

Possessing Everything

How to Find Happiness and Contentment Now

2Co 6:10 (NIV)

“sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”

I was walking up Ben Macdui, Britain’s second highest mountain early one morning meditating on this verse and asking God to speak.

I was asking God what does it mean to possess everything? I felt God say to me, with the loss of your own son Caleb, what would it mean to you to possess everything?

My answer was, if I had my son home again, if I could hold and have a relationship with my son that would be everything. I would literally possess everything if I had my son home. I could lack money, possessions, other relationships but to have your son back home, I could say I possess everything.

I felt God say, that’s what the Father’s heart longs for. To have my children home again. To have my children home is to possess everything. That’s why Father gave everything, His son to die on a Cross so His children could come home again to Father.

Then God reminded me of this verse in the parable of the prodigal son about the older brother.

Luke 15:31 (NIV)

*“My son,’ the father said, **‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’**”*

The younger son had asked for his share of the estate and squandered it on wild living. In those days when a father dies the oldest son received a double portion of what the other children inherited. If a father had 2 sons, the oldest would have gotten two-thirds of the estate and the younger would receive one third. But this was only to be distributed after a father’s death. To ask for it when the father is still alive is shockingly disrespectful. It was the same as wishing the dad was dead. The younger son was saying: **I want your things but I don’t want you father.**

We can be Christians and want Father’s things more than we actually want Father. How do I know if I’m more interested in Father’s things than Father?

Questions to ask:

- How much of my prayer consists of asking Father for things compared to praising Him, worshipping Him, listening to Him, waiting on Him and enjoying him?
- Are the things I really want from God about bringing Him and his children pleasure or me? Is it really more about my own pleasure than His?
- What consumes your thoughts? What can you do for Father or being with Father?

A traditional response in those days to such a disrespectful request would be to drive the son away with nothing but possibly a beating. But the father gives him what he asks for and loses an incredible amount of honour and is hurt by the painful rejection of his younger son.

He ends up feeding pigs and longs to eat the pig's food so he comes to his senses. He decides to try his luck, go home and ask to be made a hired servant. He walks home. From a long way off his father sees him, is filled with compassion and runs and throws his arms around him and kisses him. His father puts the best robe on him, a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. They kill the fattened calf and party. This is a lavish and extravagant love revealing the extravagant and lavish love of father. He does this before the son has a chance to clean up his life and show evidence of heart change or even recite his rehearsed speech. See Wingclips video: The Heart of a Man – Abba Father.

The older brother hears what's going on, gets angry and refuses to go in. Why is he so angry? Remember, the younger brother has already wasted a third of the family's estate. By bringing the younger son back into the family the father has made him an heir again with a right to a third of the now diminished family estate. His father goes out and pleads with the older brother and the older brother says:

Luk 15:29-31 (NIV)

"But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.'"

Look at how the older son describes his relationship to his father. Slaving and obedience and hoping for rewards. Sounds a bit like the Pharisees doesn't it. The elder brother shows that his obedience to father is nothing but duty. There is no joy or love, no reward in just seeing His father pleased. His relationship to his father is not about the father's pleasure but his own. Jesus is using the older brother to speak to and challenge the Pharisees in the crowd. The Pharisees are like the older brother. Slaving for God and focussed on obedience in everything. But their obedience is joyless, loveless, lacks mercy and is not about the Father's pleasure. They have managed to clean up their external lives but internally they are dead and very short on love and mercy. The older brother shows you can slave hard for Father, slave hard in obedience even cleaning up your life externally and yet be

dead inside like the Pharisees. All the hard work can come from the wrong motive. We can move from sonship to a slave mentality. It can become joyless and loveless. Jesus said to the Pharisees who had no mercy or compassion for lost people:

'On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." ¹

Matthew 9:12-13

The older brother was sacrificing and slaving for Father and obeying Him in everything. He focussed on hard work and obedience. That sounds great and noble doesn't it. Yet, like the Pharisees – he was good on the sacrifice part but low on love, joy and relationship. And when your low on love for Father, your love and mercy for others is low. Look at the Pharisees. How much compassion did they have for the lost, the hurting and the broken? Very little. And the older brother in the story. How much mercy did he have for his lost brother? Very little. Here's a question. Why did the older brother not go after and search for his younger brother? In Luke 15 Jesus tells the parables of the lost coin and sheep and in both someone goes and finds that which is lost. Not in the prodigal son story. Why not? The older brother should have gone but didn't. Why not? He was mad. He was angry. He was high on sacrifice and obedience yet low on mercy.

How do I know if I am more interested in getting things from Father than being with Father?

- How much mercy do you have for lost people?
- How much time do you spend praying for lost people?
- How much time do you spend with lost people?
- How much compassion do you feel for lost people?

If you are truly in a relationship with Father you will come to care about the things Father cares about. Your heart will be transformed to receive His desires over and above your own. That's sonship. When the Father's will becomes your will and you like Jesus can pray; "not my will but yours be done." And what does Father care about? Lost things. Lost coins, lost sheep and lost people.

If your sacrifice is high and your obedience in your view is high maybe you need to re-learn the words of Jesus: ***But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'*** The brother yes slaved hard, yes focussed on obedience but lacked mercy for his brother when he was away and even more so when he returned.

How do I know if I'm more interested in getting things from Father than being with Father?

- How easily angered am I when things don't go my way?

- How difficult do I find it to be happy when others are blessed and are shown mercy?

You become what you behold. 'And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.' 2 Corinthians 3:18. You become what you behold (to look intensely). Why is that? Possibly because when you look at something with longing you desire with your heart which influences your priorities, choices and decisions. Marketing people understand this and its why they want you to behold people their product so you desire and move towards them.

Behold the Father and you become more like him growing in the fruit of the Spirit. Am I growing in the fruit of the Spirit or growing more grumpy, irritable, judgmental and independent?

Let's compare the older's sons view to the father's in the parable:

31 *"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours."*

The older son viewed himself as slaving for the Father. The Father viewed it as "always with me". The son was focussed on what he was doing for Father. Like Martha, he was working hard for Father but missing the most important thing. Martha like the older son was working hard yet annoyed and irritable and lacking mercy for her sister. The Father was focussed on being with Father – you are always with me. ' "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42.

You are always with me the Father said. But that is not enough for the older son. His priority is not being with, pleasing and loving Father. His priority is slaving and obedience in order to "get everything" from Father.

The older son views it as "you have never even given me a young goat to celebrate with my friends". The Father viewed it as "everything I have is yours". This is similar to Paul's language – having nothing and yet possessing everything. Imagine you could reframe your thoughts – no matter what you lack or lose – you possess everything! Relationship and inheritance.

The elder brother said to the father – you never threw a party for me! He lacks assurance of the father's love. He did not have assurance the father loved him and delighted in him. He was trying to earn the Father's love when He already had it.

What is the Father seeing? What is he explaining? And can it give us some insight to help us understand:

2Co 6:10 (NIV)

“sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”

The older son was looking at the relationship in a servant-master mentality. I will work hard and obey and you will reward me. He was slaving for the Father rather than enjoying the father. He was a good servant but had not learned sonship. A big difference.

The father was viewing it as a father-son relationship. The father was surprised. He said: “You are always with me.” Is that not enough? Is being with me not enough? Everything I have is yours.

What both sons had in common is they both wanted the father’s goods rather than the father himself. The younger brother went away to get the father’s goods. The older brother stayed at home and “never disobeyed” to get the father’s goods. Both sons rebelled. One by being very bad and one by being very good. Both were distant in their relationship to father – both were lost sons.

Jesus is teaching that neither son loved the father for himself. They were both using the father for their self-centred ends rather than loving, enjoying and serving him for his own sake.

Tim Keller, Prodigal God, page 38:

“Underneath the brother’s sharply different patterns of behaviour is the same motivation and aim. Both are using the father in different ways to get the things on which their hearts are really fixed. It was the wealth not the love of the father, that they believed would make them happy and fulfilled.”

What do you think will make you really happy and fulfilled? When will you finally be content and happy? When your dreams come true? When all your prayers are answered? When you are successful? When you are married? When you have kids? When you have a job? When you retire? When you get a good pension? When you are recognised? When you are respected? What if we could be truly happy and fulfilled right now in every season because our joy, peace and strength comes from being with Father in his house? What if you could have nothing yet possess everything? Maybe that’s how you can like Paul be sorrowful yet rejoicing, poor and yet making many rich, having nothing and yet possessing everything.

At the end of the story the elder brother has an opportunity to truly delight the father by going into the feast. If the father’s happiness was the older son’s goal, he would have went into the party to make his father happy. But his refusal shows that his father’s happiness was not his goal or priority.

Elder brothers obey God to get things. They don’t obey God to get God himself, in order to be like him, love him, know him and delight him. Though the older son stayed at home, he was actually more distant and alienated from the father than his brother, because he was blind to his true condition. He would have been horribly

offended by the suggestion that he was rebelling against the father's authority and love, but he was, deeply.

What does all this mean?

Paul said in 2 Corinthian 6: "...*having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*"

I felt God say to me that to possess everything is to be at home with your son. You may have nothing materially but possess everything.

To always be at home with Father is everything. The younger son didn't realise he had everything. He thought "possessing everything" was to be outside the Father's home. He discovered as he was eating with the pigs that he used to "possess everything." Everything was being at home with father. But both sons had missed it.

Possessing everything cannot be found outside of relationship with Father. The younger son tried to find it in wild living and ended up possessing nothing. The older son tried to possess everything through slaving hard and obedience but was miserable and cold-hearted. Both sons needed to learn as Martha did and as we do, that to possess everything is being in Father's home enjoying Father.

Both were in the father's home and possessed everything the father owned. Yet they missed out on enjoying the father and making his joy their ultimate aim and purpose. They made their own happiness the ultimate goal. One left the home to find their happiness. One stayed at home as a "slave" to find happiness. Both missed it.

Both needed to learn and discover true sonship. How to live in the Father's home and love and serve him and make his happiness their highest end and purpose. And in doing so they would truly discover true happiness for themselves.

Psa 27:4 (NIV)

"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple."

'If you say, "The Lord is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent. '

Psalms 91:9-10

So how do I do this? How do I live peacefully and joyfully in Father's house?

1. Learn to receive His love daily. Come to Him and learn to be a son/daughter and receive his love.

2. Preach the gospel of grace to yourself every day. Come to the Cross, confess your sins and daily receive His forgiveness and joy of a clear conscience.
3. Gratitude. Practice gratitude daily in prayer and in everything give thanks.
4. Search your hearts. Make your highest goal to please Father. Let your motivation to serve come from His love for you. Do not let fear be your motivation.
5. Honour your Father. Honour your father by your speech and conduct. As children of your father represent the family well to others.
6. Father/mother others. **1Co 4:15 (NIV)** “Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” **1Th 2:11-12 (NIV)** 2

Father Me song – Brian Doerkson. and Pray.