

# CONTENTEDNESS

## Series: “7 Spiritually Healthy Habits”

Perth Bible Church Sunday, December 6, 2009 AM

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### INTRODUCTION:

It's the first Sunday of December and snow is finally on the ground. It is officially the season of giving and getting, making your list and checking it twice . We want everything to be . . .(dare I say it ...) HUGE! We think of all that we desire and all that we do not have. Sometimes, it's things we never had and sometimes it's things that we once had, but have no more. For example, consider:

**Video: Parody of Beatle's Yesterday (Hair Today)**– Phil Callaway

[http://connect.tangle.com/view\\_video?viewkey=68fa089e292fcec29989](http://connect.tangle.com/view_video?viewkey=68fa089e292fcec29989)

The 17<sup>th</sup> Century German philosopher and theologian, Immanuel Kant, pointed out: “Give a man everything he desires and yet at this very moment he will feel that everything is not everything.”

**The problem of dissatisfaction is a human problem. The answer to the conundrum of unfettered contentment is a spiritual answer that must be sought, found and maintained in Christ at all times!**

The 16<sup>th</sup> Century British theologian, William Law instructed: “One who makes it a rule to be content in every part and accident of life because it comes from God praises God in a much higher manner than one who has some set time for the singing of psalms.”

### SCRIPTURE:

**Philippians 4:11-14** *I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content-- whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me. Still, you did well by sharing with me in my hardship.* (HCSB, emphasis mine)

### PRAYER

### WHAT **WE** NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CONTENTMENT:

#### Philippians 4:11-14

#### I.) CONTENTMENT IS **LEARNED**

- Noticed how this is emphasized twice in the Scripture we just read.
- Contentment is not something we are born with.
- Contentment is not something that just happens to us.

- It is not something we can simply find, earn or buy.
- It is not something that someone else can give us.
- **Contentment IS something which everyone must LEARN. It is achieved through a process of growing faith and truth as we trust Christ in all things while recognizing and receiving all of his graces.**
- Therefore, it is something that is developed and then maintained and increased over time and through intentional faith in action!

Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century pastor, social activist, and brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of Uncle Tom's Cabin), cautions: *“A man looking at the present in light of the future, and taking his whole being into account, may be contented with his lot: that is Christian contentment. But if a man has come to that point where he is so content that he says 'I do not want to know any more, or do any more, or be any more,' he is in a state in which he ought to be changed into a mummy.”*

## II.) CONTENTMENT IS CONTINUOUS

### Philippians 4:11-14

It is to be maintained it . . .

#### A.) All Situations

- Those that feel good and those that feel bad.
- When things seem to go right, and when things seem to go wrong.
- In pleasure and in pain.
- In success and in failure.
- In what we understand and in what confuses and frustrates us.
- When we have much and when we have little.
- When we are treated well and when we are treated unjustly.
- When we think the grass under our feet is greenest and when we think the grass across the way will be even greener.
- In authority or in submission.

The great reformer, Martin Luther, humbly asserted: *“Next to faith this is the highest art – to be content with the calling in which God has placed you. I have not learned it yet.”*

#### B.) All Things

Thomas Fuller, 17<sup>th</sup> Century English churchman and historian, once remarked: *“Contentment consists not in adding more fuel, but in taking away some fire; not in multiplying of wealth, but in subtracting our desires.”*

##### 1.) Money

- Our continuous contentment needs to include our finances – whether it be their abundance or their lack.
- Not only the finances we have, but the wages we make.

**Luke 3:12-14** Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He told them, "Don't collect any more than what you have been authorized." Some soldiers also questioned him: "What should we do?" He said to them, "Don't take money from anyone by force or false accusation; be satisfied with your wages."

**Hebrews 13:5-6** Your life should be free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for He Himself has said, I will never leave you or forsake you. Therefore, we may boldly say: The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

## 2.) Possessions

- Similarly, we are to be continually content with any and all of our possessions; whether in abundance or lack, new or old, unblemished or worn.

**Illustration:** *With the winter Olympics on the horizon, I suspect the old comedy, Cool Runnings, will be everywhere and the TV on video rental market. As some of us may know, this movie was about the first Jamaican bobsled team to go to the Olympics. The team was coached by a former American gold medalist, played by the late John Candy. The players adore and revere the coach, even nicknaming him "Sled-god." Later on, however, it comes to light that in the Olympics following his gold medal performance the "Sled-god" was caught cheating by weighing the U.S. Sled. As a result he and the entire US team was disgraced. When the Jamaican bobsledders found out about this, they were astounded. One of them in particular, struggled with trying to understand why and how anyone who had some much ability and who had already won a gold medal would cheat. Eventually, he confronted the coach with this very question. The coach replied, "I had to win. I learned something. If you are not happy without a gold medal, you won't be happy with it."*

## 3.) People

- Sometimes, our greatest obstacle to contentment is people. Or, more accurately, OUR attitude and relationship to them!
- Family. Co-workers. Supervisors. Supervisees. Teachers. Those in authority. People who are different. People who have or know something we don't. People we just don't get along with because of personality, quarks, and pet peeves.

**Illustration:** *Once upon a time there was a man who lived with his wife, two small children, and his elderly parents in a tiny hut. (picture this) He tried to be patient and gracious, but the noise and crowded conditions wore him down. In desperation, he consulted the village wise man. "Do you have a rooster?" asked the wise man. "Yes," he replied. "Keep the rooster in the hut with your family, and come see me again next week."*

*The next week, the man returned and told the wise elder that living conditions were worse than ever; with the rooster crowing and making a mess of the hut. "Do you have a cow?" asked the wise elder. The man nodded fearfully. "Take your cow into the hut as well, and come see me in a week."*

*Over the next several weeks, the man – on the advice of the wise elder – made room for a goat, two dogs, and his brother's children. Finally, he could take no more, and in a fit of anger, kicked out all the animals and guests, leaving only his wife, children, and his parents. The home suddenly became spacious and quiet, and everyone lived happily ever after.*

- At the end of the day, friends, contentment is a personal decision. Only I am responsible for my own contentment and only you are responsible for yours. If I am not generally content, it is my own fault, my own distorted perspective. Others may provide and provoke me with plenty of reasons to feel otherwise. But, only I choose how I react to them!

### III.) CONTENTMENT IS GREAT GAIN

**1Timothy 6:6-12** *But godliness with contentment is a great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. Now you, man of God, run from these things; but pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Fight the good fight for the faith; take hold of eternal life, to which you were called and have made a good confession before many witnesses.*

- The world, in it's foolishness, believes and teaches that contentment is a disease; that to be content is to be weak and certain of missing out on something. Yet, Scripture – the very Word of God perfectly revealed to us – says just the opposite!

**Illustration:** *In Our Daily Bread, Philip Parham tells the story of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. “Why aren't you fishing?” he asked. “Because I've caught enough fish for today,” said the fisherman. “Why don't you catch more fish than you need?” the rich man asked. “What would I do with them?” “You could earn more money,” came the impatient reply, “and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me.” The fisherman then asked, “Then what would I do?” “You could sit down and enjoy life,” said the industrialist. “What do you think I'm doing now?” the fisherman replied.*

#### **One caution:**

Sir James Mackintosh, a Scottish jurist, politician and historian, further cautions: *“It is right to be contented with what we have, never with what we are.”*

- **Biblical contentment refers to the state of our heart, spirit and mind toward God in relation to the life He has given so graciously given us; no matter what kind of life that may be.**
- It's about being fully satisfied in Christ and His Sovereign Hand.
- It is NOT about ourselves! **Ephesians 3:16-19**

### THE FINE ART OF CONTENTMENT

**Video: The Fine Art of Contentment** by Ed Price (based on words of Pastor Maltbie D. Babcock)  
[http://connect.tangle.com/view\\_video?viewkey=d84115ba12e26d79ecc3](http://connect.tangle.com/view_video?viewkey=d84115ba12e26d79ecc3)