

"Investing In Eternity By Strengthening The Local Church"



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Pastoring The Small Church

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"Godliness with...

Contentment

...is great gain." (First Timothy 6:6)

"I HAVE LEARNED... I KNOW HOW...I AM INSTRUCTED"

In Hebrews 13:5 the Christian is commanded to, "...*be content*," however, we cannot be content because someone commands us to be content, even if the command comes from God. If we are going to achieve contentment we will need to "*study to show ourselves approved unto God*," concerning how to make it a reality in our lives.

In Philippians 4:11-13 we read that Paul said, "...*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*" He continued, "*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*"

Paul learned how make contentment a reality in his life in spite of his many trying circumstances. Paul said, "*I am content*," however, he qualified that in First Corinthians 15:10 where he said, "...*by the grace of God I am what I am.*"

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT?

Contentment is a work of the Holy Spirit on the inside that shows on the outside. A Christian with contentment will have a sweet, inward, gracious spirit, while freely submitting to God's wisely sent circumstances. It is not only the tongue holding its peace during trying times, it includes the soul being silent.

The Psalmist said, "*My soul, wait thou only upon God...*" (Psalm 62:5). The soul consists of the *mind*, the *will*, and the *emotions*.

When a Christian has contentment it will be as a result of his *mind*, *will*, and *emotions* being under the control of the Holy Spirit.

THINK ABOUT WHAT IS BOTHERING YOU TODAY

It usually has something to do with the circumstances that are in our life today that we wish were not there. As Job faced unwanted circumstances he said, "*I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.*" (Job 7:11). The Psalmist cried, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?*" (Psalms 42:11).

THE PREACHER'S GREATEST SOURCE OF DISCOURAGEMENT IN A SMALL CHURCH



The greatest source of discouragement for the preacher is the fact that things are not happening in the church like he wishes they would. The preacher who is discontented for this reason will be discontented until he dies. The church will never satisfy your soul. Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.

If we have all the money we think we need. When we have the building we think we need. When we have the crowd we think we need, we will have more people to make is discontent. We will still cry out with the Psalmist, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?*" (Psalms 42:11).



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LEARNING CONTENTMENT Never Seek For Contentment In Your Ministry.

Whatever gave us the idea that God gave us a ministry so we could be content? Several men in the Bible who had God-given ministries, were so frustrated with their responsibilities they prayed that they could die.

Understand That Contentment Does Not Come From Addition But Rather From Subtraction.

Humanism says the chief end of man is to be happy. Humanism says we will be happy if we can add things to our life that we think we need. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:5 that we are to “...*be content with such things as ye have.*” We need not only to learn that we should be content with the thing we have, we should be content with our position in life. We have seen that Paul said, “...*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*”

Our prayer should be, “*Lord please subtract from my desires so that I will be content with what I have and where I am.*” Remember Paul wrote about having contentment while he was sitting in a Roman dungeon. He once had everything. He had a home, a family, money, a position of respect and he had power as a citizen of Israel. Now he has none of those things, however, he has something he never had before. He said, “*I have learned...to be content.*”

Contentment Comes As We Do Our Duties In The Circumstances, Not By Trying To Change The Circumstances.

The Bible is full of stories about men who took care of their God-given responsibilities in the midst of the God-given pressure filled circumstances that they faced. None of us have faced the pressures that Nehemiah faced and yet he said, “...*the joy of the LORD is your strength.*” Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and everyone else who had a God-given ministry faced pressures we know little about.

Contentment Comes When We Make Gods Will, Our Will.

Moses made his will and God’s will one and the same. We read in Numbers 16:28, “*Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.*”

In Acts 9:6 when Paul asked, “*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” it was unlikely that he had any idea it would include Second Corinthians 11:23-27 where he listed him being in prisons, being whipped five times, being beaten with rods, being stoned three times, being shipwrecked, being robbed, putting up with false brethren, suffering weariness, painfulness, hunger and thirst.

Through it all Paul could say, “...*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” (Philippians 4:11-13).

There is a big difference to simply submitting to God’s will and actually making His will our will. Psalms 47:4 says, “*He shall choose our inheritance* (the things He gives) *for us...*”

Contentment Comes Through Self Denial.

When Paul began his ministry, he referred to himself as the “*chief of apostles,*” and he was the chief of apostles. At the end of his ministry, however, he referred to himself as “*the chief of sinners.*”

At the beginning of his ministry he thought he should have some respect and appreciation. He said, “*Am I not an apostle?*” (First Corinthians 9:1). The truth of the matter is, those who do not have respect and appreciation for God-given leadership will answer to God for it. The problem, however, arises when God-given leadership thinks they deserve appreciation or respect. As Paul neared the end of his ministry he wrote in Ephesians 3:8 that he was, “...*less than the least of all saints.*”

IF WE GOT WHAT WE DESERVED!

To be content I must learn that I am nothing, I deserve nothing, and without Christ I can do nothing. The person who has learned contentment has learned he is a corrupt, unclean vessel that will spoil everything that comes into it unless Christ intervenes.

It is an amazing thing that God would allow any of us to pastor even the smallest of churches and yet many preachers are discontent because they think they deserve a big church.

When I came to Sarnia a preacher friend said to me, that after all my years of service for the Lord, I deserved a big church with a good income and a retirement package.

I said, “*Where did you get a stupid ideal like that? If I got what I deserved I would go straight to Hell. Sarnia is far better than I deserve.*” (I have been in Sarnia for fourteen years and the truth is, I have never been happier in the work of the Lord than I am today.)

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“There is a spiritual discontentment and a carnal discontentment. The basic difference is a carnal discontentment focuses on ourselves, while a spiritual discontentment focuses on the things of God.”

Sometimes the Devil puts me on a guilt trip telling me I have not accomplished enough for the Lord. **The truth is I have not accomplished anything for the Lord.** Jesus said in John 15:5, “...without me ye can do nothing.” Whatever has been accomplished **for** the Lord in Sarnia has been accomplished **by** the Lord.

DISCONTENTED MARTHA



In Luke chapter ten, Martha was very discontent because she thought she had something to offer the Lord and she could not get people to help her. Jesus informed her that it was not what she had to offer Him that was as important, as what He had to offer her.

Jesus said, “*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*” (Luke 10:41-42).

First Timothy 6:6 says, “**But godliness with contentment is great gain.**” The contented Christian is free from coveting the things he does not have. In verse ten we read, “*some coveted.*” He was referring to money, however, pastors in small churches can easily be led to discontentment by coveting the ministry of another pastor who has a larger church.

FOCUSING ON WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN

The key to contentment is to focus on what we have and not on what we do not have. In Hebrews 13:5 we read, “*Let your conversation (manner of life) be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have...*” It was in the midst of major church problems in First Timothy 6:6 we read, “*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*”

Hebrews 13:3-5 says, “*Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity...and be content with such things as ye have...*”

In Philippians 4:12 Paul said, “*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*” It was in this context that he said in verse eleven, “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*”

TWO TYPES OF DISCONTENTMENT

Lest someone should read in this article that we can be right with God, being content while the world goes to Hell, we want to say there are *two types* of discontentment. There is a *spiritual* discontentment and a *carnal* discontentment. The basic difference is a carnal discontentment focuses on ourselves, while a spiritual discontentment focuses on the things of God.

Carnal discontentment always reflects upon the man who displays it. He is like a hungry wolf prowling through the forest, restlessly searching for satisfaction at the expense of another.

Diotrephes maneuvered himself into a position of power in the church, because, “*...he loveth to have the pre-eminence among them.*” (3 John 9). Judas Iscariot, Demas, Balaam, and Demetrius were all infected with the problem of a carnal discontentment while supposedly serving the Lord. No carnally discontented person is ever satisfied.

SPIRITUAL DISCONTENTMENT

Few people, if any, were so spiritually discontent as the apostle Paul. He said, “*For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not...For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do...O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Romans 7:15-24)

We can feel the spiritual discontentment behind Paul’s words when he wrote, “*I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*” (Phil 3:13-14). Paul was so *content* with Christ, that he would always be discontented until he knew more of Christ!

It was in this context that Paul said, ‘... *godliness with contentment is great gain.*’ (1 Tim 6:6). There is more to godliness than going to a fundamental church. No church member or no pastor will achieve contentment by simply a experiencing a few token hours at church each week. Christian contentment without godliness is impossible.

***Carnal discontentment originates with self.
Spiritual discontentment comes from God.***