? If not, why not? And if not, will anything satisfy us at all?



Portrait of Leo Tolstoy by Mikhail Nesterov, 1907, [via Wikimedia Commons](#).

A story by the famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy illustrates this point. He called it, “How Much Land Does A Man Need?”\* The story tells of a prosperous woman from the city who goes to visit her sister in the country. When she boasts of the fine things they have and can buy in the city, her sister responds,

“I would not change my way of life for yours. . . We may live roughly, but at least we are free from anxiety. You live in better style than we do, but though you often earn more than you need, you are very likely to lose all you have. You know the proverb, ‘Loss and gain are brothers twain.’ It often happens that people who are wealthy one day are begging their bread the next. Our way is safer. Though a peasant’s life is not a fat one, it is a long one. We shall never grow rich, but we shall always have enough to eat.”

Overhearing the conversation, her husband, Pahom, thinks to himself, “It is perfectly true. . . Busy as we are from childhood tilling Mother Earth, we peasants have no time to

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\* Leo Tolstoy, “How Much Land Does A Man Need?” in *What Men Live By and Other Tales*, Aylmer and Louise Maude trans, Project Gutenberg EBook #6157, Joe Jurca and David Widger prod., June 13, 2009 (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6157>)

let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!"

Tolstoy writes that this line of thinking gives the devil an opportunity to work mischief in Pahom's life. Pahom works hard over the next several years to buy land, and then to improve and expand his holdings, yet he is never satisfied. One day, he hears there is abundant land available in the far east, so he travels there and learns that he can buy as much land as he can walk around in a single day. The catch is that he must start at sunrise and return to the exact spot by sunset or he will lose all his money. Eager to acquire as large a landholding as possible, Pahom sets out at the crack of dawn, covering ground quickly. Seeing one desirable parcel after another, and he extends his route several times to take in just a little more.

Late in the day, he realizes he may have walked too far to return in time, so he quickens his pace. By the time the sun is nearly down, he is exhausted. Exerting himself one last time, he reaches the goal just as the sun disappears, but in that final effort, Pahom's exhausted body falls down dead. It is here that Tolstoy ends his story, saying: "His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in, and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed."

Tolstoy's stories have their roots in timeless Russian folk wisdom, which in turn has connections to eternal and universal principles our Creator instilled in humanity from the beginning. The prophets and apostles have reminded us of these principles since time immemorial.

It all goes back to the Garden of Eden, when our first ancestors decided they wanted just a little more than what the Creator had allotted them. He gave them all the fruit of the field except the one tree He had reserved for Himself, but instead of looking with contentment at the bounty available to them, they grasped what was not theirs in the vain hope that it would be enough to satisfy a craving they did not know they had until they listened to the serpent. In grasping for more, they lost everything.

Messiah Yeshua addressed that very issue when the serpent tempted Him, saying, "'It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" (Matthew 4:4 NASB) He was quoting from Deuteronomy 8, a passage in which Moses warned ancient Israel about this same danger. As he said:

Take care that you do not forget *ADONAI* your God by not keeping His *mitzvot*, ordinances and statutes that I am commanding you today. Otherwise, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply, and silver and gold multiplies for you and all that is yours multiplies, then your heart will be haughty and you will forget *ADONAI* your God. He brought you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. He led you through the great and terrible wilderness—fiery serpents and scorpions, and thirsty ground where there was no water. He brought forth water for you from the flinty rock. He fed you in the wilderness with *manna* that your fathers did not know, in order to afflict you and test you, to do you good in the end. You may say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand has made me this wealth. Rather you are to remember *ADONAI* your God, for it is He who gives you power to make wealth, in order to establish His covenant that He swore to your fathers—as it is

this day. “Now if you do forget *ADONAI* your God, and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you will certainly perish. Like the nations *ADONAI* makes perish before you, so you will perish, since you would not listen to the voice of *ADONAI* your God. (Deuteronomy 8:11-20 TLV)

Yeshua’s apostles issue the same warnings and exhortations that Moses gave to our ancestors in the covenant. Then as now, the cause and the cure are the same, just as James 4:1-7 tells us:

Where do quarrels and conflicts among you come from? Don’t they come from this, namely your passions that battle within your body parts? You crave and have not. You murder and you envy, yet you cannot get it. You fight and you wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives so you may spend it on your passions. You adulteresses! Don’t you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that in vain the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit which He made to dwell in us”? But He gives greater grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:1-7 TLV)

How do we avoid the trap of “just a little bit more”? By learning the discipline of contentment. When we trust our Creator to give us just what we need at the time we need it – and to give it in abundance – then we have no reason to grasp that which He has allotted to someone else.