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Challenger

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Dealing with Discontentment

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

I have a confession. A few weeks ago I left the office feeling bored (and it wasn't for a lack of things to do). Along with the boredom came anxiety, irritability, and a mild sense of despair. I went home and tried to drown my feelings by immersing myself in yard work (one of my loves). The feelings, however, persisted. Thankfully, by the next morning, I felt fine.

That's not the first time I've experienced those feelings. For the last few years I've struggled at various times with discontentment. Sometimes the battle will last only a day. Other times, weeks may go by before I'm able to get out of my funk.

Please don't misunderstand. I enjoy what I do and am grateful to God for who He's helped me to become. I'm a blessed man. I'm sure I've got it better than 5.9 billion other people on the planet. So what's the problem? Good question. There's no logical explanation for these feelings.

All I know is that I'm not alone. I've talked to plenty of people young, old, and mid-life like myself who've had similar struggles. In fact, my (and your) great, great grandparents dealt with this very issue.

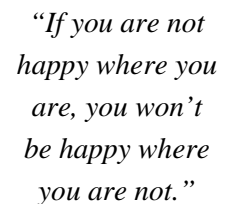
Think about it. The very first sin was not violence. It wasn't lust. Not substance abuse or blasphemy or murder or lying or stealing. It was *discontentment*. Adam and Eve weren't content. They wanted more.

Here are some things I've learned about contentment from Philippians 4:10-13 that I hope will be helpful to some of you:

1. Contentment is not a PLACE.

We kid ourselves when we believe that the grass is greener on the other side. Getting a certain degree or job or relationship or some other thing will never bring lasting satisfaction. Paul

knew this. Whatever his station in life—good or bad, poor or rich—Paul had to fight with discontentment. The truth of the matter is: If you are not happy where you are, you won't be happy where you are not. Contentment is NOT a place of geography; it is a state of soul.



*"If you are not
happy where you
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2. Contentment is not without a PRICE.

Contentment isn't cheap. It comes at a great expense. You must discover more and more your own inadequacy and helplessness. You cannot get along without Him, and nothing under the sun will give you lasting peace of mind. All your efforts at becoming fulfilled and complete independent of Christ (e.g., food, sex, TV, the internet, managerial excellence, owning properties, ministry involvement, etc.) will ultimately disappoint.

This is a lesson we must learn throughout our lives, and it doesn't come easily. Our pride resists the notion of dependency—let alone “radical dependency.” So God—in seeking to draw us to Himself—mercifully brings us face to face time and again with our weaknesses. For it is not until we experience our own insufficiency that we'll ever enjoy Christ's sufficiency. That is why Paul boasted in his limitations because they drove him to Christ where he then tasted of God's great grace (see 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

3. Contentment is not a struggle restricted to the POOR.

By “poor” I mean the less advanced or spiritually immature. Great saints fight this battle too. Saint Paul did. So did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Remember them? They were Levites, well-known community leaders, who did the work of the Lord's tabernacle and ministered to the people. But they weren't content with that. They had to have more. They wanted the priesthood too. So they started a coup against Moses (see Numbers 16).

And then there are the disciples. On no less than two separate occasions they argued over who was the greatest among them. It wasn't enough to be one of the Twelve. No, they had to be top dog, chief amongst the Twelve.



CONCLUSION

Here's the bad news: We will fight discontentment all our lives. Proverbs 27:20 states, “Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man.” The earth is rigged for disappointment. This is a fallen world. God's pronouncement to Adam and Eve after they sinned still applies to us today: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food” (Gen. 3:19).

The good news is this:

There's a way to successfully navigate through these difficult periods. Paul lets us in on a vital lesson he learned. He calls it a secret (lit., “mystery”): “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). Paul was not saying that he could do anything to which he set his mind. The “all things” to which he refers has to do with coping with need or plenty and everything in between. Paul did this through Christ, through relationship with Him. Paul's fellowship or union with Christ enabled him to joyfully endure any situation placed in his life.

“It is not until we experience our own insufficiency that we'll ever enjoy Christ's.”

If you find yourself battling discontentment, here's a thought: Thank God. Thank Him for the pain that forces you to look to Him.



*“To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;
in you I trust, O my God.
Do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
No one whose hope is in you
will ever be put to shame.”
(Psalm 25:1-3)*

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT:

- “If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy, the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.” (C.S. Lewis)

Testimony

Jim Simpson

"I was born in 1957 in Ferndale, Michigan. My parents believed in God, but we never went to church. When I was nine, my parents did enroll me and my sister in Vacation Bible School. It was during this time that I asked Jesus into my heart.

I was a member of the Boy Scouts and Brigades, but when I was fifteen some of my friends and I started experimenting with alcohol and marijuana. We went to sporting events after school and smoked and drank during the games.

When my father found out about these escapades he threatened to kill me if I ever did drugs again. A couple of months later he died suddenly at the age of 39. His death left a huge empty space in my life and I felt all alone.

Going to high school in the 70's, I got involved in everything that was going around—sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll. My behavior soon became too much for my mom to handle, and she told me I had to move out. I went to live with my grandparents.

After I graduated from high school I got a job as a maintenance welder and started to experiment with LSD. I was hoping to find the meaning to life. Then someone introduced me to cocaine, and I became obsessed. I knew drugs were destroying my life, but I could not resist the temptation.

My grandfather later hung himself. I blamed myself for his death. I had given him so much grief. I tried to find comfort by using more drugs.

Two years later I was involved in an argument with my younger brother. While we were arguing I accidentally bumped my grandmother and she fell over a chair. The lining of her stomach tore and she developed peritonitis. A month later she died right before my eyes. I was overwhelmed with guilt.

I eventually married my high school sweetheart.

The marriage lasted only eighteen months. I started smoking crack cocaine and I finally admitted that I was an addict.

I sought help through treatment programs and twelve-step recovery meetings. At first the meetings seemed to help. I met my second wife at one of these meetings, and things were good for awhile. We bought a house, and I got a job at Chrysler., but I still felt empty.

After four years clean I started using drugs again. My second marriage collapsed, I lost my job, and continued in a downward spiral.

For the next 10 years drugs consumed me. I lost more jobs and became homeless. I was full of self-pity and suicidal. I believed there was no hope for me. One day I cried out to God for help. I remembered a friend telling me years before about Life Challenge. I had two quarters in my pocket, and decided to call. I got an appointment and entered the program the very next day.

God used Life Challenge to draw me into a relationship with Jesus Christ. My life has been renewed through His Word, prayer, chapel and church services. I have developed a personal relationship with my Savior. Because of Jesus, I am a new creation. I have meaning and purpose in life. My desires are now changed. I want to serve Jesus."

P.S. Jim graduated the program in October of 2005. He completed a six-month internship program and now serves on staff.

Ministry Opportunity

- We are currently taking applications for full / part-time employment in our Men's Division. This is an excellent opportunity for short or long-term ministry. Please contact Bob Carey for further information at 313.531.0111.

Together for souls,

Jeff