

Do nice clothes really lead to ruin and destruction?

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I am prone to desiring things that are beyond my financial reach, or at least beyond what I'm willing to spend. Sometimes it's big-ticket items: cars, tropical vacations, houses that have a shorter list of needed repairs. Other times the price tag on my desire is smaller: a designer purse or a fancy pair of shoes. I'm a sucker for window-shopping the latest trends, caught between financial sensibility and a strong lust for the beautiful. I usually leave the mall empty-handed, laden not with shopping bags but with a sense of discontent.

"If we have food and clothing," says 1 Timothy, "we will be content with these." I understand "clothing" to refer here to basic needs, not the latest fashions. And I know this is right: I am content, or at least I should be. But there is a strong temptation to have more, even at the risk of "ruin and destruction." Other people have the things I want, and they seem fine. I mean, how bad can that be, really?

One of my favorite reality checks--both for myself and for others--is the Global Rich List. Enter your annual income or your accumulated wealth and find out where you rank globally. It's a simple website with an eye-opening reminder of how people live around the world. Even with a very rough estimate, it's easy to see that I have a lot.

Whether we're trying to keep up with the neighbors or just trying to keep afloat, the desire for more is often fueled by the sense that while we might have much, we don't have enough. Contentment, of course, is more than recognizing that my place in the global economy isn't so bad after all, which feels a bit like finding peace at someone else's expense. Instead, being content is peace of mind and spirit, recognizing that today is enough in all things.