

On having enough

By [Steve Woolley](#)

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I was talking with some younger friends recently, and the subject of having enough came up. They have young families, mortgages, some loans to repay, college tuition to look forward to, their own so recently paid off, and a certain middle class lifestyle to which they've become accustomed. When, they wondered, would they have enough? Enough to not worry about money. Enough to pay all the bills, have enough left over, and be reasonably certain in the security of their financial future. It was not a matter of wanting to be rich, whatever that means, or to win the lottery. It was a question of what it might be like to have enough.

I remember those days. The days of my young family happily unaware that I had some anxiety about whether we would make it to the end of the month. Robbing Peter to pay Paul while syphoning some off to buy this or that that was what everyone else did for their families didn't work well at all. It was not a comfortable time because whatever enough was, it was not what we had. Enough was not just about money. It was also about possessions. Friends had newer stereos, better furniture, took more exotic vacations, went out to dinner more often, bought their kids better things, and so on, and so on, and so on. It was also about competitive career growth and social standing among our group of friends. It was enough that it looked like there would never be enough.

I'm not sure when that began to change. Somewhere, even before my children were out of college, it did begin to change. I became more comfortable with the idea that what we had was enough. Oddly enough, it was also a time when we began to tithe, and not just give what we could when we could. Maybe it had something to do with enough years as an adult to see that God had always been walking with us, even through the darkest and dumbest places, which, in turn, became a deeper trust in God's benevolent presence in the future of our daily lives. Maybe it takes that kind of distance in time to gain a decent perspective on things.

There is a danger in that. It can come close to the gospel of prosperity nonsense that has become so popular these days. It can come close to the 'God loves me more

than he loves you because see how well I'm doing' kind of hubris masquerading as piety that is so obnoxious to others, and is such lousy theology.

I think what happened is that I quit feeling that I was in competition with my friends and neighbors. I could be more content with what I had, and enjoy it to the fullest. I began to develop new friends. Some of them wealthy, but content and grateful for what they have. They delight in enjoying it, and part of their enjoyment is giving money away. Some of them are poor by most standards, but content and grateful for what they have. They delight in enjoying it. Part of their enjoyment is sharing their life and labor with others. Some of them are good old middle class who exhibit the same contentment and enjoyment. Contrary to the pop psychology of success, contentment with what they have discovered to be enough is not a second rate coping mechanism for not having reached 'the top'. Rather, it is a genuine enjoyment of life lived fully within the means available.

Here and there this odd lot group of friends mix together, enjoying each other in ways that have nothing to do with money or possessions, as such, and everything to do with what they share with each other. One thing they have in common is an unwillingness to live beyond their means while not begrudging the means of others. More often than not, they also share a profound sense of gratefulness for all that God has meant to them in their lives, and an equally profound trust in God's presence. They have enough.

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