

The Secret of Contentment

When we first returned from the Soviet Union, Audrey and I noticed an attitude with our children that was always saying, "I want that." We know that part of that came from living in conditions where our children didn't have the choice to buy something simply because there was nothing to buy. Now we live in a nation that is riddled with indebtedness. People are constantly getting into trouble because they over spend. Why do they spend so much? The answer is they aren't content with what they have. We have marriages breaking up because one or both spouses aren't content. What is the answer to indebtedness and divorce? Much of the time the answer is found in learning how to be content.

We live in a society of plenty yet if you would listen to some people talk it would seem that they live in poverty. If people could just see some of the places that I've been privileged to minister in, they would know that what we consider poverty would be middle to upper class in other nations. We have been blessed with so much yet we are not content. That is why so many people are in debt beyond their ability to pay. They simply were not content with what they had and thought they needed or deserved more.

The Apostle Paul addressed the subject of contentment in Philippians 4:11-12. I like the way the New Living Translation puts it, "Not that I was ever in need, for I have ***learned how to be content with whatever I have***. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. ***I have learned the secret of living in every situation***, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little." I want us to notice that Paul tells us that contentment comes from learning something. So what did Paul learn? He learned that contentment doesn't come from what you have.

A couple years ago I watched an interview with a man who is the world's richest man. During the interview they asked this man if he would retire. His answer shocked me. He said that he wouldn't retire and when they asked him, why not, he said, "I don't have enough. I want more." This man had so much that computers were having a hard time keeping up with his net worth! Riches and material things don't satisfy! We need to learn that. Now don't get me wrong! I don't believe that God wants us poor. What God wants is for us to be content no matter what state we are in. The Lord wants us to prosper and be in health even as our souls prosper (III John 2).

So how do we learn the secret of contentment? Paul gives us that answer in verse 13. It says, "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength." Contentment comes from a relationship with Christ. When we understand that the power of the anointed and His anointing is in us, then we can rest. Jesus taught this in the first temptation. Even though He hadn't eaten in forty days, when He was tempted to turn stones into bread, He said 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Jesus realized that bread would have only given Him a temporary solution to His hunger, but the Word of God offered Him everything He needed. Paul understood that all he needed was the power of God on the inside of him. With the power of the God we can do anything. We can live anywhere. We can live with little or much. The power of God is what we need!

I can almost see Paul sitting in prison while he was writing this. He was probably chuckling to himself as he wrote because he had what he needed and with that he was content. He had the anointing of God. He had Christ in him and that meant everything was going to change. So how can we be content? By knowing that everything we need is in us as believers.

Don't allow discontentment to rob you of a thankful heart especially in this Thanksgiving season. Focus on what you have. God's ability in you will empower you to live in whatever situation you're in. Not only that, but it will change the situation. You have the power of God in you! That is the secret of contentment!

