

Christian Contentment

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- [0 : 0 0] Last weekend there was a feature in a paper which called itself Top Tips to help you feel tip-top this year and beyond.
- It is January after all. Now I liked being told that I could eat chocolate. That was one of the suggestions if I felt like it. A little bit of what you like. Does you good?
- What I was more interested in was to find that they included a section which said, Don't assume success will make you happy.
- Don't assume success will make you happy. And quite right was my reaction to that. Why do we often, or at least sometimes, feel dissatisfied?
- Restless? Discontent. Well, we live in a falling world. We know that. And from Genesis 3 we know that. The world, it is broken.
- [1 : 0 3] And we are part of that brokenness. Our hearts are sinful. And we all struggle with sin. We all struggle with our particular life circumstances.
- Now rightly, the Bible tells us that we will never be fully satisfied in the here and now. We chase satisfaction, or at least distraction, in the things of this life.
- We wrongly think, or feel maybe, that we might get satisfaction from the next thing. You fill in the blanks for you.
- We're all different. The next achievement. Maybe the next job. Maybe the next relationship. Marriage.
- Maybe our kids achieving or being this or that. When we're feeling discontent or dissatisfied in our life circumstances, what is it that we're actually saying about God?
- [2 : 1 4] Contentment is not smiling through all those awful circumstances we find ourselves in. But rather, it's having a deep-seated, heartfelt peace that comes from fully trusting in God.
- And if we're tempted to think that discontentment is not our issue, then we're saying that we're never frustrated, never envious, never bitter, never disappointed, never restless, never angry with our circumstances.
- Of course, there are things that we should be discontent about. Our own lack of godliness. When others around us reject the Lord Jesus.
- Injustice. War. The list goes on and on. So even a non-Christian tennis champion like Martina Novatova, I'm giving away my age there probably, she recognised that she was never content with the next accomplishment.
- But really, we know that things of this life do not fully satisfy. They're not meant to. We're built for relationship with the one who made us.
- [3 : 4 8] True contentment will only come from a relationship with him. Only Jesus satisfies our deep spiritual longing. And we're all in the same boat.
- So even the most seemingly together Christian can feel discontent at times. An example here.

Helen Rosevear, an amazingly faithful missionary in the Congo. After she endured an appalling, battering and much worse, said that this is how she felt.

At last, God had failed me. But we can be restlessly content now in this life as we bring everything to the Lord in prayer.

As we wait patiently for him to right every wrong, we can be thankful and remember all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. All the material blessings too.

[4 : 51] Count our blessings each morning. Naming them as we pray. We can have a relationship with our creator now. As we get ready for the new creation, whatever our current circumstances, we can have a taste of heaven now.

So how do we get this contentment? Well, in John's Gospel, he includes seven I Am statements. The first of these is found in John's Baptists.

And we're going to go there now. So if you wouldn't mind grabbing a Bible, and these ones on your tables, it's page 1075. Or use your phones if that's easier.

And I'm going to read from chapter 6, verses 25 to 40. And we're on point 1 of the handout, if you want to know.

So page 1075 in those Bibles. When they found him on the other side of the lake, they said to him, Rabbi, when did you come here?

[5 : 59] Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

For on him God the Father has set his seal. Then they said to him, What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.

So they said to him, Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

[7 : 11] For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, Sir, give us this bread always.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

But I said to you that you have seen me, and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

[8 : 12] So Jesus has just fed the 5,000. And it's rather like the Lord in the wilderness as he rescued his people from Egypt.

The crowd is following him. They want more physical food. But what they need is something different. Jesus tells them, verse 27, have a look.

Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. Jesus is saying that they need spiritual food that leads to everlasting life, which he, Jesus, will give them.

They are seeking after the wrong type of food. He's using the title Son of Man from Daniel 7 in the Old Testament. The Son of Man is both human and divine.

He's the Messiah, the King. And all they had to do to get the saving food, says Jesus, did you spot that in verse 29, is to believe in him whom he has sent.

[9 : 23] This is mind-boggling. Jesus is directly saying that he is the bread the Father sends to his people. Let's look at verse 32. Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

Did you notice the present tense there? 33. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

So Jesus is that bread. And now we come to the key point. Jesus continues in verse 35. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Here's where the rubber hits the road. Jesus says that he is the food and water that everyone needs. He's the way to be satisfied, content.

And he concludes verse 40, For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life. To all who come to Jesus, who believe in Jesus, he satisfies the hunger and thirst of the human condition.

[10 : 41] Whoever comes and believes will have eternal life and be satisfied forever. So we've had a look at Jesus' own teaching on him being the bread of life, and we've reflected on that just for a few minutes.

Let's think now about where's the best place to go. Let's look at Psalm 23 together. And it's the second point on the handout.

If you could turn it up in the Bibles around the place. It's page 550. And point two on the handout. So we're looking at The Lord is my shepherd, so come and follow him.

Now this is a beautiful Psalm of David. I'm sure it's very, very familiar to many. But we don't want our familiarity with it to blunt its message.

It's very, very rich. And it was written by David. King David, as we probably all know, was David's ancestor. And he was in trouble. And it shows how to live for David with God as his shepherd and his very, very generous host.

[11 : 55] And so David gives us two big metaphors here. And they're both showing his confidence in his personal God. And for us who live post the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in this part of history, this shepherd king is obviously Jesus himself.

And we've just looked at the bread of life, Jesus' first claim in John. So let's have a look at this fantastic Psalm. I'm going to read it as we go. So verses one, two, and three first.

Verses one and two. Follow along with me. They tell us. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

So the Lord is our very personal shepherd. He's our caring God. One who takes care of all my needs.

I will lack for nothing if I am his. It's having a right relationship with him which brings contentment. Have a look at the second half of verse two.

[13 : 04] He leads me beside still waters. I will find rest, peace, quietness, contentment with him.

Verse three. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. So he's my leader.

I am his sheep. He plans only good things for me. And he does it for his name. The Lord is good.

He provides. He leads us in good places. By the way, I've been reading a very useful and comforting book by David Gibson. I've got one copy of it here.

On this one psalm. And I'm very happy to lend it. I think there's another one in the church family. People are happy to lend it. Or you can buy it. I got it for 11 quid. Crossway printers.

[14:10] But you can easily find that. It's in prints. David Gibson. It's just very helpful. Let's carry on with our own looking at the verses. So Psalm. Verse 4.

King David goes on. Verse 4 to say. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Or deep darkness. As you can see in the footnote.

At the bottom of the page. I think these are very useful footnotes. Footnote 3 at the bottom of the page. Says deep darkness. So even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Or deep darkness. I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and your staff. They comfort me. Jesus walks with his people.

Through every terrible situation. We find ourselves in. He is our constant companion. Through the whole of life. With his rod.

[15:08] Or shepherd's crook. I don't have one of those. This is the closest I could. This is the closest. Sorry. I could come to a crook.

But just. Use your imagination. So he rescues us. His sheep. When we're straying away. On the wrong. On the wrong path. When we fall into a hole.

Into the ditch. And he puts us back. On the right way. And he has another implement. So he has a rod. And a staff. And with his staff.

He's defending his sheep. From evil enemies. You can imagine in David's day. It would have been wolves. Today. It might be slightly different. So he's defending his sheep.

So he. The shepherd. Defeats evil. He helps us resist temptation. Even when we can't see him. He is with us.

[16:07] As our travelling companion. On the road of life. Through all the ups and downs. He is with us. Even when we're maligned.

Excluded. Perhaps insulted. Ignored. Or rejected. For following Jesus. And then we have a change of metaphor. In five and six.

Have a look. The Lord. The King. The perfect host. He prepares. A table before me. In the presence of my enemies. Whatever is going on.

In my life. Whatever my circumstances. If I'm trusting. In the Lord Jesus. He is making. A generous banquet. For me. Now.

In this life. He anoints. My head with oil. And my cup overflows. This is a picture. Of lavish abundance.

[17:06] Familiar to those. In King David's day. We. As the Lord's. Special guests. Are being greatly honored. And he's doing it. When I'm surrounded.

By my enemies. So we have this blessing. In this present life. As well. As the promise. Of the future banquet. Let's look at verse six.

Surely. Or as the footnote. Hopefully. Says only. Surely. Only. Goodness. Goodness. And mercy. That steadfast love.

Shall follow me. All the days. Of my life. The Lord is providing us. At all times. For us. At all times. And one day. I shall dwell.

In the house. Of the Lord. Forever. The Lord is with us now. Providing. All that we need. And one day. We will return. To dwell.

[18 : 03] With him. Forever. Forever. So can we see. That Jesus. The bread of life. Is the answer. To all our needs. He's the shepherd. The companion.

On the journey. The host. Of the banquet. All our needs. Are met in him. Now. I know. That I often. Find myself. Thinking.

I wish. I had that. Or could do this. Or comparing. My situation. And when I. Catch myself. Thinking this way.

I need to repent. Of that futile. And sinful. Way of thinking. Everything. We have. Or don't have. Is from the Lord.

We need to keep going. To scripture. And reminding ourselves. Of this. Perhaps getting an app. To help me. With my daily. Bible reading. Planning.

[19 : 00] To set a few minutes. Aside. Each day. Whenever that's. Good for you. And we're to help each other. To do that too. Encourage each other. Amy Carmichael.

I've got a biography of her. Here. If anyone wants to borrow it. She was a missionary. To southern. To southern India. She wrote a poem. Called. In acceptance. Lieth peace.

In it. She talks about. Feeling restless. It's not enough. To submit. To God's plans. She said. But we must accept them.

Jerry Bridges. Has been around. A long time. In his book. Respectable sins. And I've got a couple of. Copies. People can borrow. As well. Or other people.

Probably do. As well. Bridges. Sums up. Amy's thoughts. With. With this line. It is neither. In resignation.

[19 : 59] Nor submission. That. But only. In acceptance. That we find peace. So. How do we find.

This contentment. This peace. As we journey. The Lord is calling us. To come to Jesus. And walk with him. Through all the ups and downs. Of messy lives.

Very. Very briefly. In fact. I'm going to cut some of this. We're on to section three. So have a look. How do we live. With Jesus. And trust him. Now we've only had time.

To dip into this. Topic. Just to encourage us. Let's not forget. That's from. John's gospel. Chapter 14. Particularly 15 and 16.

I've noted it down. On your handout. I think. That we have God himself. The Holy Spirit. To help us. In living for him. Jesus promises disciples.

[20 : 50] That when he left them physically. He would send the advocates. And Paul. Also has lots of encouragements. For us. He says. We need to learn.

To be content. It's not something. That comes naturally. We need to remember. Our good. And sovereign Lord. And to bring everything. To him in prayer. Actually.

On that. Just a how to thing. Sometimes I think. Having a booklet. Or piece of paper. To jot down. Things you're praying about. It's a real help. A friend gave me this one.

It's a lovely thing to do. Because you can look back. And see which prayers. Have been answered. So that can be a great encouragement. I would recommend. That. Also. There's a free app.

Which many people in this room have. But maybe some don't. I'm called prayer mates. I really fairly recently. Put that on. My. My phone. And that's very useful. Because you can.

[21 : 46] Put in there. What you want to pray about. And also. Grace Church is just. We've. We've signed up for that. And so you can get. Grace Church prayer diary. Now. On that prayer app. So I could just recommend that.

That's a really good. Tool for prayer. Just as one last thing. Thinking about King David. Psalm 139. David helps us remember.

That we are formed. By the Lord. And. Each of our days. Is ordained by him. And there are many other places. That we can go. In scripture.

So. Just. Just to conclude. From the front. We're not going to be fully satisfied. This. This side. Of the new creation. But the God. The Lord is working.

His purposes out. In our lives. Even when we don't see it. To come back to that quote. From Helen Rosevear. As she continued to live. With Jesus as the Lord.

[22 : 43] She finally realized. That through her brutal. Heartbreaking experiences. She could say this. God met with me. With outstretched arms of love.

It was an unbelievable experience. He was so utterly there. So totally understanding. His comfort was so complete. And suddenly I knew.

I really knew. That his love. Was unutterably sufficient. He did love me. He did understand. The Lord Jesus is with us.

Through everything in this life. In him only. Can we find spiritual contentment. And through him.