

The Secret of
contentment

The Secret of *contentment*

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Special Thanks

A special thanks to Lenore Igleheart for all the hours she saved me in preparing this book for publication. During the time I was discipling Lenore, I discovered she had computer skills and she agreed to type this book for me. She diligently deciphered the scribbling in my notes with a happy, contented spirit.

The Secret of Contentment

© 2006 Regular Baptist Press • Arlington Heights, Illinois

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www.RegularBaptistPress.org • 1-800-727-4440

RBP5353 • ISBN 978-1-59402-425-2

Seventh printing—2020

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Preface

A wise person once said, “Discontentment makes rich people poor. Contentment makes poor people rich.” My prayer is that this study will lead you to a contented life, if you do not already experience it. When you find contentment, you will realize you have found something the richest person cannot buy. You will discover that contentment is a state of the heart that does not fluctuate with circumstances or people. Ultimately, we will discover that contentment is more a change of our attitude than a change in our circumstances. Are you ready to find the Biblical secrets to contentment? Let’s get started!

LESSON 1

Searching for Contentment

“But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased” (Psalm 115:3).

If you stood in a busy mall and asked people to answer a question for a survey, would many people stop? Probably not. Why? They are too busy or don't want to get involved. If you could get a few of them to answer your question, you might be surprised at their answers. Oh, by the way, I did take a survey. Below are my question and the answers I got.

Question: “What are you searching for in life?”

Answers:

“Happiness and to be successful.”

“Money, love, and a normal family life with a happy home.”

“Happiness.”

Not one person said he or she was searching for peace or contentment. Most people in our materialistic society do not know that the things they are searching for will not bring contentment. I can hear someone saying, “Doesn't happiness bring contentment?” No! Because happiness depends on happenings, such as having money, it can be here today and gone tomorrow. Contentment is built on a relationship with Christ—a solid foundation that never changes. So how do people find contentment?

Peace with God

Contentment starts with peace with God. We receive this peace when we accept Christ as Savior.

1. How does the Bible picture people before they are saved? Read Isaiah 57:20 and 21 and Romans 3:17.

2. Describe how a person can have peace with God. Read Ephesians 2:13 and 14 and Romans 5:1.

3. Are you a restless, discontented person with no peace? Do you want peace with God? If you answered yes, read the verses below that explain how you can have peace with God.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

God *loves* you and wants you to enjoy the *abundant life* He offers you.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“For the wages of sin is death [that is, separation from God]” (Romans 6:23).

People are *sinful*, and their sin *separates* them from God.

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

The death of Jesus Christ is the only *provision* God has made to pay for people's sin.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

You must *receive* Jesus Christ as your Savior before you can personally experience His love for you and the abundant life He has planned for you.

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith”
(Ephesians 2:8).*

You can receive Christ right now by an act of *faith*.

Are you ready to believe on Christ as your Savior? Use the following prayer as a guide to help you express your desire to God: “Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins. Right now I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life; replace all the restlessness and anxiety with peace and contentment.”

We cannot have the peace *of* God, which leads to contentment, until we experience peace *with* God through salvation. I trust you have taken time to consider it and have responded in a positive way. If you believed on Jesus as your Savior, be sure to tell your Bible study leader or another friend.

Peace of God

We have peace *with* God when we receive Christ as our Savior. We enjoy the peace *of* God as we learn to trust Him with our lives. Are you experiencing the peace of God? If not, could it be that you have never really accepted God’s divine sovereignty in your life and circumstances?

4. Look up the word “sovereign” in a dictionary and write down the definition.

The sovereignty of God means God is God; He has no equal (Isaiah 40:25). He does whatever He pleases with His creation because all of it belongs to Him. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”

5. What do the following verses teach us about God’s sovereignty?

Proverbs 16:9

Ecclesiastes 7:13

Psalm 115:3

Daniel 4:34 and 35

Lamentations 3:37 and 38

Confidence in the sovereignty of God in all that affects us is crucial to our trusting Him. If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God's sovereign control then we cannot trust Him. His love may be infinite, but if His power is limited and His purpose can be thwarted, we cannot trust Him.¹

First Timothy 6:15 says, "Which in his times he shall [show], who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." A potentate, or sovereign, rules his or her realm.

6. "Potentate" means "ruler" or "sovereign." How does 1 Timothy 6:15 describe our sovereign God?

7. First Timothy 6:15 has helped me accept God's sovereignty in my life. What does this verse teach you?

The Old Testament tells about a potentate named Nebuchadnezzar. This king set himself up as the supreme ruler of his kingdom, but he also wanted to control people's lives. He made a ninety-foot tall golden idol and demanded that everyone bow down and worship it. God made Nebuchadnezzar insane to humble him and to bring him to the place where he knew that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:32). The king lived like an animal for seven years.

8. Read Daniel 4:34–37. After God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar, how did he view God?

Nebuchadnezzar's reasoning did not return to him until he started thinking right about God (Daniel 4:37). We also need to think right about God and see Him as the blessed "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15).

9. Many people rebel against the idea of a sovereign God ruling their lives. All they want is a jack-in-the-box God. What kind of God is that?

10. Read Isaiah 55:8 and 9. Why can't we always understand God's sovereign rule in our lives?

God is often silent when we prefer that he speak, and he interrupts us when we prefer that he stay silent. His ways are not our ways. To live with the sacred God of creation means that we conduct our lives with a God who does not explain himself to us. It means that we worship a God who is often mysterious—too mysterious to fit our formulas for better living.²

11. Read James 1:13, Isaiah 45:5–7, and Psalm 76:10. James tells us that God is not the author of evil. What do the verses in Isaiah 45 and Psalm 76 tell us?

We must, therefore, conclude that God neither causes sin, incites it, authorizes it, or approves it. He does, however, permit it by allowing creatures, whom He has endowed with a moral will, to rebel against His authority. He then sovereignly overrules their evil to accomplish His sovereign predetermined purposes. In the allowance of evil, God demonstrates how great He really is. Or as Joseph so accurately articulated when giving his analysis of the evil done to him by his brothers who sold him into slavery, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Genesis 50:20).³

It is hard for us to fathom that a God of love permits the death of a mate or a child, cancer, or the loss of a job. Did God allow all of Job's adversities and calamities (see Job 1)? Yes! Job 1:12 reveals that God gave Satan permission to test Job.

12. How do we know Job understood that God allowed his trials and controlled his circumstances (Job 1:20, 21)?

13. Did Job ever fully comprehend why God allowed all his trials? What did he understand (Job 42:2, 3)?

*Faith submits, taking God at His word and resting in His character. Can you see that this Sovereign One Who sits upon the throne of the universe is just, merciful, holy, righteous—a God of love? Rest and listen.*⁴

14. Abraham called God “the Judge of all the earth” (Genesis 18:25). What is the main responsibility of a judge?

15. Read Genesis 18:25 and Psalm 145:17. What kind of judge is handing down the verdicts in our lives?

Psalm 106:1 says, “Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

16. When are we most likely to say, “God is so good”? When are we least likely to say this?
17. What is happening in your life right now that makes you think, *God isn't good, or He wouldn't have allowed this?* How could this situation work for your spiritual good?
18. Our thoughts and motives are often focused toward a comfortable life. What is God always thinking about those who love Him (Romans 8:28, 29)?

God's working in our lives could be compared to baking a cake.

“Some ingredients of a cake taste good by themselves. Other ingredients taste terrible by themselves: nutmeg, baking soda, etc. But when you mix those things together and get the mixer churning, the good and the bad blend and turn out for the better. When that cake comes out of the oven, the good and the bad have been so mixed, so integrated that they have produced something well worth the waiting.”⁵

God takes all the good and all the bad experiences in our lives to help conform us to the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Have you been wrestling with the question, Why, God? Can

you change your question to, How, God? How can I grow spiritually from this experience and bring honor to Your name? Coming to grips with God's sovereign control in my life has taught me to live a palms-up life.

19. What is your concept of a palms-up life?

20. What relationship does palms-up living have with contentment (Job 23:14; Psalms 115:3; 135:6)?

We will probably spend most of our life with family, friends, good health and good work. But they are not ours by rights. They are not promised to us. We may have to give them back to God at any moment. Someday we will give them back. The trick is to learn how to do that before they leave us. That allows us to spend the rest of our time enjoying them as the temporary gifts that they are.⁶

Accepting the sovereignty of God in your life will help you in your search for contentment.



From My Heart

For me, finding the secret of contentment started with living a palms-up life. Palms-up living was a slow process that occurred in my life over a period of a few years. I remember the day the process started. I had taught a Bible study on Romans 8:28 and 29 that day. For the first time I came to the full realization that all the good and all the bad that had happened in my life were for one ultimate purpose: that I might become more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). I got down on my knees and told the Lord, "If

Your goal for my life is to be more like Your Son, then I want that as the life-long goal of my life as well.”

Since that day, I daily (mentally and sometimes literally) put my palms up before the Lord and say, “Give what You want and take what You want.” When I first started saying that to the Lord, I was fearful of what He might take from me. One day I realized I must give Him everything I have; then He couldn’t take it from me. From that day on, I have visualized placing every person and everything in my life at the feet of Jesus and saying, “It all belongs to You.” Never again have I feared He might take something from me, because I have already given it to Him. Palms-up living has taught me what contentment really is: total trust in my sovereign God.

From Your Heart



Have you been struggling with God’s sovereignty in your life? Did you learn anything in this lesson that helped you? What was it? Have you tried palms-up living?

Notes

1. Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 37.
2. M. Craig Barnes, *When God Interrupts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 135.
3. Tony Evans, *Our God Is Awesome* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 99, 100.
4. Kay Arthur, *The Sovereignty of God* (Chattanooga: Precept Ministries, 1987), 11.
5. Evans, 100, 101.
6. Barnes, 18.