

A Painful Lesson From the Jeff Bezos Divorce

This is not a slam on Jeff Bezos, either explicitly or implicitly. This is not an attack on the rich. Or on liberals. Or on any other group of people.

All kinds of people have marital problems. Evangelical Christians commit adultery. Conservatives divorce and remarry. Poor people experience broken homes.

All this is self-evident and needs no documentation.

The sobering lesson is that, as the Beatles sang, money can't buy us love. Or peace. Or contentment. Or a stable marriage. Or a sense of purpose. Or morality. Or freedom from inner demons.

In fact, it's often true that the more we have, the less content we are.

To be clear, poverty is not the key to happiness. Or peace. Or contentment. Or marital stability. Far from it.

Poverty is draining and demeaning. Poverty is burdensome. Poverty, in and of itself, is anything but a blessing.

I don't know anyone who thinks, "If only I were poor! Then I'd be happy and content."

Hardly.

But I know many who think, "If only I had more money! If only I were rich! Then I'd be happy and content."

Not so.

As Jesus warned, "Then He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness. For a man's life does not consist in the

abundance of his possessions' (Luke 12:15).

He also gave a warning to those who "[store] up treasure for [themselves], and [are] for themselves but [are] not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

The real question, then, is, are we rich toward God? Are we rich on the inside? That's the key to contentment, joy, purpose—and a healthy marriage.

Some of the most content children I have ever met were kids aged 3-15 who lived in a children's home in India. Some were orphans. Others came from families experiencing great hardship who were unable to care for their children.

These kids had a school uniform to wear and one additional set of clothing. They had no cell phones. No TVs. No computers.

They slept on the floor (more recently, they sleep on mattresses, several kids to each mattress), and they ate three simple meals a day.

But they were taught to love God. They were taught to pray and read the Bible. They were taught to love the poor and needy. To be compassionate. To respect their elders. To be wholesome.

They were not under pressure to dress a certain way or wear their hair a certain way or model themselves after the latest pop star.

Yet their smiles could light up the room, and along with getting the very best education offered in their entire community, they have gone on to productive careers, from pastors to medical doctors and from professors to homemakers.

The book of Proverbs reminds us of what really matters with pithy sayings like this: "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with trouble. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened calf with hatred" (Prov 15:16-17).

And this: “Better a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice” (Prov. 16:8).

Who would argue with this?

There’s something else that the Bezos divorce brings to mind (and, to repeat, this is not an attack on the man; I pray for God’s best for his life).

Beauty doesn’t bring happiness. Having a trophy wife or a stud husband doesn’t bring marital bliss.

In fact, often, it’s the rich and famous who struggle the most with self-image (just talk to a famous model about the internal battles many of them face). And often, it’s those who have access to anything, who have the most gorgeous men and women at their beck and call, who have the least long-term contentment.

Here’s some more wisdom from Proverbs.

“Better is a dry morsel with quietness than a house full of sacrifices with strife” (Prov. 17:1).

Who could argue with this?

Or this: “Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in his lips and is a fool” (Prov. 19:1).

What price can you put on integrity? Or morality?

And who could argue with this? “It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman [or man] in a wide house” (Prov. 21:9).

The point of all this is simple.

Let’s focus on our inner person more than on outward appearance.

Let's give more attention to the quality of our relationships than to the quantity of our possessions.

Let's put our emphasis on getting our spiritual houses in order before we pursue our earthly dreams.

Then, whether we're rich or poor, whether we're famous or unknown, whether we're beautiful or homely, we can be blessed and content. Our marriages can be strong. Our families can be whole. And we can go to sleep at night with peace and wake up in the morning with purpose.

Is there anything more important than that?