

The Secret To Living A Contented Life

'The (reverent, worshipful) fear of God leads to (Spiritual) life then contentment. They rest and will not be touched by trouble' (Proverbs 19:23). 'Be content with your wages' (Luke 3:14). 'I have learned whatever state I am in, to be content in it. I know how to be humbled and I know also how to abound. In everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, to abound and to be in need' (Philippians 4:11 & 12). 'Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into the world and we certainly cannot carry anything out. Be content having food and clothing. Those who are determined to be wealthy fall into a temptation and a snare with many foolish and harmful lusts such as men drowning in ruin and destruction. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows' (1 Timothy 6:6 to 10).

Many people, including many Christians think a contented life is one of wealth, stable job, large home, a new vehicle every few years, good wife/husband, nice children, expensive clothes, good church and being able to get along with the in-laws. That is not what the writers of the Bible meant when they refer to contentment. Placing our hope in these worldly aspects is a counterfeit view. Although not necessarily sinful, that viewpoint can only lead to discontent and overwhelming heartache if a disaster comes along and these gains are suddenly gone. Floods, storms, fire, burglary or death in the family can bring terrible losses but if people focus on God more than possessions, they will be able to stand in the day of trouble. 'It is well with the man who deals graciously ... he will never be shaken ... he will not be afraid of evil news, his heart is steadfast, trusting in God, his heart is established, he will not be afraid in the end. He has dispersed his wealth and has given to the poor. His reputation will be exalted with honour' (Psalm 112:5 to 9).

Righteous Job had many possessions and everything was suddenly lost to him including his ten adult children but Job's losses were from a demonic attack, his evil day, after which he was able to stand, drawing from the strength he gained from God. 'Put on the whole armour of God so you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand' (Ephesians 6:13). After Job lost everything, he bowed down and worshipped the Lord. 'Job tore his robe and shaved his head then fell down on the ground and worshiped. He said, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked will I return (to God). God gave and God has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this trouble, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrongdoing' (Job 1:20 to 22). After losing everything Job became seriously ill so he also lost his good health. Could you as a Christian respond to intense trouble the same as Job did? There are some Christians who go through terrible trauma yet they continue to worship the Lord because we know full well, no trauma on earth can pluck us out of the Lord's hand (John 10:28 & 29), plus once we finally get to heaven we will be rewarded for every negative thing we have been through (Matthew 5:12). We must focus solely on our salvation and our eternal walk with God and not focus on transient earthly troubles. 'The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us' (Romans 8:18).

If we have roof over our heads, healthy food and reasonable clothing we should be content. It might come as a surprise to some people but as long as we have adequate shelter, we do not actually need a huge flashy house. Always striving for a bigger home, new cars, more money, new clothes, bigger television and a more 'perfect' spouse can destroy lives. Mankind is bombarded with advertising in glossy magazines, the internet, social media, television, billboards, encouraging people to buy new things, temptations to gamble, drink alcohol and to eat, eat, eat. Fast food/junk food outlets show young slim people having a great time eating fattening, unhealthy foods but they never show the victims of obesity, heart failure or stroke caused by eating junk foods. As long as we have enough healthy food to live on, we do not need fatty, salty, sugary junk foods, which in the long term are very bad for us. 'Their eyes bulge with fat. Their minds pass the limits of conceit' (Psalm 73:7). God created healthy food for humans and all animals to eat (Genesis 1:30). He did not give us junk food and warned people not to eat blood or fat (Leviticus 3:17).

Marriages destroyed by alcoholism or gambling are never mentioned in advertisements. The brainwashing within advertising continues on and on even though most advertising exaggerates the capabilities of their products without revealing the weaknesses of those products. Advertising breeds discontent. People are made to feel inferior if their vehicle is not the newest and best brand, or if their furniture is not new and as expensive as their wealthy neighbours. Young people are made to feel 'ugly' if their bodies are not perfect or their clothes, make-up, hair or perfume is not the most modern or the best. We do not need new clothing every week. Some of us are content wearing clothes until they are too worn out to wear. If we think back to the Children of Israel, their clothing and shoes lasted for many years. "I (the Lord God) have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not grown old on you and your shoes have not grown old on your feet" (Deuteronomy 29:5).

Older people are made to feel inferior if the advertised skin care range cannot eliminate wrinkles, which are actually a very natural sign of maturity. Children are bullied at school if their phone or shoes are not the most

expensive, which can leave them with a life-long feeling of 'needing' the best. True contentment can never be achieved by worldly possessions. A 100% contented life is unachievable. Society lives in a constant state of being unhappy with what they have and advertising plays on that insecurity and discontent. Greed destroys lives and sometimes seduces people away from God. This is what the Bible means when it says, 'Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows'. The Lord provides our needs but not usually our unnecessary desires, which God regards as lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Jesus said, "Beware! Keep yourselves from greed, for your life does not consist of the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

The Bible discourages people from wanting more and more, it discourages people from hoarding, it discourages people from greed and it tells us how to be content without having more than we actually need. Hoarders or 'collectors' as they call themselves, are called fools in the Bible, especially when they purchase bigger buildings to house their abundant items like a man in one of the parables who wanted to pull down his barns and rebuild larger ones to keep his abundance when God said to him, "You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you. The things you have hoarded, whose will they be?" So are they who lay up treasure for themselves and are not rich toward God' (Luke 12:20 & 21). Jesus said, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven then come and follow Me." But when the young man heard that, he went away sad for he was one who had great possessions. Jesus said to His disciples, "Most certainly I say to you, a rich man will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven with difficulty. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:21 to 24). When people love their possessions more than they love God, their possessions have become their god.

If people have more money than they need to survive they should do what Jesus said and give some of it away to help the poor, not spend it on things they do not really need. The divine calling on every believer is to live a Godly life, not a wealthy one. That is why the 'prosperity theory' is misleading and false, especially when the teachers of that theory say to normal people, there is something wrong with their walk with God if they are not wealthy. That is so wicked. Jesus said we will always have poor among us and at any time we can do what is right by them and help them financially (Mark 14:7). Being poor does not mean their walk with God is in any way inadequate. Look at dear old Lazarus. 'There was a rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, living in luxury every day. A beggar named Lazarus lay at his gate, full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores. Lazarus died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. He cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus so he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am in anguish in this flame." But Abraham said, "Son, remember in your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus, in like manner received bad things, but now here he is comforted and you are in anguish. Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed so those who want to pass from here to you are not able, and none may cross over from there to us." He said, "I ask you therefore father, send him to my father's house for I have five brothers, to testify to them so they will not come to this place of torment." But Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them." He said, "No father Abraham, if one goes to them from the dead they will repent." Abraham said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if One (Jesus) rises from the dead" (Luke 16:19 to 31). There was nothing wrong with Lazarus' walk with God. He ended up heaven. The fault lay with the wealthy man's walk with God. If you are a very wealthy believer and spend your money on worthless pursuits, you could easily end up like the rich man while the poor you should have helped will end up in heaven. That is something to consider.

True contentment is to be satisfied with what we have and what we look like. Nobody can improve on our looks. God gave us our face and to Him we are beautiful and there is no need to wear make up or change ourselves in any way. Vanity and conceit are sin. 'How long will you people love vanity and seek after falsehood?' (Psalm 4:2). 'God will not tolerate those who are proud and conceited' (Psalm 101:5). We are what we are, so we all need to be happy with how God created us. 'O man, who are you to argue against God? Will the thing formed ask Him who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?"' (Romans 9:20). The Lord has strongly told us not to worry about earthly 'things' (John 14:1). The less people worry about themselves, the more content they will be. Our needs will be provided but selfish desires may not be given to us. 'You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so you may use it for your own pleasures' (James 4:3). Many people trust their income more than they trust God. Many religious ministers trust the congregation's tithes and offerings more than they trust the Lord's provision. We need to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). 'Those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty' (Psalm 91:1). We need to rest in the Lord. We need the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding and emotion (Philippians 4:7).

It is impossible to live a contented life if a person does not trust in God's provision. Striving does not make trust a reality. Trusting God comes from a heart to heart relationship with Him, studying the Bible and fully accepting who we are in God. We are the righteousness of God through the blood of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21). By accepting Jesus we are children of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 13:38). The blood of Jesus has removed our shame and guilt. 'There is no condemnation to those who are in Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life in Jesus made us free from the law of sin and of death' (Romans 8:1 & 2). We are called, sanctified, washed, justified and glorified (1 Corinthians 6:11; Romans 8:30). The blood of Jesus has made us worthy, forgiven, powerful and victorious. 'In all these things, we are more than conquerors through God Who loved us ... not death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will ever be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus our Lord' (Romans 8:37 to 39). We are God's children and joint heirs with Jesus (Romans 8:17). It is His will for us to walk in the power and authority of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). Once we have our place in God and in the Kingdom settled deeply in our hearts, souls and minds, it is hard to feel any discontent. We should feel only excitement. We are saved, delivered from spiritual death, we walk with the Creator of the entire universe and everything in it, and He lives within us. If that is not exciting enough, then read this amazing statement telling us where we are in God and what our future is, as long as you are born-again and continue walking with the Lord. 'You (yes, you) have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to innumerable multitudes of angels, to the (heavenly) general assembly and assembly (Body of believers in Jesus) of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the (heavenly, immortal) spirits of just men made perfect (in death), to Jesus, the Mediator of a New Covenant and to the blood of sprinkling (Jesus' blood) that speaks better than Abel's blood. See that you do not refuse God Who speaks, for if they did not escape when they refused Noah who warned on the Earth, how much more will we not escape who turn away from God Who warns from heaven' (Hebrews 12:22 to 25).

In our overly busy world, resting in the Lord can be hard. Everything is at our fingertips so when God tells us to wait, some people fail in their walk in God because they want everything immediately. Being extremely busy is not the life God wants for us. Not only is constant rushing bad for our physical health, it is also bad for our spiritual health. Living a life of constant discontent keeps us focused on circumstances, desires and imagined needs when we need to concentrate on the things of God. 'Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and he will do this for you ... Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him ... Do not fret, it leads only to evildoing' (Psalm 37:3 to 8). The Lord wants us to rest in His perfect peace, that silence and calm He gives to those people who love Him, trust Him, obey Him and seek Him regardless of their circumstances. We need to realise, ultimately God is sovereign and He is in control so striving reduces our trust in Him. We were created by Him for Himself (Colossians 1:16) so we actually belong to Him (Psalm 89:11) and we must surrender our will to His will just like Jesus did (Luke 22:42). Sinfulness in this world has conditioned us to be independent of God and solve our own problems, to take care of ourselves but what God wants is for us to stop striving and lean on Him (1 Peter 5:7). The world can only offer us stress, distraction and temptation. When we let our burdens go and give them over to God to deal with, we can rest, spend more time with Him in prayer, Bible study and really learn to enjoy being in His presence. When we are very close to the Lord we can experience the immense fulfilling joy of being in His company. God draws near to people who choose to sit in His presence (James 4:8) and with His presence comes rest, fulfilment and quiet contentment. Contentment achieved by sitting with the Lord brings a spiritual sweetness, an inwardly quiet gracious Spirit, a feeling like nothing else matters.

Moses was contented with his life when he lived in Midian with his in-laws. 'Moses was content to dwell with the man (Jethro) who gave Moses, Zipporah his daughter as his wife ... Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian' (Exodus 2:21; 3:1). The Apostles knew the secret to a contented life (Philippians 4:12). Thankfulness, gratitude and gratefulness bring contentment and joy. When we trust in the Lord and rest in His Kingly sovereignty our reactions to situations can be a witness to unsaved people who are living without the hope of salvation. Gratitude is what protects us from the temptation to be discontent. We have the power to live a contented life regardless of circumstances if we are not slaves to the god of this carnal world. We know Who our God is and having a close, loving relationship with Him with a grateful heart is the secret to a contented life. 'Be free from the love of money and be content with what you have' (Hebrews 13:5).

Amen and God bless you.

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