

Contentment

Introduction. What is “essential” in the mind of the typical college freshman? According to research collected by Pew Research, 18- to 25-year-olds listed the following as their top life goal: be rich (81%), be famous (51%), help people who need help (30%), be leaders in their community (22%), and become more spiritual (10%).

Given these kinds of results, we need reminders at times that while in this world, we can find contentment and peace of mind if we accept God’s prescription for it, not the world’s (Proverbs 30:7-9).

I. The Definition Of Contentment

- A. Contentment means “to be sufficient, to be possessed of sufficient strength, to be strong or satisfied; adequate, needing no assistance.”
- B. This was originally a Stoic word which expressed one of the favorite doctrines of the sects, that man should be sufficient in himself for everything. He should be able, by the power of his own will, to resist the shock of circumstance. Paul used the word and he was self-sufficient, but not through his own power.

II. Contentment And Circumstances

- A. Contentment is a “learned” life (Philippians 4:10-13).
 - 1. This word means that it is learned by use and practice. Paul had ample experience and ample time to reflect on this valuable lesson (2 Corinthians 11:26-27).
 - 2. Paul learned contentment, not at the feet of Gamaliel, but at the feet of Christ (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58).
- B. From this, we learn two great lessons.
 - 1. We learn to be content with what we have and we learn to accept all of life’s circumstances.
 - 2. It takes as much difficulty to keep the heart right in prosperity as it does in adversity.
 - a) Paul had learned how to exercise temperance, soberness, and gratitude when he was satisfied and he learned how not to murmur or complain when he was in want.
 - b) In all areas of life, count your blessings so you will not end up like the man who became dissatisfied with his house. He found everything wrong with it, listed it with a realtor and when the realtor posted the listing, describing its selling points, the man read it, called the realtor, and took it off the market, saying, “I have looked for a place like this all my life.”
- C. How Paul could find contentment.
 - 1. He knew he could trust God no matter what happened.
 - a) Paul wrote Philippians as a prisoner and some trusted in the Lord because of his imprisonment (Philippians 1:12-14).
 - b) Some preached from good will, others from selfish ambition, but Paul could rejoice that Christ was preached (Philippians 1:18). All, he said, would turn out to his deliverance (Philippians 1:19).
 - 2. He counted everything except Christ as nothing (Philippians 3:7-9).

- a) Because of all that Christ had become to him Paul was willing to collect all his former privileges (vv. 5-6), to put them, as it were, in one box, and write that off as loss.
- b) Furthermore, He was not content simply to dismiss them and become indifferent to them. Rather, he rejected them with horror and treated them as liabilities.

III. Contentment And Godliness

- A. Contentment is a path to godliness (1 Timothy 6:6-10; Hebrews 13:5).
 - 1. True satisfaction with what you have should be regarded as the greatest gain, far greater than gold, currency, or investments.
 - 2. However, godliness coupled with contentment is the real gain; it is the great blessing. An individual who is godly and content with what he has possesses riches for both this world and the world to come.
- B. Two reasons to be content.
 - 1. We brought nothing into this world.
 - a) Whatever we have been blessed with since entering this world we owe to the providence of God (Ecclesiastes 2:24).
 - b) We had nothing yet God cared for us, provided for us, and we have been fed and clothed all of our days (Matthew 6:25-34).
 - 2. We will leave this world with nothing.
 - a) The richest man in the world will leave with nothing more than a coffin and a grave (Psalm 49:16-17; Ecclesiastes 5:15-16).
 - b) Why do we need to be so covetous if this is the end of us all? Socrates said, "He who is richest is content with the least."
- C. How much of this world's goods should it take to make us content?
 - 1. Paul stated that we need nothing more than food and raiment. The apostle used this phrase to denote everything that was necessary for life.
 - 2. Those who use their time on Earth to pursue riches will never be content (Proverbs 15:16; 16:8; 17:1).
 - a) Those who purposefully plan on being rich fall victim to the temptation to act wickedly in order to achieve their goals. It is extremely difficult to cherish the desire to be rich and be an honest person (Matthew 19:23-24).
 - b) There are many Christians blessed with a lot of money, but yet they do not have a love for it. If we want to be content and godly, we have to destroy the spirit of covetousness within us (Ephesians 5:5).

Conclusion. A contented mind is a continual feast because it removes anxiety (Philippians 4:6). Someone once quipped, "The nice thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time." Take each day of what future God wants us to have and be at peace with God, having the peace that passes all understanding. Most of all, come to Christ today and be at peace (Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:12).