



Monday, March 23, 2020

If God has wired you to be good at what you do – whether business or art, manufacturing or farming, music or medicine, or anything that allows you to freely help the needy and further the cause of Christ – rejoice! This is a great use of your life.

So, whether you are a grocery clerk, an assembly line worker, salesperson, a flight attendant, a stay-at-home mom, or a professional athlete, or whether you have a primary ministry of prayer or encouraging people, God has given you a unique platform. In all likelihood, no pastor or missionary will reach your neighbors, teachers, coworkers, coaches or teammates. We each have our own God-given mission fields to serve every day. So, use your platform for the glory of God, and then give generously to the causes of evangelism, justice, and mercy that are close to his heart.

God doesn't just call people to the far reaches of the Earth for his Kingdom. He also equips many servants to support and supply workers and to meanwhile represent him in their own territory right where they live and work. Whatever he has called you to do, do it with your whole heart, living generously out of the overflow he's entrusted to you.

May each of us live daily in such a way as to look forward to hearing the Lord say to us, when we meet him face to face, *"Well done, you good and faithful servant! ... You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts, come on in and share my happiness!"* (Matthew 25:21).

Pastor Bill's Question:

In the difficult times what is God asking you to give to others and our mission here at Union.

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

We are living in an era when we have more material possessions than any generation before us. Compared to Americans living in the 1950's, we have countless more conveniences, including big screen TV's, microwaves, online shopping, smartphones, and twice as many cars. It's easy to assume our purchases will automatically lead to greater contentment.

Tuesday, March 24, 2020 [continued]

But will they? Dr. David G. Myers claims that this generation is actually less content than generations before it. *"Compared with their grandparents, today's young adults have grown up with much more affluence, slightly less happiness and much greater risk of depression and assorted social pathology."*

The false idea that prosperity brings contentment is nothing new. Paul warned Timothy and the church at Ephesus about false teachers – first century equivalents to modern prosperity theology proponents – who were *"depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain"* (1 Timothy 6:5).

Pastor Bill's Question:

Be honest, are there places where prosperity and more material possessions have hurt us?
How?

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

Jesus put it this way: *“Everything they do is just to show off in front of others”* (Matthew 23:5, CEV). They impressed people with their clever interpretations and personality-driven communications. Instead of faithfully teaching God's word, they misused their platform to perform and make money. We know from historical documents that some prominent religious teachers in that time charged exorbitant fees.

Like their counterparts today they embraced the secular culture's materialistic values while baptizing them with verses taken out of context. Contentment is being satisfied in whose you are, who you are, and what you have. Those who love and serve Jesus can be truly content. Those who love and serve money can never be. Contentment isn't dependent on favorable life circumstances, nor is it the product of material abundance. That's why there are people who struggle with poverty or other difficult life circumstances and yet are content, and rich and healthy celebrities who aren't.

Money-love robs us of contentment, while God-love fills us with it. God our Creator and Redeemer has transformed us and opened the doors of Heaven to us. No matter what happens, no matter how much or how little money we have, *“nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:39, NLT).

Pastor Bill's Question:

How would you define *“contentment”* in your life?

Make a List! What makes you content?

Thursday, March 26, 2020

Hebrews 13:5 gives us the formula for finding contentment, as well as the ultimate reason for it: *“Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU’”* (NASB).

Jerry Bridge wrote, *“Contentment is one of the most distinguishing traits of the godly person, because a godly person has his heart focused on God rather than on possessions or position or power.”*

If our trust is in money, possessions, power, or fame, we'll never be content. All of these are cruel false gods. They always break their promises and send us the bill. Proverbs 23:5 puts it this way: *“Your money can be gone in a flash, as if it had grown wings and flown away like an eagle”* (GNT). Money is a false god that, when we love it, will disconnect us from loving God and living the good life.

God, on the other hand, has promised and proven that he loves us unwaveringly, that he will never abandon us, and that he is sufficient for all our needs. He is our true God, and when we love him, our hearts can always be at rest. Then we will be free to live the abundant life.

Pastor Bill's Question:

How can focusing on God help you get content in the storms of life? Right now, in the middle of a world-wide Pandemic?

Friday, March 27, 2020

There's a secret to being content, and Paul discovered what it was:

“I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn’t have the chance to help me. 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. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength”

(Philippians 4:10-13, NLT).

Paul said the key to contentment is living for Jesus and doing every-thing through Christ, relying on his power.

The phrase, *“I have learned how to be content”* tells us something. Contentment doesn’t come naturally. So, if you struggle, be encouraged! We shouldn’t give up on seeking contentment, because Paul tells us that we *can* learn it. However, to learn anything, we must invest the time and effort to develop our skills. We must ready ourselves to have our contentment tested and deepened, as Paul did.

Friday, March 27, 2020 [continued]

Contentment requires learning new habits and new ways of viewing God, money, and life itself. Since even the apostle Paul had to learn to be content, we shouldn’t be discouraged that it takes us time to learn it too.

Pastor Bill’s Question:

Paul says we can learn how to be content.

What are some things you have learned to help you be content?

Saturday, March 28, 2020

A primary Greek root word for *contentment* is often translated *“sufficiency”*. It’s used in 2 Corinthians 9:8: *“God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work”* (emphasis added.). This sufficiency – *“in all things at all times”* – is not because all things and all times are sufficient, but because *God* and his abounding grace are.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God told Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for you.”* We often admire the quality of self-sufficiency in ourselves and others, but the key to contentment is recognizing that Christ is our sufficiency. *We are not enough*. We should admit that we lack the power, knowledge, moral strength, and stability necessary to be self-dependent. Self-reliance never leads to contentment.

Our satisfaction with Jesus – and our happiness in him – exists independently of large bank accounts and retirement funds, (In fact, it can often be impaired by them.)

The Egyptians weren’t alone in their belief that being buried with precious metals and money would transfer from this life to the next.

At least five tombs unearthed in Ephesus, where Timothy lived, contained substantial treasure, fine clothing, and even slain servants.

As moderns, we may smirk at this seemingly primitive belief that the dead could take their assets into the afterlife. The saying *“You can’t take it with you”* may seem self-evident. But in practice, many of us cling to our possessions with a similar mind-set, desperately and nonsensically clutching them as if we really could take them with us.

Pastor Bill’s Question: What legacy gift are you leaving for God’s work on this earth? What is stopping me from helping Union right now to keep ministering in this crisis? Devotionals are inspired from Randy Allcorn’s book, *“Giving is the Good Life”*