

# Choosing Contentment

1 Timothy 6:6-8 Tate Cox  
Media Reference Number GS767 10/8/23 – 1<sup>st</sup> service

## **Introduction:**

Today, we are going to learn about one of the most neglected spiritual disciplines, *contentment*. It almost feels like contentment is the long-lost spiritual discipline of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

What are we talking about when we talk about contentment?

**Contentment** – a perfect condition of life where nothing is needed to be added, *sufficiency* of life's necessities, a mind *satisfied* with its lot.

- Tate's definition – being good with what you got

Contentment is something that is *completely unnatural* to us. *We are not naturally a content people*. Because of the sinful nature within us, which the Bible describes as the flesh, we have an insatiable desire for more, more, more.

And because contentment is so unnatural, *it is something that we must choose* (hence the title, Choosing Contentment). It is a spiritual discipline that we must exercise ourselves towards.

Here's a story that depicts contentment well...

### Illustration:

There was once an old fisherman who came in from a day of fishing and relaxed by his beat-up boat on the shore.

A young and wealthy businessman who happened to be walking along the beach came to him and said, "Sir, how come you're not out fishing?"

The seasoned fisherman told him "Because I've caught enough fish for today".

The businessman was confused and replied, "Well, why don't you go try to catch more? There's still some time left in the day!"

The fisherman acknowledged what he said and replied, "That may be true, but what would I do with more fish than what I've caught already?"

The ambitious businessman said, "If you catch more fish, you could make more money and use that money to buy a better boat so that you could go out into deeper water and catch even more fish that would be bigger and more profitable for you. And if you did this for a month, you could make so much money that you could invest into a fleet of boats and pay other fishermen to fish for you and eventually you could make so much money and be rich like me!"

The fisherman pondered what the businessman suggested and replied, “And then what would I do?”.

The now frustrated businessman told him, “Well, then you could sit back and enjoy life!”

The fisherman chuckled to himself and said, “Young man, what do you think I’m doing right now?” as he kicked his feet up and looked peacefully out at the sun setting over the sea.

The reason why contentment is oftentimes so neglected is because it is so much easier talked about than put into practice.

We live in the midst of a hyper-driven consumer society that teaches us to *not* be content. We are constantly bombarded with advertisements to buy this or buy that. These advertisers have one goal in mind: to convince you that you *need* their product when, in reality, you really don’t.

***The world we dwell in is anti-contentment but the God we follow is pro-contentment.***

Before we read our text for this morning, I want to challenge you with a thought that I firmly believe in regarding contentment. I am convinced that...

***The spiritual discipline of contentment is the key that can unlock a depth in your walk with the Lord that you may not yet know.***

## 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Our first point today is found in verse 6...

### 1. Choosing Contentment: Because It Is Great Gain

*“6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.”*

Godliness and contentment go hand in hand.

We defined contentment at the start of the message as a mind satisfied with its lot/being good with what you got. Godliness has to do with *Christ-like character*. It should be thought of as God-likeness (GOD-LI-NESS). To be godly is *to seek to know the attributes of God and make sure you act in accordance with them*.

When godliness is paired with contentment, it’s like peanut butter and jelly (a great combo). We’re told that it is great gain!

**Great gain** – highly profitable/beneficial/advantageous; *that which produces a great return*

- Choosing to be content is not simply a “good” thing. It is absolutely one of the best things you can do for yourself!

Let me put the concept of great gain like this to you: ***contentment is something that you should invest in.***

Think about what investors do. An investor is someone who devotes their money, time, energy, and resources into something that they think will be profitable to them!

Illustration: Shark Tank – tv show

- The sharks don't bother with things they don't believe will be of profit to them, but when they find a product that they think can be of great gain to them, they aggressively pursue making a deal.

Maybe you're someone who knows a good amount about the stock market...

Stock illustration: If you were to take the knowledge that you have today about huge companies like Apple, Amazon, and Tesla back to the time of when these companies were first starting out, you would have thrown a ton of money into their stocks because the return you'd get over time would be astronomical!

In the same way, God is saying to you today to choose to invest in practicing contentment because He knows how profitable it will be to you! It will be great gain!

This great gain is not in the sense of “well, if I choose to be content with my current possessions, God is going to give me more possessions”. He may do that, but this is not what great gain means.

The great gain that comes from godliness with contentment is *for your soul*.

Think about that one lyric in the classic hymn, *It Is Well...*

“Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul.”

- One's lot is what God has appointed for them. Oh, to always have this heart and mind.

Let's now change gears for a moment. Everyone, what's the opposite of contentment? (**DISCONTENTMENT**).

Illustration: If you want to find what discontentment looks like on display, just go watch some reruns of the game show Deal or No Deal.

Discontentment is the mind that thinks “what I have is *not* enough, I need *more*/I need THAT over there”. This way of thinking and living will *exhaust you*, make you a *miserable* person, and *destroy you* from the inside out over time.

We are all too guilty of practicing discontentment in many spheres of life: relationships, occupation, living situations, and seasons of life.

- “Why doesn’t my spouse love me the way I saw in that romance movie? Why am I working 60 hours a week to just get by and their job is so cush that they barely work but make way more? Why do I have to live in this crusty old apartment when everyone else is in nice homes that they own? Why have I been going through such a trying season for so long when it seems like they’re never struggling at all?”

We are tempted to be discontent when we *compare* ourselves to others. I was just talking with a friend the other day about how I was going to be teaching on contentment today and he told me of a quote he’d heard before. He told me that “*comparison is the thief of joy*”. That couldn’t be more true.

When we’re looking at other people’s lives and start comparing us to them, *we will be robbed of the great gain that contentment brings to our souls*.

As we mentioned at the beginning of the study, we are not naturally content, *we are naturally discontent and covetous*. Discontentment and covetousness are virtually the same thing. *Covetousness is like discontentment’s final form*.

- **Covetousness** – the greedy desire to have more; avarice; desiring *what’s not meant for you to have*
- **Exodus 20:17** <sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor’s.”

We can accurately think of covetousness as “a desire for \_\_\_\_\_ over a desire for what God has for you”

- **Colossians 3:5** <sup>5</sup> Therefore *put to death* your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and **covetousness, which is idolatry.**”
- How is it that covetousness is a form of idolatry? Because to covet is to make a god out of something that you want.

When you and I covet, *we sin against God*, and we learn the hard way that what we’re coveting after will not satisfy.

**Proverbs 27:20** “<sup>20</sup> Hell and Destruction are never full;  
So the eyes of man are never satisfied.”

Think about the parable of the prodigal son. You can read about it in Luke 15. The son was *discontented with what he had in his father’s house*. And so, the son asked for his portion of the inheritance only to go waste it on prodigal living. He learned the hard way, just like some of us have learned the hard way, that the things of this world don’t satisfy us.

Illustration: Giving in to covetousness and going after the material things of this world is like running on a treadmill; you don’t stop running but you don’t actually get anywhere

- Can you tell I don’t care for running?

We didn’t read them at the beginning, verses 9-10 of 1 Timothy chapter 6 describe the desire for riches and love of money, which are *manifestations of greed and covetousness*.

The heaping up of riches in this life is something that you’ll find frequently condemned throughout the Scriptures.

**Luke 12:15-21** “<sup>15</sup> And He said to them, “Take heed and ***beware of covetousness***, for **one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.**”

<sup>16</sup> Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup> And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup> So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.” <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

<sup>21</sup> “So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

- Jesus warns us here to be ***on guard against covetousness***. What really matters in life is not your possessions, it is being rich toward God. You might be rich, but are you rich toward God?
  - **1 Timothy 6:17-19** “<sup>17</sup> Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> *Let them* do good, that they be **rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share**, <sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”
  - *Letting your life be in the service of others is how one becomes rich towards God*

King Solomon was the richest man to have ever lived, and what was the conclusion that he came to regarding the material things of this life?

**Ecclesiastes 2:4-11** “<sup>4</sup> I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. <sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of fruit trees in them. <sup>6</sup> I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. <sup>7</sup> I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. <sup>8</sup> I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical instruments of all kinds.<sup>9</sup> So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.<sup>10</sup> Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. <sup>11</sup> Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled;

***And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.***”

**Jim Carey** once said, “I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer.”

The bottom line as to why we must deny discontentment and covetousness is because **God did not create us to be satisfied with the material things of this life**: He has a higher calling for His children.

Reflect back with me to the opening illustration of our study, the interaction between the old fisherman and the young businessman. The young man was ambitious, antsy, and even frustrated while the old man had a real sense of peace upon him because of his choice to be content with what he had.

When you choose contentment over covetousness, your soul experiences immense benefits, namely, ***the rest and peace of God***. Choosing contentment over covetousness is the remedy to the pain that covetousness brings. Choosing contentment is great gain.

Our second argument today is...

## **2. Choosing Contentment: Because You Can't Take It With You (vs 7)**

*“<sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”*

Illustration: It's been said before that you won't see a U-Haul being towed behind a hearse. This idiom represents the truth that ***none of the material achievements that you and I have accomplished in this life will go with us into eternity.***

All of Elon Musk's billions of dollars will not go with him into eternity. Tom Brady's seven Superbowl rings will not be brought with him when he dies. The Rock's 392 million Instagram followers aren't going to mean diddly-squat when he stands before God.

Souls are eternal, the things of this world are not. And yet how guilty are we of centering our life around material stuff and not the things of eternal value?

You may have heard of the infamous poem from the British missionary **C.T. Studd** that states “**Only one life, ’twill soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last**”.

What many don’t know about C.T. Studd was that he walked away from a life of affluence and material success to pursue the call to take the Gospel of Christ to the world. He knew that the things of this world wouldn’t go with him into the next. He lived by what he preached.

Some have said that the only things you can bring with you to heaven are other people! The way you do this is by evangelizing this lost world!

What you won’t be able to bring with you into eternity is meaningless material possessions.

Illustration: The Egyptian pharaohs of old did not seem to understand this. They were often buried with gold, fine clothing, food, games, and weapons in hopes that these things would go with them into the afterlife. Spoiler alert: those things remained in the tomb while the souls of the Pharaohs did not.

After virtually everything he had was stripped away, Job said...

**Job 1:21** “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there.  
The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; **Blessed be the name of the Lord.**”

***THIS IS CONTENTMENT!!!***

**Ecclesiastes 5:15** “<sup>15</sup> As he came from his mother’s womb, naked shall he return,  
To go as he came; And he shall take nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand.”

- Are you a workaholic? Do you work so much and neglect the things that really matter such as time with the Lord or time with your family? This verse is for you!

**Psalm 49:17** “<sup>17</sup> For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.”

Far too many people, even Christians, are more focused on the temporary things of this world, rather than the things of God. *We need to shift our focus to the things that really matter.*

**Colossians 3:1-2** “If then you were raised with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**”

And so, we should choose to practice contentment because the material things of this world matter little and will not go with us into eternity. We must maintain this biblical perspective.

If we don't have this perspective regarding the material things of this world, we leave the door wide open for the temptations of discontentment and covetousness.

Our final argument regarding choosing contentment is...

### 3. Choosing Contentment: With the Bare Necessities (vs 8)

*<sup>8</sup> And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content."*

It's hard for us who live in an affluent first world country, to wrap our mind around the concept of being content with just food and clothing, but according to God, that's all we really need to choose contentment.

Theologian and Bible commentator **Albert Barnes** said this regarding contentment:

"Contentment is a constant feast,  
***He is richest who requires the least.***"

In 1 Timothy 6:8, Paul tells us of an important principle about choosing contentment: ***the choice to be content is not dependent upon circumstances.***

**Philippians 4:11-13 (AMP)** <sup>11</sup> Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult times], and I also know how to enjoy abundance *and* live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret [of facing life], whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance or being in need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens *and* empowers me"

Notice the power and the depth of what Paul writes here in Philippians 4! **Contentment can be chosen regardless of circumstances.**

I love how Paul describes the practice of contentment in every season of life as a ***secret***. Have you learned this secret for yourself? Remember what we said at the beginning: *the spiritual discipline of contentment is the key that can unlock a depth in your walk with the Lord that you may not yet know.*

Paul had learned how to live humbly (be abased-NKJV). This has to do with the times in his life where he had just enough. This is like a paycheck-to-paycheck season of life. I don't know about y'all, but I know I've lived this way in the past.



These abased seasons of life aren't necessarily what we pray for, but *they are where we can and should STILL implement the discipline contentment into our lives.*

But how is it that someone can choose contentment even in the lows of life, where we don't have much? This is where verse 13 comes in. "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME" (NKJV).

Philippians 4:13 is one of the most widely favorite verses in the Bible, but it is unfortunately misunderstood by far too many. This verse is not about you going out and having a good game where you throw for 4 touchdowns and 300 yards.

This verse, in its proper context is about *practicing contentment in whatever season of life God has you in!* You can be content and get through any season of life because *Christ gives you the strength* to do so! What an amazing promise this is!

**Hebrews 13:5** <sup>5</sup> *Let your conduct be **without covetousness; be content** with such things as you have. **For** He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

- Notice the word "for" that is used here. It functions as a connection between contentment and the promise that God will not leave us nor forsake us.
- Here is yet another reason why you and I can choose contentment in the most trying of seasons: because God is with us!

Illustration: There's a song I kinda like where the singer reflects on the times of his family's life where they didn't have a whole lot. He sings "*we had it all when we didn't have much*"

- How can you have it all when you don't have much? By seeing life through the proper lens of contentment.

Author and Bible commentator **Kent Hughes** writes...

"Real contentment and material prosperity actually have nothing to do with one another."

Is there breath in your lungs? Do you have a roof over your head? You got shoes on your feet? Did you eat breakfast today or do you have a meal coming later? If your answer to any one of these questions is yes, YOU CAN CHOOSE CONTENTMENT.

Sometimes all it takes to get back to that place of contentment is simply *getting your eyes off what you don't have and focusing on what you do have. Covetousness is concerned with what you don't have while contentment is being thankful for what you do have.*

I'll never forget the first time someone challenged me with the thought "*someone is praying for the things you're taking for granted*". The one who is content takes nothing for granted.

What we must know is that ***our God is pretty good at taking care of His kids. We don't need to doubt His provision.*** When we put Him first, He promises to provide for all of our needs.

**Matthew 6:33** "But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

- The context of this verse is not about God granting you your wishes and desires like some sort of genie; rather, it is about how God will take care of our needs when we put Him above all else. And because this is so, we don't need to worry! If He feeds the sparrows, He's got you too.

**Psalm 34:9-10** "9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! ***There is no want to those who fear Him.***  
10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; ***But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.***"

**Psalm 37:25** "25 I have been young, and *now* am old; ***Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.***

## Conclusion/Contentment in Christ

As we slowly start to close, we would be remiss to talk all about contentment without talking about what it means to be content in Christ.

*Contentment in life is only possible when there is contentment in Christ.* But what exactly does it mean to be content in Christ?

To be content in Christ is to truly have ***found it all in Him.*** It is when you have come to Him and, not only received eternal life from Him, but had ***the desire of your soul satisfied.*** It is when you no longer have to look for the things of this world to satisfy you, because ***He is all you need.***

Both believers and unbelievers have this in common: a soul that is hungry and thirsty for fulfillment. The difference is, the believer knows where, or rather WHO to go to, to have their soul satisfied, whereas the unbeliever looks to the things that the world offers them in an attempt to satisfy their hungry and thirsty souls.

We see this very truth described by Jesus in His interaction with the woman at the well.

**John 4:13-15** “<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will **never thirst**. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

Again, we see contentment in Christ described by Jesus the day after He fed the 5,000.

**John 6:35** “<sup>35</sup> And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. **He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.**”

And perhaps the best passage to describe contentment in Christ would be Psalm 23.

### Psalm 23:1-6

“The Lord *is* my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
<sup>2</sup> He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside the still waters.  
<sup>3</sup> He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
For His name’s sake.  
<sup>4</sup> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For You *are* with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.  
<sup>5</sup> You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.  
<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
Forever.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, we do not lack. We are utterly contented in the Good Shepherd’s care and have no cravings for anything else.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, we are well taken care of. If we’re not content with the green pastures our Good Shepherd has provided for us, we’ll look to the vain and empty material things of this world for that sense of fulfillment and we’ll never find it.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, when our souls experience distress and brokenness, He restores us.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, we can walk the paths of righteousness as we are led by Him.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, though we may be walking through the gravest of times, we do not need to fear because He is right there with us.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, His protection and correction bring our souls comfort.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, we are bountifully provided for in perfect security.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, He refreshes our weary souls.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, He fills us with joy overflowing.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, His goodness and mercy will forever be upon us.

Because He is our Good Shepherd, we will live with Him in eternity forevermore. **(HALLELUJAH)**

Is He your Good Shepherd? Is He the caretaker of your soul?

In the amazing little book, ***A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23***, the author, W. Phillip Keller, (who was literally once a shepherd of flocks of sheep) tells a story of a problem-sheep that he had in his flock. He tells of how hard he worked to provide and maintain lush green fields that were full of the best grass for the sheep to feed on. This one problem-sheep would constantly break out of the fencing, abandoning the lush green fields to go eat inferior dead grass that provided no nourishment/fulfillment for the sheep. He states, “She was a sheep, who, in spite of all that I had done to give her the very best care, still wanted something else.”

- How many of us are guilty of this: having all we need in Jesus and yet going to the foul things of the world for some sort of fulfillment that just isn’t there. The grass is not greener on the other side.
- If you’ve been running to the things of this world, looking for some sort of satisfaction, God is calling you to drop the act and be satisfied in Him. Be content in Christ.

A final word from ***A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*** as we close our study: Keller writes...

“Contentment should be the hallmark of the man who has put his affairs in the hands of God. Always men are searching for safety beyond themselves. They are restless, unsettled, covetous, greedy for more—wanting this and that, yet never really satisfied in spirit. By contrast the simple Christian, the humble person, the Shepherd’s sheep, can stand up proudly and boast. ‘The Lord is my shepherd—I shall not want’. I am completely satisfied with His management of my life.”