

Moving from Scarcity to Sufficiency

By Bobby Schuller

So today I'm going to teach you a little secret on how to be a much happier person immediately with very little cost. How does that sound? Many of us; many of us have had amazing experiences in life. Many of those great experiences were religious. I've told you about a great encounter I had with the Holy Spirit when I was ten years old in this tent. It's another story for another time. But many of us have had these mountain-top type experiences where we just feel so full of God's life. Maybe the point where you received Christ, or maybe you had a time in your life where you came back to Christ, or maybe you just after you got married, or after you had a kid, or got a promotion, there are these seasons in life where you feel so overwhelmed with joy. And maybe today you don't feel that way. I have a word for you.

For many of us, we find ourselves going through life in the rhythms. We look back and we wonder 'where did all that time go' and that makes us feel more depressed or sad. I don't mean to laugh at that. But we find ourselves going through life wondering where God is. We find ourselves living from a place of scarcity, of insufficiency.

And today I want to encourage you that there is a way to completely just open up heaven in your life, to completely experience everything that heaven has to offer, and its one word. You know what it is? It's gratitude. Gratitude. Regular practices of gratitude are proved,

both in the bible and scientifically to completely fill your heart with happiness, joy and actually make you a more successful, less stressed out and healthier person. There's never been a more rewarding practice for such a low cost than regular practices of gratitude.

I believe that gratitude completely opens up your heart and your mind to the sufficiency of heaven. In heaven there is no lack, there is no insufficiency, nobody's hungry, nobody's dying, nobody's crying, nobody's bored. In heaven, people are so overwhelmed with joy. And that feeling, that emotional feeling is available to you right now. And the way to completely open up your heart to the amazing things that heaven has to offer is to be a grateful, thankful person. To go out of your way to thank people and to thank God and to think about the tremendously great things that you have in your life today, in spite of all the things that you're missing.

And I know life is hard. I know life will hit you but it's not going to stop hitting you. And we have to remember between all those peaks and valleys that the thing that sustains us is gratitude. Walking in faith saying maybe I don't have some of the things I would have yet, and maybe I'm missing some of the things, maybe I just lost something big, but to live from a place of just saying thank you completely opens up the heavens to your life to be just completely overflowing with good stuff.

And let me just say I know you are a grateful person and people are glad to be around you because you are the type of person that says thank you and that lives thank you, and that's a really great thing.

Today we're going to talk about the tenth commandment. Now let me just pause for a minute. I know it's January, and you thought we weren't going to finish the Ten Commandments but we're going to kick off this New Year with the tenth commandment. How does that sound, everybody? Yes.

So today we're talking about the 10th commandment and it's such an important one. And it is the opposite of gratitude. The 10th commandment is this: you shall not covet. You shall not covet. There are a couple things about this commandment that are important. First, coveting is not envy and that's really important. Coveting is envy with intent. Coveting means that not only you desire something that somebody else has, but you desire it to the point that your heart is poisoned towards them; that you've now maligned them in your heart and mind. And that you intend, in some way or another, to get what they have.

And what's amazing about this command is that it's not very Jewish, in a way. Let me explain that. Traditional religious Jews are very concerned with what you do, not what you feel or think. It's very much about how you act and how you treat people. So in Judaism, it's all about what you do. So it's weird that the greatest moral code in human

history ends with not legislating your actions, but your thought. This is the one thing we don't want you to ever think and that is coveting. Coveting means to desire with intent. And if I were going to pick a contemporary word for coveting, it would be this: entitlement. Entitlement. I deserve that. They don't deserve that promotion, I do. They bend the rules to get that. It's not fair that they have that and I don't. I should take that somehow. Coveting or entitlement poisons the heart and will never get you what you think it will get you. That is not you. You are not a grumpy, entitled, envious person. You are a grateful, joyful, life-giving, encouraging person. You're the type of person that people can celebrate with. So do not fall into the trap of getting mad at others because they have a state of being, or they have things that you want to have. Let it go and live every day with gratitude for the good things you have in your life and watch as the heavens just spill over into your life with favor and goodness and blessing.

The most common story that's used in tradition to talk about coveting is the story of King Ahab and Jezebel and Nabath's vineyard. If you're not familiar with this bible story, then you're like 99% of other religious people. It's not one they tell a lot. King Ahab was the king of Samaria and he had a palace in the southern part of the Sea of Galilee. And right near his palace was this vineyard, beautiful vineyard, and this is from 1st Kings. He wanted to take the vineyard and turn it into a new vegetable garden. So he went down to the owner of this vineyard, his

name was Nabath. And he said Nabath, buddy, look I know you like this vineyard, I'm willing to pay you way, way, way more than it's worth. How much do you.. just say a number and I'll buy it from you. Whatever you say, whatever price you want. Nabath says good king I can't sell you this land. This was my father's land and my grandfather's land and my great grandfather's land. And in fact Jewish tradition and the way that he had gotten the land prohibited him from selling it. So he just said I cannot sell you this land.

King Ahab, wicked king says Nabath you need to sell me this land. I'll give you a vineyard that's way better than this one. I'll give you anything you want. And of course Nabath says good king I can't sell you this land for your vegetable garden. This is my ancestral land.

So Ahab goes back to his palace. He's fuming. He's all upset. He refuses to go to dinner. He lays down sulking in bed and his wife, his queen Jezebel comes and sits with him and she says.. in verse 15 says she said baby what's wrong? And he says to Jezebel, it's that Nabath guy. I want to put my vegetable garden there. I'd give him anything he wants. Technically it's my land anyway, I am the king, and he won't sell it to me. Jezebel says let me take care of this. So she disappears. She writes a bunch of letters in King Ahab's name. She sets up a false trial for him, for Nabath, and has him executed. And then Ahab hears that Nabath has died and goes and takes the vineyard, the very thing he wanted.

Now the scripture doesn't tell us whether or not Nabath knew that his coveting led to the death and murder of his neighbor and the theft of his property, but you kind of think he does. It's kind of like one of those grey areas where I'm not sure I know how he died, but the guy was not a great guy anyway. He wouldn't sell me his property and now I get what I want. And that is human nature, isn't it. When you covet something, very often you dehumanize the one who has what you want. They stole it. They weren't being fair. It's mine anyway. I ought to take it from them. I'm only stealing from a thief. These are the thoughts, and of course they're deceptions, but these are the thoughts that go through your head when you feel entitlement. And in the end what happens is God activates the prophet Elijah to go talk to Ahab and Elijah professes a curse and judgment over Ahab for his sin.

This is what we learn from this story. When we feel coveting towards something else, even if we get it, that thing you get becomes Nabath's vineyard. It becomes a curse to you. You may get the thing that you envied and you coveted. You may have bent the rules to get it, but it is not going to make your life better. It will make you more thirsty, more insatiable, more restless, and that's not you. You are not an entitled, greedy, angry, embittered person. You are a good person that can rejoice with others when good things happen for them, and can be thankful for the good things God has given you.

The lesson of Nabath's vineyard is that coveting, even if you get it, won't bring you any joy because you were expecting to get it anyway, so you just got what you expected. God has much more in store for you than those little things that you want. And you're saying well Bobby I mean does that mean I can't desire anything? Does that mean I can't even envy? Actually, it may not be that bad to envy. If you desire something that your neighbor has, covet means you envy with intent, but to desire something that your neighbor has, as long as you're happy for your friend, that's okay. Look at Chad Blake's clothes. I want Chad Blake's clothes. He's one of the best dressed guys I know. But do I want to curse Chad or take Chad's stuff? No! I'm very happy for Chad. And I can be grateful for what I have and work my way up to a nice pair of brown shoes someday. I still have these.. four years old. Four years old.

Russ Jacobson has a membership to Club 33. Do I want a membership to Club 33? Yes, I do. Do I want to take Russ' membership? Sometimes. No, it's okay to desire what others have. That's okay. Desire is a good thing and very often God wants you to desire things, too. But to grow embittered or jealous or angry or blame others or say he's such a hot shot, or she thinks she's so great because they have something that you want. And that could even be, I learned from Tully, that can even be a state of being that sometimes you can be envious of the fact that somebody's just happy. And it is time to let that go. That's not who you are. You're a joy filled person who encourages others, that lives every day

from a place of gratitude. You are just so grateful to have breath in your lungs, and so am I. I'm so glad I woke up today, aren't you? I'm so glad to be alive, in spite of all the challenges that life has thrown at me, I am so glad to be alive. So desire is fine, as long as desire doesn't turn into coveting.

Here's a quote from, and you can say this, its Maimonides, The Rambam. Tell me that's not the coolest name ever. Maimonides, The Rambam is one of the greatest living Torah scholars in the Jewish tradition, and this is a real quote. Real. This is from a thousand years ago. Desire can lead to coveting, coveting leads to stealing, and stealing leads to the dark side. I couldn't leave it out. It sounds like Yoda, doesn't it?

So the reason coveting is so bad is it leads to a very, very dark place. In other words, coveting leads to depression. Entitlement leads to depression. Even if you get the things you feel entitled to. Gratitude, though, leads to joy. Gratitude leads to success. Gratitude leads to a full, rich life, and that is available to you right now if you just begin recognizing all the fantastic things you have in your life, like the very breath in your lungs. Practicing gratitude opens our heart. It moves us from a place of scarcity and lack to a place of sufficiency, rest, joy, faith and overflowing.

There's a great quote from Lynne Twist in her book "The Soul of Money: Transforming your relationship with money and life." And this is

such a great thought. She said “for me and for so many of us, our first waking thought of the day is I didn’t get enough sleep. The next one is I don’t have enough time. Whether true or not, that thought of not enough occurs to us automatically before we even think to question or examine it. We spend most of our hours and days of our lives hearing, explaining, complaining or worrying about what we don’t have enough of. Before we even sit up in bed, before our feet touch the floor, we’re already inadequate, already behind, already losing, already lacking something. And by the time we go to bed at night, our minds are racing with a litany of what we didn’t get, or what we didn’t get done that day. We go to sleep burdened by those thoughts and wake up to the reverie of lack; this internal condition of scarcity; this mindset of scarcity lives at the very heart of our jealousies, our greed, our prejudice and our arguments with life.”

Many of us feel that every day just like I’m always behind, I’ve always got to catch up, I don’t have enough energy and I don’t have enough time. But when we focus on what we lack, we lose sight of the great things that we have. Dennis Prager called this the missing tile syndrome, and I think that’s great. Dennis Prager was saying that he was with a friend of his, and they were like ying and yang, you know positive and negative, and they were at some beautiful church somewhere, and on the ceiling was this amazing mosaic. You know a mosaic is a collection of different colored tiles that forms a beautiful picture. And as

they looked up at this amazing ancient mosaic, he said to his friend, isn't that gorgeous? And his friend looked at him and said yes, it's pretty. There's a tile missing. And he said what? And he goes well look, right there on Jesus' cheek there's a tile missing. And he said that there's something that happens in life when we focus so much on what we lack, all we can see is that other people have that thing that we want.

He said he had a friend who was going bald and all his friend could see were men with big bushels of hair. All men had hair now. He said I'd never seen the world through that lens before. Or maybe if you want to be married, all of sudden all your friends are getting married. Or if you want to have kids, all of your friends are getting pregnant. I remember when I went to Venice back when Hannah barely knew my name, and she was dating some guy. I was so in love with Hannah, and I was like heartbroken because I was actually working, and I went to Venice for the first time and I'm walking around and everyone's in love. Everybody's there with their spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend or old people, young people, everybody's kissing. And all I could think about is just how lonely I am. It's this missing tile in my life.

Maybe that's where you are. Maybe right now there's just this big thing, this big hole in your heart. Maybe you're empty nesting, or whatever it is. Maybe you just lost your job, or maybe you just didn't think you'd be where you are in life and all you can see is that other people are getting the thing that you want to get. I don't think Facebook

and Instagram help much with that. You see the best version of everybody's life.

And I just want to say to you it's okay to grieve that. In fact it's good to grieve that and it's good to feel that, and it's good to not bury that. But don't dwell on it. Because in life, when that tile gets filled, and I'm going to believe for you it will get filled, some other tile will fall out. Isn't that just how life is? Put the tile in and.. Right? That's life. Every time a tile gets filled, another tile falls out.

In other words, life's going to hit you and it always does. There will be always something that isn't the way it should be. Until Christ returns, this life and the in-between that we live in, there will always be something we want that somebody else has. There will always be a thirst, an insufficiency, a lack, unless you get to a place where you can walk by faith and be at peace that sometimes a beautiful picture can have tiles missing from it. And look at your own life and say look how great my life is. Thank you, God. And when you say that, all of heaven just spills over into your life. Saying thank you is not easy. Saying thank you is hard. It requires a courage, it requires facing the hardship of life and saying I am still glad and I trust God. And you can. That's who you are. You are not an angry, depressed, embittered, envious, jealous person. You are a life giving, encouraging person that people love to be around because you practice gratitude. Gratitude opens up your heart. You guys are great. The clapping in this church is terrific. It reminds me of the old churches

in Oklahoma there would be like an amen section and I think clapping is like amen here, so I appreciate that. They say saying amen to a preacher is like saying to a dog sic 'em. Anyway, Amen! Amen! All right. I digress.

The great thing about practicing gratitude.. see that's what worship is, by the way. When you worship God, it's just creative ways of saying thank you. And that's why sometimes our greatest encounters with God are in worship. It's when as a community we decide that in spite of all the challenges and all the things that are missing in our life, we're just going to say thank you. That was Dallas Willard's last word. The man died, he died a mentor and somebody that I loved dearly, and a great writer. His last words were just thank you. I want to live from that place. Whatever is challenging me, I want to say thank you God for all that I have. And as you do that, as you say thank you in the midst of your storm, not thank you for the storm, but thank you for what I have, you'll just see as heaven will overflow into your life.

Here's the secret: grateful people attract great blessing. Grateful people attract favor and this is just the truth. In fact not only does the bible teach us this, but science teaches us this that grateful, positive people are more successful, they live longer, they do better in their work, they have better relationships. Gratitude moves you from a heart of walking with a fist to just an open hand in life to receive from life, and see in life all the good things that are happening.

I don't know if you've ever given something to somebody and they didn't really care, or really say thank you, you're probably response to that was they're not getting anything ever again. How do you think God feels when he gives you good things in life and you don't recognize it, right? And what about the opposite? When some kid or somebody just like you give them some little thing and they're just over the moon about it. You're like take everything! Take all I have!

I remember when Haven did that once to me. She loves to play my phone and play games on the phone. And there's this trick now. Free games on the phone? They're not free because you can't really enjoy them unless you're throwing money at the game. So she buys this My Little Pony game, and it only lets you play the first level for free. It's like getting a taste at the ice cream stand, and you can't have the whole cone. And so she beats the level and there are 15 other levels, and she comes and she says daddy, will you open up this new land, it's just a dollar. I say let me look at that. And I look at it and she says one dollar to open up Rainbow Land. And I think all right, one dollar. But its \$3 to open up all 15. So I'm like you know what, not only would it be \$15 when all is said and done, cause she's going to keep bringing it back to me, but I'm just want to get this. So I just buy.. I go girl, I'm going to buy all these for you. And so I lay down \$3 on that I-Phone and freed up the whole game for her, and it was like she was just saved from an execution. I had never seen someone so full of joy. She jumped up and down, she screamed, she

threw her arms around my neck, she said thank you, daddy, thank you. She took the phone and ran it up to Hannah to prove that something so awesome had actually happened to her.

And when you think about generosity, I mean I was like now when she wants a game, I'm like okay let's buy another game. Or sometimes I'm like you want me to buy you a game? You want a game? See that's what gratitude does. When you're really grateful for what you have in life, especially when you're grateful to God, or to your colleagues, or to your spouse, or to others, when you go out of your way to really give a heartfelt thanks, you just open up a world of blessing to your life. And that's what you do. You know the importance of taking time to put your hand on someone's shoulder and just say I am so thankful for you. It means the world. And it erodes all that entitlement, all that envy, all that greed, all that anger, it just gets washed away because when you say thank you to someone, you can actually.. not thank you, but like if you really say thank you to someone, you feel it in your body. Like you feel the goose bumps and it gives you an incredible sense of joy.

And there's real science to that. There are lots of studies that have been done on this. My favorite is from a man named Chris Peterson, who's a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan. He just died recently, 2012. But after his death, there was just an outpouring of students and colleagues that loved being around this guy and felt so blessed by him. If I understand right, he confessed that he himself

struggled with negativity and so in order to combat that, he studied positive psychology and did a lot of ground breaking work into how positive psychology is really helpful to succeeding in life, to having a healthy body.

And one of the things he would always do, and I love this, he would have his students, his college students write a letter to someone they appreciate and really write a thoughtful letter. And he would say don't put it in jokes and stuff, make it a heartfelt letter. And then go and read that letter to the person it was written to. Read it aloud. And he said he got so much feedback from these students, positive feedback about how much this had impacted their lives, and the life of the person they read the letter to that he decided, as a good scientist does, to put it in a lab.

So he began measuring happiness and different things, and seeing what this letter would do. And what he and his colleagues found out was that one gratitude letter, one experience where you write down the letter and read it aloud to someone overall led to an increase of happiness and a decrease of boredom for a whole month. That it had a residual of one whole month of more happiness and less boredom. What a small price to pay. And what a great thing to do in an age when so many professors are teaching their students to be entitled, and angry, and to blame others, somebody is teaching students to be positive, to be thankful, and to be hopeful, and that is what we need, and good on him for that.

We need students and we need young people and we need fresh hopeful visionaries. Not people who look around and blame everybody else and say everything isn't the way it should be. We need people who are positive, who are life-giving, who are encouraging. We need leaders in business and politics and especially in the church to pave a hopeful way forward. And if you want to have a vision for that, you just begin to practice gratitude. Just begin thanking God and others for the good things in your life and just watch. So much of your stress and boredom goes away. And that your life just fills up with vision, with purpose, with success, with goodness. That's what happens when you intentionally decide to be thankful for all that you have, even the little things. It makes all the difference in the world.

The world needs people like you. You are the kind of person who is so overflowing with life and joy, the kind of person that is grateful for the things that you have. And that's why so many are drawn to you, and that's a good, good thing. Keep it up. I'm proud of you.

Father, we thank you for calling us here today and I pray in Jesus' name that you would build into our hearts a clear vision, not to see what we lack, but to see what we have. And to open our hearts to all the opportunity this world has to offer. We want to do life with Jesus Christ. We pray, Lord, that you'd teach us to walk as you walked on this earth – full of life, full of healing, full of wisdom. It all comes from you and from your word and we thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

