

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Week #3

“Delighted & Contented”

Have you ever been around a person that seems to never be satisfied in life? I don't know if there is a better way to suck the life out of a room than to put a person in it that is dissatisfied and uncontented. If we are honest, we know that at some point this has been each one of us. As Charles Spurgeon said in a sermon, “It is so easy to be covetous, that no class in society is free from it.” This unwillingness to be contented, or delighted, in where God has us and how He might use us has caused major divisions in home life, and all sorts of other relationships. Instead of counting the blessings we've already been given, we demand that we are given more. The mentality has become, “what have you done for me lately?” We may not always consider it such a problem, but this is a form of humanistic thinking. Ultimately, humanism is any ideology that centers around mankind.

A foundational aspect of the Gospel of Christ is that it is an act of grace by God toward us. In other words, it is an unmerited and non-purchasable gift to those that are completely undeserving. Another foundational aspect of the Gospel is that at salvation God promises He will never leave, forsake, or fall short of providing for those He calls His own (Heb. 13:5 & Phil. 4:19). At the root of contentment and delight is the truth (reality) that God will indeed provide for those that are His out of His perfect goodness. Because of this, the Christian need not look for satisfaction anywhere else but God. God is fully satisfactory. For this reason, David writes, “Delight yourself in the LORD...” (Psalm 37:4). Additionally, David encourages us to “taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man that takes refuge in Him” (Psalm 34:8).

Contentment and Delight are heart topics that mark the life of a Christian as trusting and walking by faith in God, who provides. The problem is that believers can have moments of “grieving the Spirit” (Eph. 4:30). In other words, if we don't like a situation, we demand God to get us out. And, if He doesn't then we will find our own way out. God promises that He is faithful and will carry us through, if we will but trust Him and let Him live through us (1 Cor. 10:13 & Prov. 3:5-6).

Lacking contentment and delight can greatly affect our relationships beyond our relationship with God. Due to lacking contentment and delight we will constantly change plans to what we think might get us out of a situation. We will drag our family through “whatever it takes” to get what we want. Our emotions begin to rise and fall based on the circumstances of each day, making life like a roller coaster. And eventually we become tired & weary to the point where there is no space to just enjoy the blessings God has already provided. This lifestyle will always impact our nearest relationships. This is why contentment & delight in God are basic components for ANY relationship to thrive.

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

MEN:

Contentment in the full character of God breeds a delighting heart. According to Webster's 1828 Dictionary, contentment means to be "without complaint and lacking want". However, men in our culture are growing more and more discontented with their work, wife, and so much more. Because of this we are prone to either blame God or purposefully cloud God out of our view. We begin chasing things that may work for a moment, but they always fall short in the end. We begin to complain... Often that starts at home with our spouses, but it is often reflected in our friendships and even the way we treat our children.

In the book of Ruth we do not see Boaz complain one time. At first glance we might say that he had everything going for him. However, being the kinsman redeemer meant that he had a role of responsibility to care for extended family that had fallen into unfortunate times... And perhaps even for family who had made foolish mistakes that cost them greatly. Boaz's hard-earned property was expected to be used to care for all of those situations. Let's be honest, we would care for a good friend who has done well to us. But how about being expected to care for those that have made continual foolish mistakes? Boaz had to learn to be content in the role God had placed him. His role had purpose, and that gave him delight.

This attribute isn't just about the workplace, though. It is also pivotal to marriage relationships. Proverbs 31, where we get our six qualities of Biblical Excellence, is written to men first with the focus on teaching them to cherish their wives beyond that of priceless jewels. How are we doing? Yet, the men of Israel became unsatisfied with what they had at home. Malachi 2:13-16 says that they had forgotten and acted treacherously against the wives of their youth. They weren't content at home, so they sought pleasure elsewhere. Men, this discontentment will never bring delight in marriage, but always heartache. The Israelites missed out on blessings God wanted to give all because they were not cherishing their wives properly!

READ 1 Timothy 6:6-11...

It is not wrong to take an opportunity that God puts in front of you. However, contentment speaks to a willingness to stay and be where God already has you. On many occasions I have seen recked homes and lives because families are put on the back burner while other passions are pursued. What does this passage have to say about contentment? What about the lifestyle of discontentment?

READ Matthew 6:25-34...

Worry is not something us men like to admit that we have felt; however, in truth we know we have each had those moments. Verse 27 reminds us of a profound truth... "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" Considering this question, what is it that Jesus was saying to the men about contentment? How would this affect your home relationships?

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

WOMEN:

Contentment in the full character of God breeds a delighting heart. According to Webster's 1828 Dictionary, contentment means to be "without complaint and lacking want". However, through the last century we have seen a huge feministic movement for position, power, and prestige. Admittedly, a large part of this is men not cherishing their wives as He directed. But, in a covenant, the vow is made and kept irrespective of the other party's faithfulness. This is what makes it different than a contract. We love the blessing of this truth when it comes to God's covenant of grace with us, but not so much when it keeps us bound to a person that may not always be easy to follow. However, this was God's design for women and what God called "good" in making them. Unfortunately, in Genesis 3:16b we see that God acknowledges the discontented heart of women in their role because of sin. When God made women, He made them for a role that He called "good", and in total it was part of what He called "very good." In Proverbs 31, we see that a woman within God's directive is to be cherished beyond all the treasures of earth.

Both in the book of Ruth and Proverbs 31 we do not see Ruth (the woman of excellence) complain one time. Ruth is widowed, without a home, and in a position of caring for a widowed mother-in-law. Her position was rough and very vulnerable in every sense. Yet she had come to trust in God and was contented with His provision. Recognizing the situation, she went out in the morning glad to work in a field to gather for her and Naomi. The work was hard, but she remained content and diligent in her work. Why was she able to take delight in her work? Because she saw how it would benefit her home, and it would bring God glory. In the end, God provided and rewarded her faithfulness with redemption.

READ Proverbs 31:11-30...

No complaints are listed. Just a faithful and devoted wife one day at a time. Hard, long days were ahead of her. Snow would come. The tasks were great! Yet the woman of excellence had a smile of delight (v.25). Why? Because she is content in God with what He gives, and she is delighted to work to His glory. How is this reflected in your daily life? If not, what is it that is getting in the way?

Using that same text, the woman of excellence is said 6 times to have been focused on her husband, once on her children, and never herself. When we are content with God's watchful provision for ourselves, we can begin to pay close attention to the needs of those around us. God made woman a priceless helper, but to a specific man. While it is true that she nurtures the children, the woman of excellence is first known for her priority in support of her own husband. This is what earns her praise according to Proverbs 31. In this way she trains the younger women (children). How is the training by loving your husband going? Is there anything that needs to change?

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

YOUNG PEOPLE:

Contentment in the full character of God breeds a delighting heart. According to Webster's 1828 Dictionary, contentment means to be "without complaint and lacking want". However, the words I often hear at home are "we never get what they have." Yes, my children can be much like other children and adults. And let's be honest, you don't enjoy being around friends when they start complaining. It ruins the fun and enjoyment you could have instead. That is because God didn't build us to complain, but to be content and delighted with the things He gives us. It is part of delighting in Him!

In the books of Ruth and Proverbs we have been looking at the qualities of a Biblically Excellent person. The qualities we are looking at now are "Working with Delight" and being "Content with What God Gives". Psalm 103:2 goes with this and tells us to praise the LORD as we count all the blessings He has given. When we complain we are telling God that He hasn't done enough, and that we deserve more. On the other hand, when we are content with what God gives, we get to enjoy seeing those things put to work for His glory and our delight.

Interestingly enough, young people's relationships with friends are greatly impacted by attitudes (contentment & delight or complaining & arguing). We don't get to choose the situations that come up in life, but we do choose our response. My father-in-law used to say that "attitude is almost everything". When a young person is content with the things God gives them, they are able to respond in joy and delight.

READ 1 John 2:15-17 & Ephesians 6:1-2...

Young people, at first glance you may not think these verses have much in common. However, we don't have to be trained to be selfish and disobedient. We have to be trained to be selfless and obedient. You know that your parents instruct you for your good, not bad. Part of being content in God is by being content with the parents He gave you. The apostle John writes what he did like he was talking to children. He does it to warn them that selfish mindsets are a bottomless pit that will destroy you. However, obedience to God and parents will prove beneficial to train you in good things. Because of this, a child should obey (work) with delight knowing that their obedience will produce something good.

What are some things that you know are good that you are called to obey in? How are you doing at listening and working through those things?

READ Philippians 2:14-15...

What is it that God is telling you to do (or not do) in these verses? Why is He saying this? How does this show your delight in God?