

WEEK 7 Article on Contentment

Does your house seem too small, or your car too old? Has your job become boring, or your spouse grown unattractive? If so, the problem may be with your soul instead of your circumstances.

When you're not content with your life, your relationship with God will be affected because you're not trusting Him to provide what's best for you. Chasing after more of what the world offers may satisfy you temporarily, but ultimately you'll be fulfilled only by pursuing the contentment that God wants for you.

Here's how you can discover the secret of contentment:

Rest assured that contentment is attainable. If you trust God to help you develop contentment in your life, His peace will overcome the restlessness you constantly feel right now to acquire and achieve more. You don't have to be running on a treadmill toward fulfillment yet never reaching it, because God has promised to give you the strength you need to learn how to be content.

Understand why contentment is necessary for holiness. As a Christian, you should pursue contentment because: God has commanded it, contentment is a priceless spiritual treasure, a discontented spirit lies at the root of much sin, contentment shows your humble submission to God's will and allows you to experience God's peace, and a contented spirit helps you worship God.

Beware of the dangers of a discontented spirit. Discontentment is spiritually dangerous because: it reveals the corruption of sin and rebellion in your soul, it undermines your dignity as a child of God, and it interferes with your Christian witness to seekers.

Seek contentment all the time, not just sometimes. God wants you to be content when your life is going well, keeping your focus on Him rather than getting spiritually complacent and easily distracted by worldly pursuits. And God also wants you to be content when you're struggling with challenges, trusting that God will use bad circumstances to accomplish good purposes in your life. Remember that contentment comes not by finding circumstances that you like, but by responding faithfully to whatever circumstances you encounter.

Ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind. Pray for the power you need to think correctly about your circumstances. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you develop the right attitudes that support contentment: calm trust in God's control and wisdom, joy in the good God brings into your life, submission to the bad that God allows you to suffer, and a commitment to respond gracefully to every situation you encounter.

Long for God above all else. Since a relationship with God is the only thing that has the power to truly satisfy your deepest desires, make it your top priority to pursue a closer relationship with God every day. Devote the best of your time, energy, and other resources to drawing closer to God rather than to lesser pursuits. Be single-minded in your goal to know God more deeply and become the person He wants you to become, making whatever sacrifices you need to make to do so.

Find contentment in the midst of affliction. Accept the fact that suffering is inevitable in our fallen world. When suffering hits your life, ask God to help you recognize how He is mercifully using that suffering to bring about spiritual good in your life. Rather than trying to escape from your suffering, pray for the ability to perform the duties you have in the midst of it. Give your will and desires over to God and ask Him to replace them in your mind with His will and desires for you. Instead of being preoccupied with your own concerns while you're suffering, help others in need to take your focus off yourself and find encouragement when you see the positive difference you're able to make in other people's lives. Pray for the grace to be content in knowing that God is at work in your life, even when you're suffering.

Use God's math to find contentment. From God's perspective, you can find contentment by adding and subtracting. When you add the burden of an awareness of your sin to the other burdens that are making you feel discontented, you'll see that your sin is the greatest problem. Confess and repent of whatever sins God brings to your mind. When you subtract desires that don't please God by purging them from your life, you open your soul to receive the contentment God wants to give you, so you'll be at peace with the right desires at the right times.

Long for heaven. Recognize that you're ultimately a citizen of heaven rather than this fallen world, so you can be content that you can do God-given work while

you're here and then move on to be in heaven – where you'll enjoy being in Jesus' presence, with nothing to separate you anymore. Whenever you must endure suffering on earth, remind yourself of the wonderful times that await you in heaven, where you will have your deepest desires fulfilled.

Find contentment by enjoying God and His promises. You can be content when you realize that God will give you what you need the most, since He loves you completely and unconditionally. Remind yourself of God's many promises to you in the Bible, from salvation through Jesus to working everything that you experience together to accomplish good purposes in your life. Thank God regularly for the many gifts He has given you.

Keep dying to yourself and living for God and others. You can keep growing more content when you choose each day to die to selfish desires and pursuits and instead live in ways that please God and show His love to other people. As you decide to choose faithfulness over selfishness, you'll gain freedom over sin that causes restless discontent and be able to enjoy calm contentment in any situation. You'll discover that your greatest joy comes from God Himself, who is with you no matter what circumstances you go through.

Adapted from [The Secret of Contentment](#), copyright 2010 by William B. Barcley. Published by P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, www.prpbooks.com. William B. Barcley is the pastor of Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. He was previously Academic Dean at Reformed Theological Seminary, where he is still adjunct professor. He has also taught at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts. Dr. Barcley and his wife Kristy have six children.