



CULTIVATING CONTENTMENT IN THE HOME

Preaching and Teaching Resources

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Cultivating Contentment in the Home

SERMON REFERENCE: Psalm 128

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2305

It is good to desire contentment for our families; but money can't buy it, because a content person doesn't look to circumstances to find peace.

Contentment is an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace despite outward circumstances.

Psalm 128 describes a family that cultivates contentment in the home: "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord" (Psalm 128:4).

We must first remember what destroys family contentment, which is covetousness. In Romans 7:7, the Apostle Paul confesses, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"

Covetousness is a matter of the heart; it is a deceptive, debasing, and destructive sin. One may not realize he has a wicked heart until it reveals itself through covetous desires. Discontent almost always leads to the sin of idolatry because a dissatisfied spirit desires riches and happiness more than it desires God.

Adrian Rogers says, "A discontented man is never rich, and a contented man is always rich. Somebody who is not content with what he has will not be content with what he would have, and to whom little is not enough, nothing is enough."

We must remember what defines family contentment, first being our faith: "Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways" (Psalm 128:1).

Contentment is also defined by our fellowship with one another: "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table" (Psalm 128:3). A family that is content is a family that is simply fed, both physically and spiritually. "When you eat the labor of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you" (Psalm 128:2).

Finally, we must remember what develops family contentment. When we learn to trust God and thank Him for what He has provided, we will learn to love people rather than covet things and we will learn to give generously.

May we come to know Psalm 128:5 for ourselves: "The Lord bless you out of Zion, And may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life."

LIFE APPLICATION

Are you cultivating contentment in your home? Pray and ask God to give you a spirit of gratitude and to root out any covetousness from your heart.



Cultivating Contentment in the Home

SERMON REFERENCE: Psalm 128

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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) Psalm 128 is one of the best Psalms in the Bible on the family.
- b) Many homes today are a swamp of discontent.
 - i) The world tells us that we cannot be happy without certain things.
 - (1) Many families are financial time bombs waiting to explode.
- c) Psalm 128:1-6
- d) Contentment is an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances.
 - i) Contentment has the idea of being self-contained.
 - ii) Philippians 4:11
 - (1) I do not have to look at circumstances to find my peace.
 - iii) Contentment is not complacency, laid-back or self-satisfied.
 - iv) Contentment is not learning to do without possessions only.
 - (1) We can have possessions and not be content.
 - (2) We can not have possessions and be content.
 - v) Philippians 4:11-12
 - (1) Paul learned that in whatever state he was in, good or bad, rich or poor, to be content.
- e) The Bible is not opposed to having material possessions.
 - i) Deuteronomy 8:18
 - ii) Psalm 35:27
 - iii) James 1:17
 - iv) It does not take poverty to learn contentment.
 - v) It does not take riches to learn contentment.

2) WHAT DESTROYS FAMILY CONTENTMENT

- a) Exodus 20:17
 - i) Thou shalt not covet.
 - ii) Covetousness destroys contentment.
- b) The Ten Commandments were given primarily to the family.
 - i) God instructed fathers to teach them to their sons and grandsons, that you will have a happy family.
 - ii) The first nine are laws for living.
 - iii) The first nine deal with actions.
 - iv) The last commandment deals with attitudes.
 - v) The first nine deal with deeds.
 - vi) The last one deals with desire.
- c) Covetousness is unlawful desire that comes out of discontent.
 - i) The tenth commandment deals with the heart.



- d) Why is covetousness so bad?
 - i) Covetousness is deceptive.
 - (1) We may have a heart full of covetousness and not realize it.
 - (2) Frances Xavier, Roman Catholic theologian, said, "I have listened to thousands of confessions, never one time have I ever heard anyone confess the sin of covetousness."
 - (3) Paul lived a life of excellence before he got saved.
 - (4) He checked himself off as righteous on every commandment until he got to the tenth.
 - (a) Romans 7:7
 - (i) Paul said it was the law that opened his eyes to the fact that he was a sinner.
 - (5) Many of us are covetous and do not know it.
 - ii) Covetousness is debasing.
 - (1) Covetousness reveals the wickedness of our hearts.
 - (2) Mark 7:21-22
 - (a) Covetousness comes out of the heart. We are covetous by nature.
 - (b) Covetousness is listed alongside very evil deeds.
 - (i) These things come from within and defile the man.
 - (3) Even we, as Christians saved by grace, have an old, evil heart.
 - (a) The old nature is still within us.
 - (b) These things were born in our heart.
 - (i) Just like the worm in an apple; the worm did not eat his way in but rather ate his way out.
 - 1. The egg was laid in the blossom.
 - (4) Ephesians 2:3
 - (a) We are covetousness by nature.
 - (b) Children display their inherent covetousness when playing with toys around other children.
 - (5) John 8:44
 - (a) Satan coveted the place of God.
 - (6) Isaiah 14:14
 - (a) Satan wanted to be like the Most High.
 - (7) Genesis 3:8
 - (a) Satan encouraged Eve to sin through covetousness.
 - (8) Ecclesiastes 5:10
 - (a) A discontented man is never rich, and a contented man is always rich.
 - (b) Someone who is not content with what he has, will not be content with what he would have.
 - (c) To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.
 - (9) It is not wrong to have godly ambition.
 - iii) Covetousness is destructive.
 - (1) 1 Timothy 6:6-8
 - (a) Godliness with contentment is great gain.
 - (b) Raiment refers to clothing.



- (2) Luke 9:58
 - (a) Jesus did not have a place to lay His head, but He was content.
- (3) 1 Timothy 6:9-10
 - (a) The Bible is not against riches.
 - (i) Abraham was rich.
 - (ii) David was rich.
 - (iii) Solomon was rich.
 - (iv) Joseph of Arimathea was rich.
 - (b) The Bible warns against those who set their course, who have a determined desire, to be rich.
 - (i) For example, a speaker at a graduation may say, “Make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly.”
 - 1. This is terrible advice.
 - 2. They might be making money when they ought to be spending time with family.
 - 3. They might be making money when they ought to be sleeping.
 - 4. They might be making money when they ought to be soul-winning or worshiping.
 - 5. They are “things” first; this is called idolatry.
 - a. Anything you love more, serve more, desire more, fear more or value more than God is an idol.
- (4) Luke 16:13
 - (a) No man can serve two masters: God and mammon
 - (i) Mammon is another word for things.
- (5) Matthew 6:33
 - (a) Any time we put God in second place, we commit idolatry.
- (6) Colossians 3:5
 - (a) “Mortify” means “put to death.”
 - (b) Covetousness wraps itself around us and drags us down.
- e) “If I am what I possess, and I lose those things, then what am I?”

3) WHAT DEFINES FAMILY CONTENTMENT

- a) Faith for the family.
 - i) Psalm 128:1
 - (1) The secret of satisfaction, of true contentment, is God Himself.
 - ii) Hebrews 13:5
 - (1) “Conversation” in this passage means “behavior.”
 - iii) Psalm 73:25-26
 - iv) 1 Timothy 6:6
- b) Fellowship for the family.
 - i) Psalm 128:2-3
 - (1) It is very biblical to spend time together as a family.



- ii) Children do not make a rich man poor, they make a poor man rich.
 - (1) Psalm 127:3
- iii) If I could do it all over again, what would I do with my family?
 - (1) I would love my spouse more in front of our children.
 - (2) I would laugh with my children more at our mistakes and joys.
 - (3) I would listen more, even to the youngest child.
 - (4) I would be more honest about my weaknesses and stop pretending perfection.
 - (5) I would pray differently for my family.
 - (a) Instead of focusing on them and their faults, I would focus more on my own faults.
 - (6) I would do more things with our children.
 - (7) I would be more encouraging and bestow more praise.
 - (8) I would pay more attention to the little things, deeds and words of loving-kindness.
 - (9) I would share God more intimately with my family.
 - (a) Using every ordinary day thing to point them to God.
- c) Food for the family.
 - i) Psalm 128:2
 - (1) This passage refers to the simple things in life, not the luxuries; the necessities.
 - ii) Philippians 4:19
 - (1) Not all your greed, but your need.
 - (2) Learn to enjoy the simple things in life.
 - iii) Proverbs 15:16-17
 - (1) "A dinner of herbs" refers to a vegetable plate.
 - (2) "A stalled ox" refers to a steak dinner.
 - (3) It is better to have a vegetable plate around a table filled with love, than have a steak dinner around a table filled with hatred.
 - iv) Learn to let your home ring with laughter, conversation and fun.
 - (1) Be content with the simpler things of life.
 - v) Gadgets will not make you happy.
 - vi) Many people say they want to give their kids the things their parents couldn't give them; but are they giving them the things that their parents did give to them?
 - (1) A desire to work
 - (2) Honesty
 - (3) Decency
 - (4) Learning to get along with others.
 - (5) That the necessities are food and clothing.
- 4) WHAT DEVELOPS FAMILY CONTENTMENT
 - a) Philippians 4:11
 - i) Contentment is an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances.
 - b) Learn to trust God.
 - i) Psalm 128:1



- (1) If we never learn to fear the Lord, we will never be content.
 - (2) If your family is not God-centered, there will be discontent.
 - c) Learn to thank God.
 - i) Do not be grumbly hateful; be humbly grateful.
 - ii) God has been so good to you.
 - iii) Psalm 128:3-4
 - (1) Thank the Lord for the blessings that He has given to you.
 - d) Learn to love.
 - i) Psalm 128:5-6
 - (1) Learn to look at those around and you and share the love of God.
 - ii) A covetous person is a person who loves things rather than people.
 - iii) A contented person is a person who loves people rather than things.
 - iv) Make it a habit, when visiting someone's house, to thank the Lord for blessing them.
 - v) Teach your children that someone else's blessing is not their loss.
 - (1) You cannot be covetous and love people.
 - (2) You cannot love people and be covetous.
 - e) Learn to give.
 - i) Story of the Congressman, his son and the McDonalds French fries.
 - (1) When the father wanted a few fries, the son rejected him and told him that they were his.
 - (2) Doesn't he know who bought those fries?
 - (3) Doesn't he know I could buy him more if I wanted to?
 - (a) I could buy him 20 orders of fries and bury him in French fries.
 - (4) Doesn't he know I could take those away if I wanted to?
 - (5) Doesn't he know I could buy some for myself if I wanted to and sit at another table and eat them by myself?
 - (6) Doesn't he know that I am trying to have fellowship with him?
 - (7) And then God says:
 - (a) That is the way you are sometimes.
 - (b) I give you a blessings and when I ask for part of it, you say, "That's mine."
 - (c) I could take it all away from you if I wanted to.
 - (d) If I wanted to, I could give you more.
 - (e) Do you realize, that I do not need that?
 - (i) Psalm 24:1
 - (f) Do you realize, I was wanting to have some fellowship with you?
- 5) CONCLUSION
- a) May God have mercy upon the spirit of greed that is in our hearts.
 - i) All that we have has come from God.
 - b) Families need to learn to be content and see the blessing of God upon them.
 - c) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.



- d) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - v) John 3:16



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Would you take God's Word and find please Psalm 128. If you're familiar with the Psalms; you know that's one of the best Psalms in the Bible on the family. We're in a series of Bible studies entitled: "Celebrating the Family." But there's something that wars against the family, and it is a spirit of discontent. I'm going to talk to you today about how to cultivate contentment in your home, cultivating contentment.

So many homes really are a swamp of discontent and the mosquitoes of strife and arguments are breeding and constantly nagging at us and we have people today who are, rather than getting to live, they're living to get. And Madison Avenue's done a good job on us. Madison Avenue's given us a real case of the wants, and we have the idea that in order to be happy we have to have certain things. Madison Avenue tells us, "You deserve the best, you've got it coming to you," and if you get these things, then you'll be gloriously happy like all of the pretty faces on television. But you know and I know that many families, really because of this, are financial time bombs getting ready to explode.

Well, we have a picture of a contented family here in Psalm 128 and they're only six short verses. Let's read them all; verses 1 through 6, "Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His ways, for thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house. Thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion. Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children and peace upon Israel."

Well, we're talking about contentment. What is contentment? May I give you a definition of contentment? Contentment, here it is, is an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances. Contentment: an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances. Now actually in the New Testament, the word contentment has the idea of being self-contained. You remember Paul said in Philippians 4:11 when he was in that Philippian jail, "I've learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." The idea actually means, "I'm self-contained; I don't have to look at circumstances to find my peace." When the space shuttle goes up, they put everything on board that people are going to need because there's no 7/11 in the neighborhood up there. It is self-contained, it has everything on board.

Now a Christian, a person who has the Lord Jesus Christ in his or her heart, has that contentment, that self-containment. Now let me say this about contentment, however: contentment is not complacency. It is not being laid back. It is not being self-satisfied. Many of us need to get busy. There's so much room for improvement. There's so much more that we could be,



should be, and contentment does not mean learning to do without possessions only. You can have possessions and be content. You can not have possessions and be content.

Remember what the apostle Paul said in Philippians 4 verses 11 and 12, "I've learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I've learned to abound." And there's nothing wrong with abounding. Friend, if you're abounding today, if you've got plenty, I'm so grateful for you. That's wonderful! But just be content with it. "I've learned whatsoever state, I've learned to abound. I've learned to abase." But I've learned in whatsoever state I am, good or bad, rich or poor, I have learned to be content. Now the Bible is not against your having things. As a matter of fact, the Bible says in Deuteronomy 8 verse 18, "It is the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth." And the Bible says in Psalm 35 verse 27, "God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants." And in James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above from the Father of Lights, in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning."

So, it doesn't take poverty to learn contentment. It doesn't take riches to learn contentment. But we must learn contentment. Remember in that passage of Scripture in Philippians chapter 4 verse 11, Paul says, "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." All right, may I give you three things that you need to learn if you're to have family contentment? Because, friend, listen to me now, if there's not contentment at home, you've got industrial-strength problems. I mean the devil had rather hurt you at home than any place else, because if you hurt at home you just hurt all over. And if your home, as I say, is a swamp of discontent, you have got real problems.

Number one, let's learn what destroys family contentment, what destroys family contentment. Now we read Psalm 128, and it's an obvious picture of contentment, but let's take another verse and lay down alongside of it, and that would be Exodus chapter 20 and verse 17. The Bible says there in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife nor his manservant nor his maidservant nor his ox nor his ass nor anything that is thy neighbor's." Now here in the Ten Commandments, the last of these ten is, "Thou shalt not covet." It's a very interesting commandment. And before I look at that for just a moment, let me say this: that the Ten Commandments were given primarily to the family. Did you know that? God gave the Ten Commandments and He said, "Now, dads, teach these to your sons and grandsons, that you'll have a happy family." And God gives all of these nine laws for living, and then God sums it up with the last one, "Thou shalt not covet."

Now why did God put that last? Because it sums up all of the others! All of the other commandments deal with actions, but this last one deals with attitude. All of the others deal with deeds, but this last one deals with desire. What's in your heart? Covetousness. What is covetousness? Well, we told you what contentment is. Covetousness is unlawful desire that comes out of discontent. Actually, this particular commandment deals with the heart.

Now let me tell you why covetousness is so bad. Number one: it's so deceiving. Covetousness is very deceptive. You may have a heart full of covetousness. You look so good, so holy. Your Bibles are open, but you may have a heart that is eaten up with covetousness. Frances Xavier, a great Roman Catholic theologian, said this. He said, "I have listened to thousands and thousands of confessions.



Never one time have I ever heard anyone confess the sin of covetousness." It's interesting, isn't it? There's such a deceptive sin. Never one time anyone ever confessed the sin of covetousness.

The apostle Paul was a very righteous man. He lived a life of excellence before he got saved. He was doing well. One day the apostle Paul had the Ten Commandments out and he was checking them off. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." He said, "I don't do that. 'Thou shalt not make any graven images.' I don't do that. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.' I don't do that. 'Honor your father and mother.' Yes, I do that. 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.' Yes, siree. 'Don't steal.' I don't. 'Don't kill.' I don't. 'Don't commit adultery,' never have! Boy, what a good boy am I." He said, "I was just doing real good! I was doing super good till," he said, "I got to the last commandment, and I read that one and it wiped me out. Listen to how he said it. Romans 7 verse 7, "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? God forbid. I had not known sin but by the law." That is, the law is what peeled me back and showed me that I was a sinner. "For I had not known lust," now lust means unlawful desire, "except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" Paul said, "I would've given myself an 'A' till I got down to this last commandment and it said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" I want to tell you something, folks, there're many folks, many of us who may be covetous and not know it. It's very deceitful.

And I want to tell you something else. It is very debasing. Do you know what unlawful desire, a lack of content does? Covetousness? It reveals how wicked our hearts are. Now put in your margin Mark chapter 7. Don't even turn to it, just write it down in your margin and let me just read it to you, beginning in verse 21 to verse 22. Jesus is talking and He's talking about your heart and my heart. And He says, "For from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts." Now these things come out of our heart. Now listen, "Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts," pretty bad list, isn't it? And notice the next thing, "covetousness." Notice the company that covetousness keeps. Let me read it again, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness," all these evil things come from within and defile the man.

Now God just turns His x-ray into our hearts and He says, "All of these things are in the human heart." Now we don't realize that, but I want to tell you, that you as a sinner saved by grace, still have an old, evil heart. That old nature is still there. And the old man is still there. And we are potentially, with our nature, worse than the worst man has ever been actually, apart from the grace of God. These things are down in our heart. They were born in our heart.

If you ever eat an apple and find a worm hole, don't worry, there's no worm in the apple, the worm hole is not there for the worm to get in, but for the worm to get out. The worm was hatched in the blossom. The egg is there in the blossom and the worm finds its inception there inside the apple and eats its way out.

These things that come out of our heart, they were there, we were born with them; the Bible says in Ephesians 2:3 we are, "By nature the children of wrath." Did you know little children are covetous? "Prove it." Take any little child, put him in a room surrounded by fifteen toys; he'll be playing with one. Let your neighbor come over to visit, put her little baby on the floor, and he'll go over and pick



up one of those toys, and this kid will drop the one he's playing with and go over there and bop that kid and take that toy away from him. We are absolutely by nature covetous. I, me, mine, we want it for ourselves.

And where does it come from? Jesus said in John 8 verse 44, "Ye are of your father the devil and the lust of your father ye will do." How did Satan become Satan? He coveted the place that God had. He said in Isaiah 14:14, "I want to be like the Most High. I want the throne of God. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." How did he encourage Eve to sin? Read Genesis 3:6. Through covetousness. Take that which was not hers. She's surrounded in a garden, a beautiful garden, but there's one piece of fruit she didn't have, and he said, "You go ahead and take this."

I was reading an article about some MBA students at prestigious Duke University. And they asked these students, in order that they might teach them more, these MBA students going into business, "What do you want to learn? How do you want us to teach you?" Let me just quote from the article: "For several years, MBA students at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business were asked to write a personal strategic plan. The question posed to them was, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'

With few exceptions, they wanted three things: money, power, and things. Very big things, including vacation homes, expensive foreign automobiles, yachts, and even airplanes. They were primarily concerned with their careers and the growth of their financial portfolios. Their personal plans contained little room for family, intellectual development, spiritual growth, social responsibility, or more effective management. Their mandate to the faculty was, "Teach me how to be a money-making machine. Give me only the facts, tools, and techniques to insure my instantaneous financial success." Well, I can promise you one thing. If they got that instantaneous financial success, they would not be satisfied.

The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 5:10, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver." Listen to me and don't forget this. A discontented man is never rich, and a contented man is always rich. A discontented man, I don't care how much he has, he's never rich; a contented man is always rich. And somebody who is not content with what he has will not be content with what he would have, and to whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.

Covetousness is wrong. Now I'm not saying that it is wrong to have godly ambition. I'm not saying it's wrong to have things. But covetousness is so deceptive, it is so debasing, and friend, it is so destructive. Now this verse I really would like for you to turn to: First Timothy chapter 6. Classic passage on family contentment. First Timothy chapter 6, and let's begin to read in verse 6 on through verse 8. Now, he's talking about contentment, now listen to it now, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." That's really the bottom line of all that I have to say today. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Somebody said, "You never saw a hearse with a U-Haul behind it." "And having food and raiment," that's just something to eat and something to wear, "let us therewith be content." That's all you have to have! That's all you have to have. You can't go around naked and you have got



to eat. Jesus said in Luke 9 verse 58, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, I don't even have a place to lay My head." But He wasn't discontent.

Having food and clothing, First Timothy chapter 6 verses 8 through 10, "Let us therewith be content." But now watch this, verse 9, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition, for the love of money is the root of all evil which while some coveted after," there's our word, "they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Now that doesn't say that "they that are rich." The Bible is not against riches. Abraham was rich, David was rich, Solomon was rich, Joseph of Arimathea was rich. But it says, "They that will be rich." What does that mean? It means that is their dogged determination, just like these students at Duke. "That is what I want. I have set my course to be rich." When you do that, you're living on dangerous ground.

Every so often a man speaking in a university or a high school will give a baccalaureate speech or whatever, and he'll give this advice, trying to get the kids to be ambitious. And he'll say something like this, "Now, young people, make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly." That sounds like good advice; that's terrible advice. Why? Because nobody has a right to make all the money he can, because if you're making all the money you can, you're going to be making money when you ought to be doing something else. You're going to be making money when you ought to be spending time with your wife and family. You're going to be making money when you ought to be sleeping. You're going to be making money when you ought to be soul-winning. You're going to be making money when you ought to be worshipping. There are a lot of people who are making all the money that they can. And when they're making all the money that they can, what are they doing? They're putting things first. And when you put things first, you know what that is? It's idolatry. Anything you love more, serve more, desire more, fear more, value more than God is an idol.

Now folks, when you are guilty of idolatry, you are guilty of something terrible. Listen, Jesus said in Luke chapter 16 and verse 13, "No servant can serve two masters." Boy, that's strong. "No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other," and if you're wondering what two masters he's talking about, he said you cannot serve God and mammon. Mammon's just another word for things. And then Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." God will not work in second place. When you put God in second place, that is idolatry, and that's the reason the Bible calls covetousness idolatry. We have "In God We Trust" on our money, but we have "Me First" written in our hearts.

Let me give you a verse that proves beyond the shadow of any doubt that covetousness is idolatry. Colossians 3 verse 5, "Mortify," that means put to death, "therefore your members which are upon the Earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry." Now remember, covetousness is a very deceitful thing. Many of us would not say that we're covetous, but covetousness, according to Paul here in this passage to Timothy, is



like an octopus. It just wraps its tentacles around you and drags you down. Many people get their identification by what they own, what they possess.

A psychiatrist asked this question one time, "If I am what I possess, and I lose those things, then what am I?" What am I, if I am what I possess and if I lose those things, then what am I, who am I then?

I heard about a man who loved gold; I mean he just loved it, had an inordinate affection for gold. Finally he got a lot of gold, and he loved it. And so he decided, time for him to redecorate his bedroom, so he put down a golden colored carpet, painted the walls parchment color, got yellow drapes, got a gold-colored bedspread, even bought him some yellow pajamas, everything, he just loved gold. Everything was gold all around. But then he got sick. He came down with, would you believe, yellow jaundice. Know what yellow jaundice is? Turns you yellow. And there he was up in his bedroom. His wife called the doctor and said, "Doctor, he's upstairs." The doctor went up to examine him, came back down with a bewildered look. His wife said, "Well, how is he?" Said, "I don't know. I couldn't find him." People who get lost in these things can't find themselves.

Now, folks, this is what destroys family contentment and that is covetousness, unlawful desire. It's not wrong to have things, but unlawful desire, a spirit of dissatisfaction.

Number two, let's learn about what defines family contentment. We've talked about what destroys it. What defines family contentment? What is real family contentment? Well, look in Psalm 128. There're three things. Number one, faith for the family. Look in verse 1, "Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord, that walketh in His ways." The secret of satisfaction, of true contentment, is God Himself. To tell the man on the street that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the secret of satisfaction, he would laugh at you. That's the last thing he would believe would give him satisfaction, but let me give you some verses and jot them down because, hey, folks, these are great for your children, family worship, these are great for you to put on your refrigerator door.

Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5. Now remember we're talking about contentment. Listen to this, "Let your conversation be without covetousness." This is Hebrews 13:5. The word "conversation" literally means behavior. "Let your behavior be without covetousness and be content," listen, "be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said," that's God now, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." All right, I'm telling you the first secret of family contentment is God Himself.

The Psalmist said in Psalm 73 verses 25 and 26, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee and there's none upon Earth I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

And then remember the Scripture we read in First Timothy chapter 6 and verse 6? "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

I was reading about Ernest Hemingway. Ernest Hemingway was a brilliant man, a great, great writer, a literary genius. He had fame, he had notoriety, he had money, he had everything at his fingertips that many people are striving after and he wrote some words and then committed suicide. You know what he wrote? He said this about life. He said, "Life is just a dirty trick, a short



journey from nothingness to nothingness.” Pow. Isn’t it a shame he didn’t know Jesus? Isn’t that a shame?

You see, the first thing is the family faith; faith for the family. Second thing, look at this Psalm again. Not only faith for the family, but fellowship for the family. Look in Psalm 128 verses 2 and 3, “Thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands; happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee, thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house and thy children like olive plants round about thy table.” Now folks, that’s where it’s at. Your wife, your children, the family fellowship right there. There she is, clinging to you like a vine, fruitful, luxuriant. There you are, providing for the family, eating the labor of your hands. There are your children like olive plants, which are very valuable in the Middle East. Having that fellowship.

Folks, if people today who are foregoing having children so they can have things would wake up and understand that children don’t make a rich man poor, they make a poor man rich. You can’t take your riches to Heaven. I’m taking my children to Heaven. There’s where the riches is. It’s the family fellowship. The Bible says in the preceding Psalm, Psalm 127 verse 3, that, “Children are the heritage of the Lord.” Where does content, from where does it come, what is the source? The family faith and the family fellowship.

A very wise man, a gifted man, looked back upon his life and asked himself, “If I could do it all over again, what would I do with my family?” Let me read what he said to you. He said, “I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the youngest child. I would be more honest about my own weaknesses and stop pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family. Instead of focusing on them and their faults, I would focus more on me. I would do more things with my children. I would be encouraging and bestow more praise. I would pay more attention to little things, deeds and words of loving-kindness. And finally, if I had it to do all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family, I would use every ordinary thing that happened and every ordinary day to point them to God.” That’s the family fellowship. Folks, that is where it’s at.

Many times we envy the wealthy. Now, J. Paul Getty in his day, many of you’ve heard of him, one of the wealthiest men that lived in his day. Of course, he’s not Bill Gates or somebody else, but he’s in another generation. Had a tragic life. J. Paul Getty wrote, he said, “I’ve not been given to envy, but, the person that I envy is the person that has a happy home. And those who know how to make marriage work.” He’s married five times, and all of them were failures. No family contentment.

Now here’s the third thing you need. Watch. You, you need faith for the family, you need fellowship for the family, and you need food for the family. Look again at Psalm 128 verse 2, “Thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands.” And, “Happy shalt thou be, it shall be well with thee.” It’s amazing, isn’t it? He’s speaking here of the most simple things of life. He’s talking not about luxuries, he’s talking about necessities. Philippians 4 verse 19, “My God shall supply all your need according to His



riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Not all your greed, but all your need. If you would be content, learn to enjoy the simple things of life which are the best things.

We try to read when our grandchildren are present a Proverb in the morning; that’s one of the best family worships I know. And, Proverbs chapter 15 verses 16 and 17 it says this, “Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure with trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is,” just plain vegetables, “than a stalled ox,” filet mignon, “and hatred therewith.”

Learn, folks, to let your home ring with love and laughter, conversation and fun and be content with the simpler things of life. I’m telling you these gadgets will not make you happy. You take these kids, their closet is crammed full of the latest styles, they’ve got a computer, they’ve got every electronic gadgetry, they have everything there to entertain them. And what do they say? They look and say, “I haven’t got anything to wear.” “I’m bored!” Why? They have not learned to enjoy the very basic things. You say, “Well, I want my kids to have things I never had.” That’s okay. “I want my kids to have things my dad never gave me.” Okay. But are you giving them the things your dad did give you? I mean, the desire to work, honesty, decency, learning to get along with these things. Teach your kids that the necessities are all it takes, having food and clothing. Let’s be content and would to God that we’d get this in our hearts.

Now here’s the third and final thing. I’ve talked about what destroys family contentment. I’ve talked about what defines family contentment, the family faith, the family fellowship, and the family food. It’s just so simple! So simple. Now, here friend, is what develops family contentment. In this Psalm we can find the same thing. Remember that Paul said that contentment must be learned. He said, Philippians 4 verse 11, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.” And again let me remind you of the definition of contentment: it is an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances.

Now, four simple things, here they are. Four things you can learn. Number one, learn to trust God. Look again in Psalm 128 verse 1, “Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord.” If you don’t do that, you’re never going to be content. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Learn to trust the Lord. Have you done that? Do you have faith for your family? Is your family a God-centered family? No wonder you’re discontent. You’re like a square peg in a round hole.

Number two, not only learn to trust, but number two, learn to thank. Don’t be grumbly hateful; be humbly grateful. God has been so good to you, look in Psalm 128 verses 3 and 4, look at it again, “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house, thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold that thus shall the man be blessed.” That’s it! Thank you, Lord, for this food. Thank you, Lord, for my wife. Thank you, Lord, for my children. I am a blessed man! Families need to learn how to thank God. It would be good for you to get a family diary and write in it the blessings of God. It would be good for you to sit down and rehearse with your children day after day after day the things that God has done for them. Learn to thank God.

Number one, learn to trust. Number two, learn to thank. Number three, learn to love. Look in Psalm 128 verse 5, “The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.” It’s not just simply for your own family. Lift up your eyes, look at others, look



at this city, look at people who're in need and learn to love. Do you know what a covetous person is? A covetous person is a person who loves things rather than people. Do you know what a contented person is? A contented person is a person who loves people rather than things.

Have you ever had something that you were satisfied with, maybe you had a Honda, until you met somebody had a BMW? And then you have a BMW and you're satisfied till you meet somebody has a Porsche or a Jaguar. Or have you ever thought, "Boy, we sure do have a nice house." until you visit somebody else? Say, "Good night, where'd they get all this stuff? How'd they do this? Where'd all this come from?" And all of a sudden, your house that you were so happy with, you're not happy with it anymore. Do you know why? You don't love those people.

I make it a habit, nobody hears me do it, but I walk into a lovely gracious home, I bow my head and I thank God for His blessings on those people. Say, "Thank You, Lord, for blessing those people! Thank You that You've been this good to them." Teach your children that somebody else's blessing is not their loss. You cannot be covetous and love people. And you cannot love people and be covetous.

Learn to trust, learn to thank, learn to love, and learn to give. Learn to give. If you want family contentment, let your family learn to give.

Years ago I shared with you a story I'm going to share with you again because it fits so perfectly right here. A congressman told this story; he told it to his pastor. He said, "I took my son to McDonalds. We're going to have some father-son fellowship." You know how we all dream of that. And he said, "My son wanted a large order of fries. And he got this large order of fries. And we sat down, father and son, to have some fellowship. And I sat there across from him and looked at that large order of fries and they smelled so good, I thought I'd have a couple. So I reached out my hand to get a couple French fries, and my son put his hand on my hand and said, 'Hey! Those are mine!'" He said, "I thought to myself, 'My son has a problem, a real problem,' and it just flew all over me.

And I got to thinking, 'Number one, doesn't he know who bought those fries and gave them to him? And doesn't he know that if I wanted to, I could buy him more fries? I could go up there and order twenty orders of fries and bury him in French fries. And doesn't he know if I wanted to, I could take those away from him that he already has, if I wanted to? And doesn't he know that if I wanted some French fries for myself I could go buy them for myself? I've got the money to do that, and I could go over to another table and eat them all by myself. Doesn't he know that I'm trying to have fellowship with him?'"

And he said, "Before I could tell the story, more time than I could think, God spoke to my heart and said, 'My son, that's the way you are sometime. I have given you blessings, and when I ask for a part of that blessing, you say, "Hey, that's mine." And God said, 'Son, don't you know that I could take that whole thing from you if I wanted to? And don't you know, if I wanted to, I could give you more? And don't you know that I don't need that? I am God, anything I want, Psalm 24:1, "The earth is mine and the fullness thereof." And don't you know that I was wanting to have some fellowship with you?'"

Oh, friend, may God have mercy upon the spirit of greed that's in our hearts, understanding that all that we have has come from God! And families need to learn to trust! To thank! To love! And to



give! And if you have a contented home, I'm telling you, you are blessed indeed. And if you don't, I don't care what else you have. And read this Psalm over again and let it come into your heart.

Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me tell you that godliness with contentment is great gain. You've got to have God, that's where it begins. "Blessed is the man that fears the Lord." Blessed is the woman, the boy, the girl that fears the Lord. The fear of the Lord doesn't mean slavish dread. It means reverence and love and awe for Almighty God.

Father, I pray now that You would cultivate and inculcate in our hearts a spirit of gratefulness and root out any covetousness. And Lord, help us to be content with little if You've given little, or much if You've given much. Thank You, Lord, for Your goodness to the sons and daughters of men.

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're not certain that you're saved, would you like to invite Jesus into your heart now? Are you willing to humble yourself before Him? Are you willing to lay aside your self-righteousness, acknowledge your sin, willing to lay aside any ability that you have to justify yourself and just believe on Him, because there's no other way you can be saved apart from faith in the Lord Jesus. The Bible says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Isn't that what you want, peace with God? Then put your faith where God put your sins, on the Lord Jesus.

Pray a prayer like this, "Oh God, I'm a sinner and I'm lost. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. I need to be saved. Thank You, Jesus, for dying for me. Thank You for paying my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. I love You for that. Lord Jesus, I turn away from self-sufficiency and I turn from this sin that so destroys me, and I turn, Lord Jesus, by faith, to You. I just open my heart like a child. Come into my life, forgive my sin, take control of my life and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Thank You, Jesus. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray, Amen."



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