

The Secret Of Contentment

“Discovering a heavenly place in the midst of an earthly situation”

I. Philippians 4:10-13 - It's my assignment this morning to teach you the “secret of contentment.”

Intro: Story of Farmer and his mule Matilda

- After considering all his options, the farmer discovered a place of contentment in that moment.
- **In the midst of the damage to his truck, the damage to his body, and the loss of his mule,**
 - * which would all lend itself to complaining about what happened, striving against what happened, and a desire for something different than what happened,
 - * **there was something else present that restrained all of that and caused him to focus on what he did have,**
 - * which prompted a sincere response at that time of “I'm just fine, thank you.”
- **In a different way, Christians like this farmer can discover a place of contentment in any one of our moments.**

The word secret is better translated “mystery” it's something that can't be fully grasped this side of glory.

A. Let me give you a couple of definitions for contentment.

1. Rest or quietness of the mind in the present condition.
 - a. **Contentment is not the result of you condition changing.**
 - b. But the changing of your response to your condition.
2. **Satisfaction which holds the mind in peace, restraining complaint, opposition, or future desire.**
 - a. It doesn't say that there isn't a reason to be in turmoil, or to complain, or to want to fight what is going on, or even to want something different than what you have.
 - b. **The implication is that there is something else(or better yet someone else in your life) that is more powerful than your circumstances, holding you in a place that is good, empowering you to not give into the bad, and giving you the promise that you are going to be led into something that is better.**
 - c. The secret or mystery of contentment is that the presence of Christ can help you discover a heavenly place in the midst of an earthly situation or circumstance.
 - d. **There is some one else in your life which you can't see which is more powerful than what you can see.**

II This morning I want give you five steps to this secret place called “Contentment.”

A. First Step - Contentment is learned not imparted - Verses 11-12 - **It's learned not earned.**

1. The King James Version translates verse 12 this way “*everywhere and in all things I am instructed.*”
 - a. **The Greek word for instructed is “mueo,” which means to initiate into the mysteries or knowledge of God.**
 - b. The implication is that God has allowed our situations and circumstances, in order to teach you how to get to this secret place of contentment.
 - c. **In other words, until instruction takes place, provision or deliverance won't take place.**
2. Two stories in the “Gospels” will illustrate this principle.
 - a. **The first story is found in Mark 4:35-40, where Jesus tells His disciples “*let's go to the other side.*”**
 - b. The second story is found in Matthew 14:22-32 - **When Jesus is present everything changes.**
3. **At the age of 21 I was sentenced to 30 years in prison.**
 - a. Initially, all my efforts were spent on getting out of prison, instead of allowing God to use prison to get something into me.
 - b. **Then one day, the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “son, I won't deliver you from prison, but I will deliver you through prison.”**
 - c. From then on, instead of looking for a life outside of my circumstances, I was challenged to find His life in the midst of my circumstances.
4. **The life I found in the midst of the storm, was better than anything that I had experienced outside of it.**
 - a. So much so, that 4 years later, I went up to my parole hearing praying that I wouldn't get
 - b. **I had found a place of rest and instruction in the midst of the storm.**
 - c. When asked “How are you doing,” I would respond, “I am just fine, thank you.
 - 1) **Because of Him, I didn't complain about the things I didn't have.**
 - 2) Because of Him, I began to cooperate with the thing things I did have.
 - 3) **Because of Him, I had confidence of what I could have.**
 - 4) Together they produced the mystery of contentment.

B. Step Two - Contentment comes when you discover what you already have.

Hebrews 13:5 states, *“Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you.”*

1. In order to be content with what you have, you need to fully grasp what it is that you have.

2. The rest of the scripture goes on to say *“for He Himself will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

a. Contentment isn't based on what you have or don't have, it is based on who has you.

b. Since Jesus has you, in turn you have Jesus, and Jesus is, and has, everything you need.

3. You can be satisfied in your present circumstances, because God's promise is that the presence of God will never leave you nor forsake you.

a. The Greek word translated “leave” is “anoo,” which means He won't relax His grip or loosen His hold upon your life.

1) It doesn't mean that He will take you out of your present circumstances, it means He won't leave you while you are in the midst of them. **Footsteps in the Sand**

2) Contentment comes when you know that He's got a hold of you in your circumstances, and He will hold you while the circumstances mold you.

b. The Greek word translated “forsake” is “eg-kata-leipo,” which means He won't leave you behind in some place.

1) The implication being, that once the circumstances have done their work, God won't abandon you to them.

2) Once they put something in, God will take you out.

3) Once the circumstances have changed you, then God changes your circumstances.

c. In 1979 I was recommended for parole for the 3rd straight year in a row

1) Not only did I not get paroled, I loss everything that I achieved in the past 7 years

2) Seven years isn't that bad of punishment for being responsible for the taking of a human life.

- I then heard the Lord say, “Son, where you responsible for taking a life?”

- **These last 8 years weren't for the punishment of your sin, but for the production of your soul.**

3) When I realized that my circumstance weren't there to punish me but to promote me than I was content with what I had. Because instruction took place, 7 months later deliverance.

C. Step Three - Contentment is based on knowing that God knows your needs and that He has promised to meet those needs.

Matthew 6:7-8 states, “*And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*”

Matthew 6:31-32 states, “*Therefore do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear? For the gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*”

1. God knows your needs because He knows you. 1 Corinthians 13:12 states out of the NLT “*that one day we will know everything completely even as God knows us completely.*”

2. Not just your general needs such as, food, drink, and clothing.

3. But your personal specific needs such as:

a. Your need for love

d. Your need for understanding

b. Your need for recognition

e. Your need for adventure

c. Your need for security

f. Your need for encouragement

4. His promise is that whatever you have by the way of a need, He will supply it.

Phil 4:19 - “*And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*”

a. The key to this scripture is that “God will supply all of our needs.”

1). Not our spouses or children

2) Not our hinting or manipulation

3) Not our jobs or careers

4) Not our skills or talents.

5. One of our problems is that we’ve been looking to people and things to supply our need instead of God.

6. By looking to other sources a lot of us will miss the ways that God is wanting to meet our needs.

a When I first moved to Ephrata - I spoke about 40 times in a 3 month period

b. Going to write an article on whether someone would pay Jesus 33 cents an hour.

D. Step Four - Faith for contentment comes from knowing that God has the power to perform what he has promised. Romans 4:20-21

Jer 32:27 - “*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me*

Luke 1:37 - “*For nothing will be impossible with God.*”

E. Step 5 - Ultimately contentment is the result of leaving the timing of when our needs are met in God's hands.

1. If I truly believe that God knows my needs, and that I believe that He has made promise to all of those needs, and I believe that He has the power to meet those needs, then:

2. If what I think I need hasn't arrived yet, I must not need it yet. Because the Bible says if I needed it, I would have it.

a. **Whether that need is a:**

- 1) A Friend 2) A physical healing 3) Money
- 4) A life partner 5) Ministry opportunity 6) Etc.

b. Remember, until instruction takes place, provision won't take place.

3. We can say it another way - what you have is what you need.

a. Because if you didn't need it, you wouldn't have it.

1) **Problem car - Faithfulness**

2) Unreasonable church member

- **God can redeem anything**

- **Becoming more than an overcomer.**

b. **Remember, God wants to instruct you, Patience - Service - Faithfulness.**

4. The biggest struggle in raising kids is to get them to believe that they don't need certain things and that they do need other things. God has the same struggle.

5. Discontentment comes in when we take the timing into our hands

a. One of the less prevalent fruits of the Spirit is patience.

b. **Many of us fail to realize, God operates according to a time table - His!!**

Ecc1 3:1 - *"There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven"*

Ecc1 3:11 - *"He has made everything appropriate in its time."*

Ps 105:16-19 - *"And He called for a famine upon the land; He broke the whole staff of bread. He sent a man before them, Joseph, {who} was sold as a slave. They afflicted his feet with fetters, He himself was laid in irons; Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him."*

Romans 5:6 - *"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."*