

Finding Contentment

Someone has said, "The secret of contentment is knowing how to enjoy what you have and being able to lose all desire for things beyond your reach." Benjamin Franklin said, "Contentment makes poor men rich; discontentment rich men poor." Inspiration urges, "...Be content with such things as ye have..." These statements are easy to read, but how do we translate this advice into action? Try these suggestions.

First, do not overestimate material possessions! Things of this world are very deceptive and uncertain (1 Timothy 6:17). Many conclude that material abundance is the abundant life. That is a false conclusion. Jesus said, "...A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Our affluent age is prime proof of this truth. Perhaps no similar amount of space in the world can claim more combined wealth than Beverly Hills, California. Has prosperity provided contentment for its residents? It has been said that Beverly Hills claims 193 psychiatrists. That is one for every 200 citizens! Remember, do not get "carried away" with material possessions.

Second, do not fret over what you do not have! In 1 Kings 21, Ahab pouted and threw himself across his bed, turned his face to the wall and acted like a spoiled child! What was wrong? He wanted a certain vineyard belonging to Naboth. He wanted something he did not have. Many are content with their property until they focus envious eyes on a choice possession of another. A teenager is happy with his well-conditioned, used car until the neighbor's teenager drives by in a new "Firebird." An adult is satisfied with his three-bedroom house until an acquaintance informs him that he has just purchased a six bedroom house! Some cannot go window-shopping without returning home miserable. Why? They see so many things they cannot have. So, they allow their disposition to be ruled by self-pity and discontentment.

Third, do not overlook what you do have! Contrast what you are to what you might have been, but for the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Stop looking at things you do not have long enough to focus on the things that you do have! What do we have in the United States? We have 50% of the world's wealth, 63% of the world's manufactured goods, 29% of the world's railroads, 58% of the world's automobiles, 44% of the world's trucks, 56% of the world's telephones, 43% of the world's radios, 35% of the world's electrical output, 26% of the world's steel, 29% of the world's petroleum and 22% of the world's coal? That is pretty good considering we are such discontented people.

Beloved, do you have a regular job, reasonable health, a loving family, plenty to eat and sufficient clothing? The majority of earth's citizens cannot claim such an impressive inventory! Ponder these points until you can say with the apostle Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

By: Clarence Lavender