

Contentment

Luke 12:13-21

Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” 14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” 15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” 16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ 18 So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’ 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ 21 So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

What did this man’s struggle suggest to Jesus?

His struggle was with his brother to make sure that he got his full share of what was coming to him. There was a worry, a striving, a frustration.

This man’s struggle suggested to Jesus that this man was covetous and that money and things were most important to him. We know this because Jesus said to him...

“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

Jesus told him a parable so that he could see himself better (Retell the parable in modern terms).

This man’s struggle reminds me of a meeting I had with a business man in my home church many years ago. Let’s call them Bill and James.

Bill: Started the business, made James a partner

James: Going into the ministry, wanted to be bought out

Covetousness is something that we are told will characterize the days leading up to the coming of the Lord (II Tim. 3:1-2)

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...

How are we to be generous? How are we to be able to minister to the poor?

We cannot live this kind of life without the disposition of CONTENTMENT!

Personal contentment positions us for stewardship, generosity and ministry to the poor (Phil. 4:10-13; I Tim. 6:6-10).

Bible Verses:

Philippians 4:10-13

Paul was in prison in Rome. The church at Philippi, even though it had financial struggles itself, had sent money Paul to assist him in Rome. Paul was very grateful for the gift because he was in a difficult place not being able to work. He thanked them in this verse.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:10-13

I Timothy 6:6-10

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. I Timothy 6:6-10

Verse 9 begins with, “But those who desire to be rich...” Other translations of that phrase include:

But people who long to be rich... NLT

But those who crave to be rich... Ampl.

Paul’s statement in verse 10 has often been misquoted as, “Money is the root of all evil,” when it actually says, “**the love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil.”

When riches are your goal rather than the will and purpose of God it will lead you to make many bad decisions—bad decisions in your ethics, in your priorities, in your use of time and in your ministry.

Many people today make career choices and determine job loyalty on the basis of the amount of money that they will receive for their efforts.

However, when riches are only **a tool** rather than **a goal** you are positioned for ministry to others (I Tim. 6:17-19).

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

There are several helpful definitions of contentment.

- Contentment is the opposite of envy, covetousness, worry, ambition and striving.
- Contentment is a rest of mind, satisfaction, freedom from worry and being at ease in one's situation.
- Contentment implies appeasement to the point where one is not disquieted or disturbed by a desire for what one does not have, even though every wish is not fully gratified.
- Contentment is limiting one's desires to what one has.
- Contentment is maintaining a spirit of peace and a quiet confidence in all circumstances.
- Contentment is accepting God's plan for one's life.
- "Contentment is realizing that God has provided everything I need for my present happiness." –Bill Gothard

It is important to know what contentment is not...

Being content does not mean...

- Having no goals or low goals.
- That we lower our expectations.
- Having no ambition in life (Asst. Manager for 30 years)
- That we do not strive for promotion, excellence and influence.
- That we do not seek to improve in all areas.

Contentment includes the concept of a "limited lifestyle" for the sake of ministry and purpose fulfillment. Contentment is a purposeful limitation that we place on ourselves. It means being satisfied with less when it comes to lavishing on ourselves so that we can direct more resources to ministry and the improvement of others.

There are several key verses relative to contentment.

Psalm 16:5-6 (NLT)

LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine. The land you have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance!

Proverbs 15:15

All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he who is of a merry heart has a continual feast.

Proverbs 30:8-9 (NLT)

First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name.

Ecclesiastes 6:9

Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless; it is like chasing the wind.

Contentment should pervade every aspect of the believer's life

1. Wages (Luke 3:14)

Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."

2. Vocation, Boss, Position (I Cor. 7:17, 20-21)

3. Recognition, Honor (Gal. 5:26)

4. Ministry (I Cor. 12:18)

Contentment should extend to our family, our roles, our physical appearance, our natural abilities, our possessions, our wardrobe, our automobile, etc.

There are several keys to cultivating a spirit of contentment.

1. Realize the true riches that you have and cultivate thankfulness (Pro. 17:5; 16:8; Eccl. 4:6; 5:12; Heb. 13:5).

Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice. Proverbs 16:8

Better a handful with quietness than both hands full, together with toil and grasping for the wind. Ecclesiastes 4:6

The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. Ecclesiastes 5:12

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6

Those who constantly dwell on what they do not have are most likely not giving thanks for what they do have. They are not counting their blessings. Real contentment is not dependent upon poverty or wealth but on an inner attitude of the spirit. A man who is not content with little will not be content with much.

One multi-millionaire was asked, "How many millions will it take to bring you satisfaction?" The answer, "Just one more!" It is always just a little more.

2. Recognize that all we have comes from God and we deserve none of it (Eccl. 3:13). God does not owe us anything. Our parents do not owe us anything. No one owes us anything.

...people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.

3. Refuse to compare yourself with others—believers or unbelievers (II Cor. 10:12).

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

4. Remember that God has provided everything that you need for your present happiness (II Cor. 9:8).

"Blessed is the man who God remembers with a sufficiency convenient for him."

Psalm of Solomon 5:18, Apocrypha

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. II Corinthians 9:8

5. Re-establish a proper value system (Col. 3:1-4).

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

"Contentment comes when we escape the servitude to things, when we find our wealth in the love and the friendship and the fellowship of men, and when we realize that our most precious possession is our friendship with God, made possible through Jesus Christ." --Barclay

There are Old and New Testament examples of such believers.

1. Moses was able to accept the radical change in his lifestyle because of this value (Ex. 2:21; Heb. 11:25-26).

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. Hebrews 11:24-26

*Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.
Exodus 2:21*

2. Barnabas was able to respond to the Lord because of this value (Acts 4:32-37).

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

In order to be content, we need to be able to distinguish between needs and non-essentials (I Tim. 6:6-11).

God's definition of need is somewhat different than our definition. Ultimately God says that if we have food and clothing we should be content (perhaps we could add housing to that list). God wants us to live a contented lifestyle that can have rest and inner peace even when every wish or desire is not fully gratified.

1. A Need: A need is something that is considered essential for the maintenance of life, health and spiritual well-being (Phil. 4:19).

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

2. A Desire: A desire is something that is longed for, craved or wished for to fulfill certain passion, appetite or lust (James 4:1-3).

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

This attitude of contentment will bring new freedom to our lives.

Contentment brings freedom.

Freedom to:

1. Rejoice another man's blessing.
2. Be sensitive to the needs of others.
3. Enjoy life in the place where God has you.
4. Trust that God is working His purposes in your life.