



Crucial for Your Well-being

How Do You Feel About Your Life?

My favorite football team is the Raiders and their best player is a strong Christian. He openly shares his faith and does lots of charitable work in the community. He actually is very good as a football player and has been among the top fifteen best players at his position in the league. Yet some fans aren't happy with his play. They are discontented and would like someone else to take his place. Because the Raiders haven't won enough games with him as quarterback, many fans want a change. Discontent is not limited to sports fans. It is like a viral disease that infects many. Young and old alike, rich, and poor battle discontent. One of the richest couples in the world is getting a divorce because of discontent. Families fall apart as a result of discontent and so do friendships.

Discontent is hard on us. It strips us of our happiness. It can lead to depression and even drug and alcohol abuse. Discontent leaves us restless, disturbed, unable to focus. We become miserable people to be around when we are discontented and when it gets rough on us, we often take our frustration out on others. Solomon, one of the smartest and richest people of all time struggled badly with discontent. Even someone who has everything can be dissatisfied with life. Just a snippet of his litany of complaints found in the ancient book of Ecclesiastes paints the picture pretty clearly. **"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."** (Ecclesiastes 1:2 NIV) His life work was wasted time to him. **What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?** (1:3 NIV) Studying gave him nothing but a headache! **I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men!** (1:13 NIV) Solomon couldn't find anything that made him happy. **Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly — my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well — the delights of the heart of man. (2:2-8 NIV) Nothing pleased him no matter how glad most of us would be to have what he had. **Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.** (2:11 NIV)**

What a miserable life and yet Solomon had everything he could have ever wanted...except contentment. Contentment is the great jewel of life but it isn't found in wealth, success, or acclaim. Rachel, the wife of Jacob was a miserable soul. She had her husband's love and was growing wealthy and yet because she didn't have children, Rachel was full of discontent. She complained so bitterly to her husband about her lack of kids that Jacob got fed up. **Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"** (Genesis 30:2 NIV) Have you ever known families like this? Husbands and wives blame each other for their unhappiness. Children blame their parents, parents their

kids. This is found all over the world, discontent at home. People miserable because they don't have what they want, what they decide they deserve. So many of us think others are responsible for our lack of happiness but it just isn't the case.

Hannah in the Old Testament was also full of discontent but she approached her misery in a much different way. Like Rachel, she was broken-hearted about her inability to have children. Unlike Solomon and Rachel, she went straight to God with her discontent. **In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."** (1 Samuel 1:10-11 NIV) You might be tempted when you are discontented to complain to your friends or your family members when in fact they can do nothing to turn things around for you. Co-workers and fellow students, teachers and psychologists may listen to your complaints but they can't take away your frustration and discontent. Only God has the ability to change what's inside you and He will if you join Him in it.

The power of discontent is in its ability to ruin the way you think. It is a strong narcotic that clouds your mind and keeps you from reaching your potential. It isn't always bad; discontent sometimes leads to much needed changes in your life. But for many and probably for you, discontent becomes a poison to the soul, a wrecking ball to your dreams and most times must be attacked with vigor. It is often used by Satan to ruin lives and perhaps he has attacked you with it. So what do you do to fight back discontent? Pursue your God-given goals. I know of someone who as a senior adult is learning a new language. You may have always wanted to take up the guitar or videography. Several years ago I decided I would try to memorize a book of the Bible. Maybe you want to plan for a mission trip or figure out what you can do for foster children. A goal that relies on God and His help and utilizes latent talents you possess does wonders for increasing your happiness.

Make God the center of your thoughts. The Apostle Paul says we can and should pray without ceasing. The more your mind is on God and your thoughts focused on connecting with Him, the more contented you will grow. Praying without ceasing is much more than just throwing a bunch of prayer requests at God. It is getting your mind to think with Him, talking to Him about anything and everything. Soon enough you will sense Him guiding you, shaping the way you see things, pointing out what you are missing. The great people of God were ones who kept checking in with Him during the day, being aware of Christ and His life in them. Jesus is not a distant God far away but He is right there within you ready to fill you with the peace and joy He only can offer you. Put your mind on Him and contentment will follow.

Give more attention to loving others. Discontentment is the opposite of patience. Discontentment is not happy with how now is, how it is going at the moment. Patience accepts the now, realizing that something better is coming. The Apostle Paul reminds you that love is patient. Since patience is built into love, then the more you love, the richer will be your patience and the less you will feel discontentment. Make love a priority of your day. Be kind to someone. Love an enemy. Let love come out of you when you are at work, with family members, at a church service. Love spilling out of you will result in contentment pouring into you. Author Brennan Manning had a friend who was a fellow priest that found out at age 54 he had terminal cancer. He left the monastery where he served and took a job as a night watchman in a poor neighborhood of Paris. Each morning after he got off work, he went to a local park and sat on one of the benches. Winos, drifters and broken men and women were there each day and Dominique made friends with them all. He shared his candy, laughed with them, and told stories but was never judgmental, always loving. The broken people who hung out at the park gravitated toward Dominique. One day when some of the ragtag group there asked him to tell them about himself, he gave a brief summary of his life but also shared quietly how much Jesus loved them. Not much later Dominique died in the apartment where he stayed. Seven thousand men and women who had been touched by his loving, unassuming life came to his funeral. Love made this man a great soul full of contentment and peace. It can do the same for you.