

Contentment ***Philippians 4:10-14***

Contentment:

What Is It & Why Is It So Elusive?

- What's Your Definition?

- The Big Three:

- ✓ Human Nature
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ American Culture

Today's Passage:

Philippians 4:10-14

- ✓ Contentment is learned not acquired.
- ✓ It is independent of circumstances.
- ✓ Verse 13 is about contentment – not success!

The Secret To Biblical Contentment

1st • Understand What It Is.

The ability to handle anything.

2nd • Understand What It's Not.

- ❶ It's not loving everything just the way it is.
2 Corinthians 12:7-10/ Mark 14:33-42
- ❷ It's not a lack of drive or desire to succeed.
1 Chronicles 4:9-10/ Matthew 20:25-28
- ❸ It's not fatalism.
1 Corinthians 7:20-21
- ❹ It's not laziness.
Proverbs 13:4/ Proverbs 24:30-34

3rd • Watch Out For "Contentment Killers."

- ❶ The myth of greener grass.
Ecclesiastes 1:1-18–2:1-11
- ❷ Comparison & greed.
1 Thessalonians 5:18 & John 21:18-22/ Ecclesiastes 5:10 & Proverbs 23:4-5
- ❸ Unrealistic goals & dreams.
Proverbs 13:12
- ❹ Poison people & things.
Proverbs 14:30/ Matthew 18:8-9

4th • Give Jesus The Steering Wheel!

Philippians 4:13/ Galatians 2:20/ 1 Corinthians 10:13

Growth Group Homework

For the week of March 5, 2006

QUICK REVIEW: This weekend we took a look at what biblical contentment is and what it is not. Looking back over your notes, what did you find most interesting, challenging or even troubling from this week's message?

MY STORY

1. The Apostle Paul emphasized that contentment is learned, not acquired with success or possessions. How was your definition of contentment confirmed, challenged or changed by this week's teaching?

2. There are many areas where discontentment can show up (i.e. job success, housing, self-image, education, relationships, clothing, health, money, possessions, and much more). Which area, if any, do you tend to struggle with the most when it comes to becoming or remaining content?

Can you think of any healthy and/or unhealthy ways you've personally dealt with discontentment?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. The book of Ecclesiastes records King Solomon's search for contentment in a world where he had everything at his fingertips. Take a look at what he learned by reading the following passages and then jotting down his insights about the pursuit of contentment.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. [2] "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" [3] I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. [4] I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. [5] I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. [6] I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. [7] I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. [8] I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well--the delights of the heart of man. [9] I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. [10] I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor. [11] Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve,

everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun. [NIV]

Ecclesiastes 4:4-8

And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

[5] The fool folds his hands and ruins himself.

[6] Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.

[7] Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

[8] There was a man all alone;
he had neither son nor brother.

There was no end to his toil,
yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.

"For whom am I toiling," he asked,

"and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"

This too is meaningless--
a miserable business! [NIV]

Ecclesiastes 5:10-16

Whoever loves money never has money enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.

This too is meaningless.

[11] As goods increase,
so do those who consume them.

And what benefit are they to the owner
except to feast his eyes on them?

[12] The sleep of a laborer is sweet,
whether he eats little or much,
but the abundance of a rich man
permits him no sleep.

[13] I have seen a grievous evil under the sun:
wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

[14] or wealth lost through some misfortune,
so that when he has a son
there is nothing left for him.

[15] Naked a man comes from his mother's womb,
and as he comes, so he departs.

He takes nothing from his labor
that he can carry in his hand.

[16] This too is a grievous evil:
As a man comes, so he departs,
and what does he gain,
since he toils for the wind? [NIV]

Which of the verses is most important for you to remember regarding contentment and why?

2. This week's message pointed out that biblical contentment does not mean checking our drive or desire to succeed at the door. God gives us the freedom to ask for blessings, protection and provision. How do you balance Solomon's prayer in Proverbs 30:7-9 with our freedom to ask for blessings beyond our needs?

Proverbs 30:7-9

"Two things I ask of you, O Lord;
do not refuse me before I die:
[8] Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.
[9] Otherwise, I may have too much
and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?'
Or I may become poor and steal,
and so dishonor the name of my God. [NIV]

How can Deuteronomy 8:10-18 help us further understand this balance?

Deut. 8:10-18

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. [11] Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. [12] Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, [13] and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, [14] then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. [15] He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. [16] He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. [17] You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." [18] But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. [NIV]

3. In the late 1800's Horatio Spafford wrote the famous hymn, *It is Well with My Soul*, in response to the tragic death of his daughters in a shipwreck. Here is the first verse of that song:

*"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to know;
It is well, it is well with my soul."*

His words lead us to believe that he had found contentment even amidst horrible circumstances. As Pastor Larry noted, biblical contentment does not mean we have to love everything just the way it is. But it does mean we can cope with even those things we most dread. How can Psalm 46:1-3 & 10-11 help us better learn to be content even in hard times that we'd rather bypass?

Psalm 46:1-3

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. According to alamo. A song.

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
[2] Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
[3] though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.
Selah [NIV]

Psalm 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth." [NIV]

TAKING IT HOME

Looking back at this week's message, which of the four "Contentment Killers" is most likely to rob you of the ability to handle anything and accept what can't be changed?

Is there anything you could do to reduce or eliminate that "Contentment Killer"?