

The Tragedy of Getting What You Want

Written by Bill Perkins

A paradigm defines the way we view something. For instance, if a man wears binoculars he'll see things far away better than things close. A paradigm shift would occur if he turned the binoculars around or placed them on a table.

The Money and Power Lens

In the spiritual realm, we need a paradigm shift. We tend to view success on the basis of money and power. Money works because it's an easy way to measure how we've done compared to others. It only takes a moment for someone to evaluate our success by observing the cars we drive, home we live in, and clothes we wear. Power is a bit tougher to evaluate because its symbols are more subtle. But as a general rule of thumb, the more money someone has the more power they wield.

An Elastic Heart

There's a problem though, isn't there? As we acquire wealth and influence we realize our heart is elastic. No matter how much we stuff into it, it always holds more. Solomon observed this when he wrote, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income" (Ecclesiastes.

5:10). Rabbi Harold Kushner said, "There are two tragedies in life. One is not getting what you want, and the other is getting it." Few sights are sadder than a wealthy man who feverishly fills his heart with more and more money, power and toys and is never satisfied.

The Other Tragedy

Equally heartbreaking is the person who suffers from self-loathing and despair because he failed to acquire wealth. Instead of driving a new Mercedes he drives a used Pinto and lives in an apartment. He feels like a failure as he struggles to make ends meet. Like the refrain from the country western song, he knows, "There's too much month at the end of the money."

God's Paradigm

Paul provides us with God's paradigm. He said, "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

God doesn't care about your income, investments, or influence. He only cares about your faithfulness. That's the one thing God wants from you. He wants you to do the best you can with what you have. No more. No less. He wants you to consistently trust him and obey his Word. Whether you have a little or a lot, if you're faithful, God's

applauding your life.

Such a paradigm shift is hard to accept. After all, who has been faithful with everything? Besides Jesus, nobody. That truth may cause you to believe God is giving you a thumbs-down rather than a standing ovation. Yet, Paul said, "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

A Standing Ovation

Did you catch the last phrase? Those two words, "each one," include you and me. When your life is brought into the light . . . a moment you may dread . . . God will give you a standing ovation. He will sort through what's hidden, find what's worthy and praise your faithfulness.

Living in this paradigm allows us to avoid both life tragedies.