



CONTENTMENT

LESSON 5

LOOK IN THE RIGHT PLACE

HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





Get Healthy Contentment

Lesson Five: Look in the Right Place

Look Back: 10 Minutes

Last week we examined four primary contentment killers:

1. Unfulfilled Expectations
2. Relational Disharmony
3. Dissatisfaction
4. Self- Pity and Wrong Priorities

1. What is your primary contentment killer?

We also uncovered four unhealthy ways people deal with discontentment:

1. Anger and Blame
2. Avoidance (Running Away)
3. Complaining
4. Criticism, Control, Discouragement, Depression

2. Did you identify any unhealthy ways you normally deal with your discontentment? If so, discuss.

3. What did you do to handle discontentment in a healthy way, this week?

4. Prayer is one of the most powerful tools to help us live contented in the midst of less-than-perfect circumstances (or maybe *especially* in the midst of them!) Did you ask for God's help to overcome any areas of discontentment, or any unhealthy way you have been dealing with discontentment? If so, how did prayer help?

5. Discuss anything else you learned from the lessons, discussions, optional Bible reading, or messages that has help you live with more contentment.

Looking Forward: 50 Minutes

We moved to a new home several years ago, in a neighborhood built (by design) with no streetlights. While I'm not quite sure how the no streetlight thing fares in terms of safety, it does make for a mean game of Hide and Seek. One night shortly

after we closed escrow, we took advantage of our empty dark house by playing the old childhood game. Except when you pair a house-full of teenagers (and I'll just be honest here: when JP and I play a game, we pretty much count as kids), with pitch darkness, Hide and Seek goes to a whole new level. One of our kids climbed on top of our master bedroom closet shelf and hid there for an hour. Since we could barely see our hands in front of our faces, finding her was nearly impossible. In fact, it wasn't until we turned the light on that we finally found her.

Some people feel like finding contentment is about as easy as finding my kid in the dark closet. They look for contentment their whole life, never quite figuring out where it can be found. Many women live like finding contentment is impossible.

Except it's not.

Not when you turn the light on, and look in the right place.

I hope after five weeks together, seeking contentment, you feel like the light has been turned on. I hope you see that contentment is possible. I hope you feel equipped with the wisdom and tools you need to live content. But most of all, I hope you've come to understand that true contentment is not nearly as much tied to your circumstances, as is it to your soul.

The contentment you long for can be found, *if* you look in the right place.

But not everyone does...

1. Is Contentment Found in a Provision I Need?

Read John 6:5-13 and answer the following questions:

- a. What problem did the people face?**

- b. Before Jesus took hold of the situation, did the people have no bread, some bread, enough bread, or more than enough bread?**

- c. How much bread did they have afterwards?**

A major contributor to discontentment is the feeling of lack. Of emptiness. Of not having. Or not having enough.

It might be helpful to note here that the word "contentment" in the Bible, can also be translated as "sufficient or satisfied". Discontentment, then, comes from thinking—and feeling—that what we have is insufficient, or unsatisfying.

In other words, we don't feel content when we feel like something is missing; something we desperately need, or deeply desire.

We think, "if only God would provide that *thing*—that peace, or that better relationship, or that godly, loving husband, or that baby, or that house, or that job, or that weight, or that professional success, or that cure, or that vindication, or that friend—well, then I'd be content".

- d. Look carefully at the list women commonly want God to provide to ensure their contentment (in the above paragraph). Which resonates most with you? Is there something not listed you've been asking God to provide—something you think would make you more content? What is it?**

Make no mistake, we do have needs. God wants us to talk to Him about every need, every desire, and every longing of our heart. He loves us that much. But while we wait for our needs and our desires to be fulfilled (and even if they never get fulfilled) they don't have to control our contentment, because ultimately God is the one who has all things under control.

- 2. Continue reading in John 6. This time, skip down to John 6:25-35.**
 - a. Why were the people looking for Jesus? What did they want him to do for them (v. 24)?**
 - b. In their minds, having enough bread equaled contentment and satisfaction. No more worries. No more work. They'd have everything provision they would ever need to live satisfied and content. What does Jesus tell them in verse 35?**
 - c. What do you think Jesus meant?**
 - d. Ok, let's get real. Don't just give a Sunday School answer, please. What do you Jesus words, "I am the Bread of Life" mean to *you* as you seek the "thing" you think you need to be satisfied and content?**

I hope you can see that what you are looking for to fill you, to satisfy you, to make you truly, deeply content, is Jesus. And not just for salvation—although you certainly need Jesus for that—but also for soul satisfaction.

Sweet friend, you won't find sustaining contentment in a provision. It's in a person, *who is your provision.*

3. Is Contentment Found in the People I Love?

Read John 4:7-26 and answer the following questions.

- a. How many husbands did the women at the well have?**

- b. What does this tell you about where she sought contentment and satisfaction?**

- c. What do you think: Was she looking in the right place for satisfaction? Why or why not?**

- d. How do you try to find contentment and satisfaction in people and relationships? Do you always find it?**

Let me clarify: we are *supposed* to live connected to others. We are wired to give and receive love. Loving others is the second greatest commandment. But—and here's the thing we must wrap our hearts around (notice I said "hearts" rather than "minds", because this is an emotional issue, not a mental one) —if we look to people to be our primary source of satisfaction, we will never be truly content, even in the best of scenarios.

Great spouses pass away (and less-than-great ones leave). Good kids grow up. Wonderful friends move away. Fantastic co-workers retire.

Only Jesus is there through it all. He was there at your beginning. He is there in your middle.

He will be there at your end.

- e. What kind of water did Jesus offer the woman in verse 10? _____ . How did Jesus describe this living water in verses 13-14?**

Let's pause for a moment, because I want you to see something I'd never noticed till now. Jesus tells her the water he offers—the water, which would spring up inside her—is *living water*. Jesus could have described the water as pure, or holy, or any number of other adjectives. But, instead Jesus calls the water “living”. Why?

Could it be that Jesus knew the woman was looking for satisfaction, not in a provision, or a possession, but in flesh and blood *living* people?

But wait. It gets even better! Remember when Paul said, “I've learned the secret of being content”, over in Philippians 4:11? Well, check out the definition of “Content”:

“Being self-sufficient, content in the sense of being satisfied because of living in God's fullness. It is a positive self-sufficiency (inward adequacy) that is entirely God-produced. This inward sufficiency is as valid in “low times” (suffering) as in “high times” (temporal prosperity).” (Strong's Concordance 842)

In other words, true contentment doesn't come from outside us; contentment springs up from within us. Does this sound like the living water Jesus offered the woman, or what?

- a. **What did Jesus say about himself in verses 25-26?**

- b. **If Jesus, the Messiah, spoke to *you* today, what do you think he would tell you about finding true contentment?**

Healthy women possess a positive self-sufficiency, energized by Christ. Oh, how I hope you'll take this to heart! Only Jesus can quench your thirst through every season—whether you are 23, 43, 63, or 93. **That soul satisfaction you are looking for? It's not found in people, but in a person. It's found in Jesus.**

If you look anywhere else, you won't find it.

4. Is Contentment Found in a Possession I Want?

Read Luke 12:13-21 and answer the following questions.

- a. **The man in the crowd had Jesus' attention. He could have asked Jesus anything! What did he ask Jesus to do for him (v. 13)?**

- b. **What do you think: what made this man discontent? What did the man think would make his discontentment go away?**

- c. **Nine times out of ten, when someone asked Jesus to do something, Jesus said, "yes". How did Jesus respond to this man's request in verse 15? Why do you think Jesus responded the way He did?**
- d. **The man made a mistake most of us make at some point: He asked Jesus to change his circumstances when he really should have asked Jesus to change *him*. Are you currently asking Jesus to change a circumstance, rather than change you? Discuss.**
- e. **Does being over-concerned about possessions (getting them, keeping them, maintaining them) ever steal your contentment? If so, how?**
- f. **Continue the story by reading Luke 12:22-34. How do you know if you are over-concerned about possessions? Jesus sums it up in one word: Worry (see verse 22). According to Jesus, what's the solution for allowing worry to steal your contentment (vs. 22-34)?**

The foolish rich man had stuff—and lots of it. His barns were full. Then fuller. Then fuller, still. Yet his soul wasn't satisfied or content. No matter how much he had, it was never enough. He needed more.

Barns can be full and life can still be empty—if you look in the wrong places.

- 5. **Where can we find contentment ? Read Isaiah 55:1-3, written below.**

*"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.
² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.
³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.*

- a. **What invitation is given in verse 1? To whom do you think we should come?**

- b. **What wisdom is given in verse 2?**

- c. **Remember, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6). In what ways do you “spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” (Yes, I know this is deep. Go there.)**

- d. **In verse 3, Isaiah writes, “Come to me: listen, that you may live”. What two things does God tell us to do in this verse?**

- e. **The word “live” means to “make fully alive, to surely be whole.” How do you think being made whole and living fully alive corresponds to living content?**

When we feel discontented, the lure of trying to fill those empty places of dissatisfaction our own way, on our own terms can be intense. We can be tempted to ignore God, or live like we don’t want God around, at all. It can be hard to listen to God. It can seem easier to look for contentment in anything, or anyone, other than God.

But if you look anywhere else, you won’t find it. It isn’t there.

6. Have you, in the past, or are you now, looking for contentment in something other than God? Discuss.

The contentment you and I long for isn’t found in a provision we need, or in the people we love, or in a possession we want. The great secret of contentment—the thing Paul knew when he penned Philippians—is this: Contentment comes from my connection with Christ. Why? Because only Christ enables me to joyfully accept God’s will for my life. Only Christ fills me with the living strength I need to “do” *my* “all things”. Only Christ will be with me today, tomorrow, and the day after that.

Everyone looks for contentment.

But you? Oh, sweet friend, you know where to find it.

“God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.”- Augustine

Life Application

Our Bible study on Contentment is finished, but your journey toward emotional, spiritual, and relational health is not. Neither is mine. God has just begun to work in us. Good things are ahead for you, sweet friend, so don't give up! When you sense discontentment rising up in you, you know what to do. You've learned the secrets to contentment: Focus on what you have, not what you don't have. Separate your wants from your needs. Think about what you think about. Refuse to spiral. Stop circling around your problems. Square off around your problems. Do what is right in the eyes of all men. As far as it depends on you, live in peace with all people. Rejoice. Give thanks. Pray. Don't get overwhelmed. Do each individual thing God asks you to do, one moment at a time. And never forget, true contentment can't be found in a provision you need, or the people you love, or the possession you want. Your contentment today, and tomorrow, and the day after that, rests on your connection to Christ.

To help you in the days to come, when you might feel discontent, I've included a short self-reflection guide, below. It's meant to help you find your way back to a place of contentment.

God bless! You are loved!

Finding My Way Back to Contentment

Privately answer the following questions:

- Why do I feel discontent?
- Does my discontentment stem from something I want, or something I need?
- Does my discontentment originate from something outside me or inside me? In other words, is it a soul issue or a circumstance issue? Note: ultimately, it's always a soul issue.
- Am I willing to joyfully accept God's will for me in this circumstance? If not, why am I fighting with God about my circumstance?
- Have I prayed about this circumstance (honestly)? Have I given thanks in it (honestly?). If not, use the space below to thank God right now.
- When I consider my source of discontentment, is there something I need to change in order to find contentment? (A healthy, holy kind of change—not the unhealthy kind of change that eliminates dissatisfaction for the moment, but doesn't solve the real problem)
- Am I asking God to change my circumstances, when I really should be asking God to change me?
- In my heart of hearts, do I think my satisfaction and contentment comes from something, or someone, other than God?
- Have I allowed my thoughts to spin out of control? If so, stop, and read Philippians 4:8. Now square off on the issue that's stealing your contentment. Use the space below: