

# Hearts Fit for the Journey

## When is Enough, Enough?

### Dealing with Discontent – Ph.4:10-19

#### I. Introduction

##### A. *U2*

1. Many of you are familiar with the band U2
2. Several years back one of their hit songs contained the following words
  - a. You broke the bonds and you loosed the chains
  - b. Carried the cross of my shame
  - c. You know I believe it
  - d. But I still haven't found what I'm looking for

##### B. *An all too common occurrence*

1. Doesn't it sound so familiar that in the culture of excess, so many today as well still have not found whatever it is that they are looking for
2. How do we find contentment? When is enough enough?
3. While I don't want to dwell too much on the lack of financial contentment this week, if you were to ask how much money is enough for a man who made:
  - a. \$30,000 a year, he would likely say just a little more
  - b. \$130,000 a year and he would likely say the same thing, just a little more
4. When it comes to possessions; how much is enough?

- a. **Men—how many fishing poles, softball bats, rifles and arrows do we need**
- b. **Women—how many dresses, outfits and shoes do you need**
- c. **The problem is that for most of us, we can always think of just one more things we need**
- d. **Greener Pastures**
  - i. *Sometime ago there appeared in a newspaper a cartoon depicting two fields divided by a fence. Both fields were about the same size and both contained the same kind of grass, green and lush.*
  - ii. *In each of the fields there was a mule and each one had his head through the fence eating the grass on the other side of the fence. All around each mule was plenty of grass, yet the grass in the other field seemed greener or fresher, although it was much harder to get to.*
  - iii. *In the process of trying to get the grass from the other field the mules were caught in the fence's wire and became unable to free themselves. In the caption of the picture the cartoonist put just one word—"Discontent" (Earl C. Willer, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, 831, 272.)*

5. **How many of us are just like those mules, always trying to get something else when the Lord has already provided us with plenty right where we are**
6. **“If the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence, you can bet that the water bill is higher” (15,000 Illustrations, 838, 273)**

### ***C. Overcoming Discontentment***

1. **In our lesson today I want to consider the subjects of contentment and discontentment**
2. **In doing so we shall consider:**
  - a. **What contentment is and is not**
  - b. **What hinders us from being content**
  - c. **How we can develop contentment**

## **II. What is contentment?**

### ***A. What contentment is***

1. **The condition of being content or satisfied**
2. **Content—happy with what one has, satisfied with one’s place in life**
3. **Biblically speaking it is a measure of our stability and maturity in the Christian faith**
4. **“A contented mind is the greatest blessing that a man can enjoy in this life”  
Joseph Addison**
5. **Contentment is something that all of us as children of God should be continually growing in, and the more mature we become in the development of our faith, the more content we will be—the more content we are the greater our service to the Lord will be**

### ***B. What contentment is not! It is not:***

1. **The suppression of our desires**
  - a. **There are some who believe that if only they can suppress all of their desires, then they will by default become content with life, and this is not what contentment is**

- b. To be happy with what one has and satisfied with their place in life (to be content), does not mean that we can't desire to have more and do more**
- c. To desire a better job, to make more money, to be entrusted with greater responsibilities in the Kingdom of the Lord does not have to be detrimental to the biblically mandated pursuit of contentment, but uncontrolled we know that they many times are**
- d. I can desire to preach in gospel meetings, speak on brotherhood lectureships, teach at a Christian university (and I do)—there is nothing wrong with having these kind of desires for success in my chosen field**
- e. What is wrong is a failure to be content with whatever God chooses to send my way, if these things never happen**
- f. To be content means that I am satisfied with whatever situation I find myself in, and that I do my best to serve the Lord in that situation—it does not mean that one can't aspire to achieve and do greater things than they are currently doing**

## **2. A feeling of indifference**

- a. Indifference is not the same as contentment, and that is a mistake in judgment that many people have been guilty of making**
- b. Indifference—lack of concern or interest, it is having or showing no interest in ones situation—that is not contentment**
- c. In NT times there was a group of individuals known as the Stoics—they attempted to find contentment by ignoring all pain in life, they tried to forget about all extremes of joy and sorrow until the point where they became indifferent—they just did not care**
- d. This did not bring them contentment, because indifference is not contentment—the Bible does not say that we can't seek to find joy in life and avoid sorrow—one can be content and do both of those things**
- e. Again we run into problems when we are unable to be satisfied in dealing with either joy or sorrow**
- f. 2 Cor.12:7-10, Ph.4:11**

## **3. Self-gratification**

- a. One will never find true contentment through the accumulation of personal wealth and possessions, because it is most often the case that the individual who is unable to find contentment without personal wealth and numerous possessions, is unable to find contentment with them**

- b. They are always wanting more, no matter how much they already have
- c. “Contentment makes poor men rich, and discontentment makes rich men poor” Benjamin Franklin
- d. “Contentment is a natural wealth, but luxury is an artificial poverty” Socrates—Lk.12:15
- e. Stuff will never bring happiness and fulfillment to the life of an individual, who could not, or would not be content without stuff—in fact very often by seeking to find contentment through the accumulation of wealth many have either left their faithful service of the Lord behind, or they have allowed it to keep them from serving the Lord in the first place—1 Tim.6:9-10

*C. Lesson on contentment*

1. Most of us will admit that being content is something that we all struggle with from time to time, perhaps in some cases even more frequently
2. It is a problem that needs to be dealt with, because discontentment is a great obstacle to the faithfulness of many Christians and a great hindrance to our enjoyment of the journey God has laid before us
3. The less content I am in life, the less focused I will be on doing the will of the Lord
4. When I lack contentment the time that I ought to be spending in Bible study, prayer, evangelism, visitation of the sick and shut-ins, and other spiritual activities, is usually spent in bemoaning my situation in life
5. In the remainder of this lesson, which is focused on overcoming discontentment, we will seek to answer two questions about contentment:
  - a. What are some of the barriers to contentment?
  - b. How do we overcome those barriers?

**III. What Hinders Us from Being Content?**

*A. Covetousness or envy—to desire to possess something, often something that belongs to another person*

**1. Heb.13:5**

- a. The more I desire that which someone else has, the less I will be contented with that which God has blessed me with

**b. And usually my coveting that which someone else has, leads me to desire it so much that I not only what they have, but I don't want them to have it**

**c. It is not just wanting a house, a car, clothes like someone else has, it is wanting the very thing another has—when God said in Deut.5:21 that the Israelites were “not to covet their neighbors wife”—it was not because some wanted wife like their neighbor's, it was because some wanted their neighbor's wife**

**d. That is where discontentment with one's own wife comes in, and this would lead to adultery and in the case of David and Bathsheba even worse—murder**

**2. So as the Hebrew writer instructed we need to learn to be content with the things we have, instead of always desiring that which we don't have and others do**

**a. Because covetousness and envy are two of the most condemned sins in the entire Bible, as Paul says they are both works of the flesh, and they don't just prevent us from finding true contentment, they will keep us out of heaven— Gal.5:21**

### ***B. Lack of faith in God's provisions for us***

**1. In a previous lesson we talked about overcoming anxiety or worry, and this is something that often goes hand in hand with discontentment**

**2. We often worry because we are not content with our state in life, and we are often not content with our state in life because we worry about what tomorrow may bring**

**3. Mt.6:25-30**

**a. Remember that being content means being satisfied with what one has and with their situation in life, and one of the great hindrances to that, is often our lack of faith in the promises of God**

**b. God has promised to provide for those who put Him first in their lives, and when I truly believe in that, then I can begin to find contentment**

**c. It is not until I begin to believe that God will, and most likely already is blessing me with that which I really need in this life, that I can begin to become satisfied with where I am in life, because then I will realize that I have all that I need, and that is contentment**

**4. So how many of us really believe that God is going to provide for our needs in this life (I notice did not say all of our desires, I said our needs)**

**5. You will never find contentment until you realize that God really will and probably already is providing you with everything you really need**

### ***C. Pessimism***

- 1. Pessimism—the tendency to take the gloomiest possible view of a situation or of the world in general**
- 2. If I am always expecting the worst out of life, then how can I ever learn to be happy or content with life**
- 3. Bad things happen in this life, there is no questioning that, but to live everyday as though something bad is going to happen to me, is to live a miserable, discontented, and often faithless life**
- 4. In Ex.14:10-12, we have an example of both this one and the last barrier to contentment**
  - a. Because the Egyptians were closing in on them, the Israelites became afraid and complained to Moses, for they thought they would die there, and if this was to be their fate, then they felt they would have been better off staying in Egypt**
  - b. Three problems which led to discontentment!!!**
    - i. Fear*
    - ii. Lack of faith in God—which in light of all that God had already done for them, was no doubt very disappointing to God*
    - iii. Pessimism—they feared the worst*

**c. As long as we always think bad things are going to happen in the future, we will never learn to be content in the present**

***D. Self-pity***

**1. Have you ever gotten so discouraged that you just started feeling so sorry for yourself, we probably all have at some time—but self-pity is usually the result of focusing too much on one's self, and not enough on others**

**2. Constantly focusing on what is or has gone wrong in my life, or what I think I should have gotten and did not, will usually lead to a discontented outlook on life**

**3. Lk.15:25-31**

**a. The older brother was so upset that his brother, who had been living in sin and wastefulness, was receiving a banquet**

**b. He started to feel sorry for himself, and said “I never got a party for me and my friends”**

**c. Because of this attitude of self-pity, he failed to realize, as do some of us at times, that he already had access to all that the father owned, and did not need a party of his own**

**4. Feeling sorry for self is a sure way to miss out on the contentment we should all have in life**



#### **IV. How Do We Develop Contentment?**

##### ***A. We must work at it–Ph.4:11-12***

- 1. Notice the words of Paul very carefully, he said “I have learned to be content”**
- 2. Contentment was not something that came naturally to him, and it won't come naturally for most of us—it is a learned behavior—we must learn how to be content, and learning anything takes work**
- 3. So we must work at developing contentment—How do we do that?**
  - a. We must understand that true contentment is something that only comes from within—“when we can't find contentment in ourselves, it is useless to seek it elsewhere” Francois de La Rochefoucauld**
  - b. I think he was saying that if to be content is not something that I have within me, then I am unlikely to find it in other things, such as the accumulation of possessions**
  - c. We must remove from our lives anything that would prevent us from finding contentment—such as those we just discussed—as long as you focus on the negative, you will have a negative outlook**

##### ***B. As the song says learn to “Count your blessings”***

- 1. There is not a day that goes by where each of one of us should not be down on our knees thanking God for what He has done for us, for as James says “every good and perfect gift comes down from above”, and manifold are those Gifts—both material and spiritual**
- 2. If we can learn to be thankful for what we have, then we can learn to be content—“he is rich who is content with least, for contentment is the wealth of nature” Socrates**
- 3. 1 Tim.6:8—these are the things that are truly important and needed**
  - a. Every day that I am blessed with food, clothing, shelter, and a good degree of health is a blessed day**
  - b. Is that your attitude—It should be because that is the attitude of contentment**
  - c. Don't focus on what you don't have, focus on the fact that you have the things you need, for when we have the necessities of life, it is with these things that we should be content—Ps.37:16**

##### ***C. Store up your treasures in heaven***

- 1. Mt.6:19-21**

- a. Again, many people are not content because they are focused on the wrong things
- b. Many are thinking about what they can get out of life physically and materially, and seeing that very few of us will ever gain enough in that area of life, there is no wonder so many people are discontented
- c. When you concentrate on the acquiring of spiritual wealth you will achieve a level of contentment than can be found in no other way, because it will bring you satisfaction in this life and eternal glory in the life to come
- d. The more we think about the temporal, the less contented we will be, so turn your thoughts to that which is everlasting, and the blessing of contentment will be yours—2 Cor.4:16-18

#### **IV. Conclusion**

##### **A. *Are you content?***

1. Are you satisfied with life—again that does not mean that you can't desire more, it simply means that regardless of what the future may bring, you will be happy with whatever God sends your way, and you will serve Him through it all
2. A lack of contentment on the part of Christians, who have been so richly blessed by God materially and much more importantly spiritually, is a strong indication that we have not or are not maturing in our faith as should be doing
3. Because being content is a sign that we truly appreciate what is important in life—that is having life's necessities, and being in the right relationship with God through Jesus Christ
4. If you are a possessor of those things then there is absolutely no reason why you should not feel content, and therefore be able to spend a good part of your time engaged in doing the will of God here on earth
5. That is what contentment does—it allows you to take your focus off the things which have little significance, and focus on that which matters eternally

##### **B. *Closing quotes***

1. "If you are not content it is because God is not with you as you need Him, as He would desire to be with you, as you must have Him, for you need Him as your body never needed food or air"
2. To sum it all up, I believe that Annie Johnson Flint said it best in her poem *What God Hath Promised*, which I often read at funeral services
  - a. God has not promised skies always blue, flower strewn pathways all our life through

**b. God has not promised sun without rain, joy without sorrow, peace without pain**

**c. But God has promised strength for the day, rest for the labor, light for the way;  
grace for the trials, help from above, unfailing sympathy, undying love**

**3. With all God has promised; what need have we for anything more?**

**4. Invitation**