

True Contentment

If you were to see the word “content” in a thank you note for a book you’d given someone, would you put the stress on the first syllable (*CON*-tent) or the second (con-*TENT*)? It makes quite a difference, determining whether the subject is the present itself or how they feel about the present. Of course, it could be both: “I’m extremely content with the content of the book you gave me.” Both words come from the Latin word for “contain.” This connection makes sense if we stop to think about it; it’s almost like a person who is *contented* is a person who feels they have the right *contents* or *possessions*.

The Bible recognizes that a person’s feelings of contentment are often tied to what that person possesses. It also teaches that true contentment is found in our relationship with God, and the contents of the gifts he gives those who belong to him. Let’s study together this week the true contentment God offers us in him, contentment with him and all he gives, contentment that is eternal – and eternally – with God.

Monday – Contentment

“True contentment is a real, even an active, virtue---not only affirmative but creative. It is the power of getting out of any situation all there is in it.” G.K. Chesterton, 19th-20th c. English writer

1. Please read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. What do you think Paul means in verse 6 when he says “godliness with contentment is great gain?” When do feelings of discontent enter your life?
2. What lesson did Paul describe in Philippians 4:10-13?

Text Insight: Paul wrote Philippians while a prisoner in Rome, awaiting trial for preaching about Jesus.

3. How do the experiences listed in 2 Corinthians 11:24-29 help you understand the significance of Paul’s teaching on contentment?

Making it Personal: Consider the insight on contentment in Chesterton’s quote above. What perspective does he take on contentment that you need to adopt? Ask the Lord to deepen your understanding of your true riches in Christ.

Tuesday – Temporary Possessions

“Property has its duties as well as its rights.” Thomas Drummond, 19th c. Scottish politician

1. Please read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 (focusing on verse 7). How would you explain this verse to someone who was struggling to understand it?
2. How does Jesus’ parable in Luke 12:13-21 answer the young man who asked for help?
3. According to 1 Timothy 6:17-19, what should we do to store up real and lasting treasure?

Making it Personal: Do you find yourself focusing too greatly on things you possess? Ask God to direct your focus onto him as your hope, “who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

Wednesday – Pantry & Closet

“All our discontents about what we want appear to me to spring from the want of thankfulness for what we have.” Daniel Defoe, 17th-18th c. English writer

1. Please read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 (focusing on verse 8). Why do you think food and clothing are the items required for contentment?
2. Compare 1 Kings 4:24-25, Isaiah 36:13-18 and Micah 4:1-5. Why would the enemy king choose this way to entice desertion? What does it mean to you to have a place where you belong and good food to enjoy?

Text Insights: The image of every person with his own vine and fig tree is a picture of wealth and satisfaction. Historically, Israel was at its strongest when Solomon ruled. By the time Hezekiah was king, the nation was much weaker, and soon after was defeated. In Micah, God promises to restore his people’s fortunes.

3. In what way does Jesus’ teaching in Luke 12:22-34 teach us about contentment? What is the significance of verse 27 to those who know the history of Israel?

Making it Personal: Do you worry about things you cannot change? Turn those cares over to God in prayer, and see how he cares for what you truly need.

Thursday – Get Rich Quick Schemes

“What is dishonorably got is dishonorably squandered.” Cicero, 1st c. BC Roman philosopher

1. Please read 1 Timothy 6:9. What is the difference between a desire to be wealthy and a life well lived that may result in wealth?
2. What caution does James 4:13-17 give about planning for the future? How can we do it properly (verse 15)?

Digging Deeper: Read Isaiah 1:1-31 and list the types of rebellion identified there. What hope does God provide for his people (verses 16-19)?

Friday – For the Love of Money

“Content makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor.” Benjamin Franklin

1. Please read 1 Timothy 6:10. How might eagerness for money interfere with a relationship with God?
2. In Luke 16:10-13 and Matthew 6:19-21, how is real value identified? What do you value highly?

Digging Deeper: Read Matthew 19:16-30. Why did the young man have trouble following his initial desire to be with Jesus? Would you say he has contentment? What gets in the way of your relationship with God?

For the Weekend: Read 1 Timothy 6:11-21. How would following these instructions lead to greater contentment in your life? Pray for God to guide you in finding contentment in him.