



*Pastor David Koch*

## **Contentment and Thanksgiving**

*November 15, 2009*

### **Introduction:**

As we approach Thanksgiving, I feel we need to focus this Sunday and next on the principles of being content. God's word tells us that we are to be content, yet so much of what we are exposed to every day, through advertising and marketing often breeds in us a sense of discontentment. Whether we are in a state of discontentment or contentment will depend much on our perspective, our priorities and our source of power.

In his letter to the [Philippians 4:11](#), the Apostle Paul writes to thank them for their gift to him. While he was in prison, they sent an offering to bless him. It is not that he was ungrateful, but he wanted them to know that his contentment was not in things. [Philip. 4:11-13](#) **I'm not saying this because I'm in any need. I've learned to be content in whatever situation I'm in. I know how to live in poverty or prosperity. No matter what the situation, I've learned the secret of how to live when I'm full or when I'm hungry, when I have too much or when I have too little. I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.** Paul indicates in this letter that he has learned to be content whatever his circumstances. He is content regardless of what he has or doesn't have.

Oh, to learn that secret like Paul did, but to be content with what God gives us! There is nothing wrong with the American dream, but we get too caught up in the stuff. When we grasp for more, we are going to be discontented with what we already have. Satisfaction in many instances is a good thing. If we are never satisfied, we will never come to the place of contentment. It will elude us. The Apostle Paul knew what it was to be in need and he also knew what it was to have abundance or plenty. When he writes about contentment, it is obvious that Paul knew his source of contentment was not the result of the abundance he had enjoyed. Neither was his lack of abundance something that caused him discontent. Here is the way I like to define contentment.

**Contentment is a state of satisfaction that is anchored to our confidence in God resulting in a joyful celebration of life.** If we could grasp that, it would transform the way we live. In this regard, we can be content when we face illness; we can be content when we suffer loss. We can be content with or without a job. It is because our confidence is properly seated in God's ability and God's provision. Many times our wants and desires are not in line with our needs. You do recognize that often what we want and what we need are worlds apart. So let me ask you this morning. How can you find true contentment? The answer lies in your perspective, your priorities and your source of power.

## **I. Contentment is a matter of perspective.**

Paul's perspective had been changed when He met Christ. No longer was he living for Himself. Now he saw things from a spiritual place in Christ. When you look at things from a Biblical and Spiritual vantage point, your contentment is going to come from that knowledge. What is perspective? It's the vantage point of what we see and how we are viewing things. Are we seeing what we don't have, what we strive for, what we dream about, what we grasp for?

Rather than looking at what we don't have and comparing it to others around us, our focus should be on the blessings we have received. I want you to look at this picture. Tell me about the glass. **What do you see? Is the glass half full or half empty?**

Sometimes we focus on what isn't there rather than what is there and that is the difference in the perspective of one who is or isn't content. If you can focus on who God is, that He is your source of strength, of protection, of provision, of power, of possibilities, then your perspective is in the right place. If you are looking to a source other than Christ for your contentment, you will be disappointed. People look in all sorts of places for contentment. They look at their spouses or other people, their jobs as a source of significance, their possessions, their wealth, their health, their family, the relationships they have. There is nothing wrong with any of these things, but if you make those things the source of your contentment; guess what.....you will not be content for very long.

## **II. Contentment is a matter of priorities.**

What's most important to you? What are you seeking for in this world?

### **SLIDE FOR PRIORITIES –**

We all invest time and energy on things in life that we think are important. So where are your priorities? If you are not sure what is most important to you, look at your checkbook. Where do you invest the greatest amount of your resources? Jesus, in teaching, made these statements about priorities... **Mathew 6:33 - But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. Luke 12:22-23 Then turning to his disciples, Jesus said, So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or clothes to wear. For life consists of far more than food and clothing.**

You have to start with right priorities or everything else in your life is going to be out of focus and out of balance. At some point in our lives, every one of us has had to make a list of things that we felt were important and then rate those things starting with what we felt was the most important down to the least important. It's called prioritizing.

When we get the priority of His kingdom first, not ours, then God will take care of the other things that we have to do. They should not be the top priority in our lives. When we aren't so focused on the material things in this world around us, then we can better focus on kingdom work. We can better focus on serving and obeying God.

Our contentment with God, His will, and ourselves grows when we know that our investment of time and resources in His kingdom is something that has eternal value.

### **III. Contentment is wrapped up in your source of power.**

Who is the source of your power? Is it yourself or the Holy Spirit? Our power is limited, His power is unlimited. Our strength will fail, His strength will endure. You will never be contented with your own power, because it is limited, you will always crave more. When the source of our power is from God, then we can be content with it because His power is limitless.

Jesus told His followers that they would be filled with power from Him when He left them and ascended to God in heaven. The Holy Spirit, the comforter, would be sent and He was going to empower them. The result would be that Christ's kingdom would grow through their witness and signs and wonders would follow their ministries to confirm the truth of what they preached. The power of God's spirit is still available today to every believer. We simply need to make our lives available to God and ask Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Paul was content to know that the source of His power came from God and not himself. He writes this in his second letter to the Corinthians, **II Cor. 4:7...- we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us.** Paul found contentment in the fact that the Holy

### **CONCLUSION:**

I challenge you this week to examine your perspective, your priorities and your source of power. See if changing any of these will impact your being content. I guarantee you if these things are right, you will find yourself content, regardless of circumstances, or surroundings.

Spirit was active and moving in his life and was the source of his power.

So this morning as we wrap up our thoughts, here are some final suggestions on how you and I can move toward more contented living.

1. First, we need to realize that being content rests on being completely in the present. Discontent comes from focusing on what might have been or on what could be. We are content in accepting what is enjoyable in the present. We become content as we enjoy each day for what it is rather than lament what we imagine it could have been. Instead of being dissatisfied that you don't have a bigger home, have fun with your current home. Instead of complaining about how active your children are, enjoy being able to share those times with them. Don't miss the joy of the present by focusing on what might have been. Instead of staying awake dreaming about that new car, enjoy the fact that the present one is paid for. Instead of yearning for the "new and improved" celebrate the fact that the "old and deficient" does the job. Stop looking beyond the moment and enjoy now!

2. Second, contentment comes from understanding that material things are given as tools and not as an end in themselves. Discontent or coveting makes us selfish. We hoard and hide because we believe we have to have more to be happy. The contented person is generous, willing and eager to share because s/he realizes that honoring God is truly satisfying. Such people use what they have to honor the Lord and in return they find contentment.

3. Finally, contentment comes as we grow to love Christ more completely. Too many people believe that happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction are found in power, possessions, promotions and pleasure. These are roads that lead to dead ends. There is only one road to contentment and it goes through Jesus.

