

## Things

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February 1997

Gary Larson, in his unique way, captured the deceptiveness of materialism in a cartoon. The cartoon pictures a bird who has won the lottery, and with his winnings he has built a cavernous cage on some tropical island. There he sits on his perch while the flamingoes wade in the water and distant birds fly through the sky. “Chico” feels “strangely unfulfilled” because he is not living as a bird is designed to live. The moral: money can’t buy happiness.

We Americans are overrun with “things.” We are all rich, by the rest of the world’s standards, but few of us tend to see ourselves in that category. It is so tempting to think that the pot of gold lies at the end of the right combination of lotto numbers; that a faster computer, a newer car, a bigger TV, digital sound, more square footage, etc. is the key to satisfaction, peace of mind and rest for the soul.

It ain’t so. Greater financial worth only paves more avenues of worry: *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition”* (1 Tim 6:9).

“But I don’t want to be *rich*,” some protest, “I just want enough to be ... comfortable.” But whatever level we think is “comfortable” must be maintained. If we decide that \$100,000 annually would afford a satisfying lifestyle, then once we reach that economic level it must be maintained against the encroachments of taxes, depreciation, inflation, sickness and injury, and other “moth and rust” forces (Mt 6:19-21).

And will we **truly** be satisfied with that \$100,000 income? Or would the life-style that it buys simply whet our appetite for more and finer things? Or would *making money itself* become our goal and mark of success as is the case with many wealthy people? Paul saw through all these material trappings and observed that *“godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Tim 6:6). Man wasn’t made to recline in luxury and opulence but to be honestly employed, enjoy family life, worship God, teach and otherwise help others and grow spiritually. Money doesn’t buy happiness; it just buys a bigger cage.