

C.H.O.I.C.E.S.

BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Applying the Counsel of God's Word to the Issues of Life

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Learning Contentment in All Circumstances

Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, gracious frame of Spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

-Jeremiah Burroughs

Barriers to Contentment:

1. Greed (Colossians 3:1-2, I Timothy 6:11, 17-19)

- Contentment is not _____ satisfaction in Christ with the heart
_____ of other idols.

"Within the human heart things have taken over. God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.' We have mixed up what we serve and what we use. Sadly, many serve things and use God; the Scriptures instruct us to do just the opposite."

-A.W. Tozer

"Instead of complaining at his lot, a contented man is thankful that his condition and circumstances are no worse than they are. Instead of greedily desiring something more than the supply of his present need, he rejoices that God still cares for him. Such a one is "content" with such as he has."

- A. W. Pink

Nothing makes God more supreme and more central in worship than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing - not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends - nothing is going to bring satisfaction to their sinful, guilty, aching hearts besides God."

- John Piper

“Contentment is not getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.” (If I am not satisfied with what I have, I will never be satisfied with what I want.)

-J. Purcell

2. **Lack of purpose** (Philippians 3:10, John 9:3)

- To _____ God - “For my determined purpose is that I may know Him – that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly.” (Phil 3:10, AMP)
- To _____ God’s glory - Man asks, ‘Why did this happen?’ Jesus asks, ‘How might my Father’s glory be displayed through this situation?’ (John 9:3)

Our ultimate goal, our highest calling in life is to glorify God – not to be happy...as I glorify Him, He sees to it that other essential needs are met....or my need of them diminishes.

-C. Swindoll

3. **Anxiety** (Philippians 4:6)

– acknowledge that anxiety is _____ and _____ it as such to God.

“Anxiety is that which divides and distracts the soul, that which diverts us from present duty to weary calculations of how to meet conditions that may never arrive....Worry has more to do with perspective than with circumstances.... Worry doesn’t empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.

-Linda Dillow

“It is not only wrong to worry, it is infidelity, because worrying means that we do not think that God can look after the details of our lives...”

-Oswald Chambers

When people cast fear to the wind and spend themselves and risk their lives and fortune in the cause of God's truth, and in love for other people, then God is revealed for who He really is: infinitely valuable and satisfying--so much so that His people don't need the fleeting pleasures of sin in order to be content." -

John Piper

What am I trying to _____ instead of _____ God?!

Builders of Contentment: (Philippians 4:10-13) (adapted from Susan Heck)

Contentment is not an emotion It is a choice, an act of our will. When we assume this posture of worship, our emotions usually follow. Contentment involves surrender and worship.

-Juanita Purcell

1. Choose to entrust your _____ to God (v. 4 - 6, 10)

*One by one He took them from me
All the things I valued most,
Until I was empty handed
Every glittering toy was lost.*

*And I walked earth's highways, grieving
In my rags and poverty,
Til I heard His voice inviting,
'Lift your empty hands to Me!'*

*So I held my hands toward heaven,
And He filled them with a store
Of His own transcendent riches,
Till my hands could hold no more.*

*And at last I comprehended
With my stupid mind and dull,
That God could not pour His riches
Into hands already full.*

Be Patient, by Juanita Purcell

Palms Up Living.... "Give what You want and take what You want." Palms up living means 'total trust in my sovereign God.'

- Juanita Purcell

I have held many things in my hands, and have lost them all; but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."

- Martin Luther

The soul that gives thanks can find comfort in everything;
The soul that complains can find comfort in nothing.

-Hannah W. Smith

Lord, I am willing to –
Receive what you give,
Lack what you withhold,
Relinquish what you take.

....the importance of a firm belief in the sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness of God in all the circumstances of our lives.” -Jerry Bridges

2. Choose to _____ on what is true (v.8-9)

Contentment is rooted in God’s _____...it is based on God’s Word and not on _____.

Life works better when we know how to glance at things but gaze at God.
Seeing Him clearly will enable us to see all other things clearly.

–Selwyn Hughes

"There's a difference between knowing God and knowing about God. When you truly know God, you have energy to serve him, boldness to share him, and contentment in him."

- J.I. Packer

“Contentment is essentially a matter of accepting from God’s hand what He sends because we know that He is good and therefore it is good.”

- J. I. Packer

“Contentment is accepting God’s sovereign control over all of life’s circumstances.”

- Linda Dillow

“Beware of what you dwell on for that you shall surely become.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Two women looked through prison bars; One saw mud, the other stars.”

Each of us has a choice about how we look at life: We can focus on the mud or life our eyes to see the stars. Each woman has circumstances that appear to be prison bars. God wants you and me to be content *in* our circumstances, not when they improve.” -

Linda Dillow

Philippians 4:9 – ‘practice these things’

- Choose to give our _____ to God
- Choosing to _____ specifically
- Choosing to be _____
- Choosing to _____ on the positive

In this way we _____ to be content in all circumstances

CONTENTMENT IS A YIELDING TO OUR GREAT, ALMIGHTY, HOLY KING. “God is the blessed controller of all things, the king over all kings and the master of all masters.” (I Timothy 6:15, PH)

God is too good to be unkind,
Too wise to be mistaken, and
When you cannot trace His hand,
You can always trust His heart.

- C. Spurgeon

The closer you come to My heart, the more intensely you will experience My love and understand My ways. You will become more concerned about what is eternal and less concerned about the difficulty of the journey.

–Cynthia Heald

3. Choose to live independent of your _____ (v. 11- 12)

“Many women have never enjoyed a contented life because their emotions are controlled by their circumstances. Focusing on their circumstances, instead of on the God of their circumstances, puts them on a roller coaster that is unrelated to true contentment...The secret of contentment? An understanding of God’s sovereign control keeps everything in perspective.”

-Juanita Purcell

“In time of trouble, say, ‘First, he brought me here. It is by his will I am in this strait place; in that I will rest’. Next, ‘He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child.’ Then say, ‘He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow.’ And last, say, ‘In His good time He can bring me out again. How and when, He knows.’ Therefore, say, ‘I am here

(1) by God's appointment (2), in His keeping (3), under His training (4), for His time (5).' "

-Andrew Murray

Ella's prescription for contentment

- Never allow yourself to complain about anything – not even the weather.
- Never picture yourself in any other circumstance or someplace else.
- Never compare your lot with another's.
- Never allow yourself to wish this or that had been otherwise.
- Never dwell on tomorrow – remember that [tomorrow] is God's not ours.

-Linda Dillow

4. **Choose to draw upon your _____ in Christ Jesus (v. 13)**

'Abide in Me, and I in you,' means simply to say in every circumstance, 'For this I have Jesus.'

-C. Shepson

Resources:

Calm My Anxious Heart by Linda Dillow

The Secret of Contentment by Juanita Purcell

Respectable Sins by Jerry Bridges

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment by Jeremiah Burroughs