

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

October 30, 2022 "The great search. How can I find contentment?"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing, and you can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Fall is here and we have several things planned to the end of the year. Our children's program is growing and we're still tweaking ways to love on them well. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all that through our brand new website, upgraded app, and social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. If you're joining us online, we appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

II Recap.

We'll keep this brief. We started out this series with a conversation about how to search for peace. There were some real down to earth practical applications you could use to grow the ability to experience real peace. Two weeks ago we kind of backtracked and talked about what a great search looks like. It answered the questions of what mindset and lifestyle we adopt so that we can always be aware, awake, and in a position to trade up for better in our lives. And last week, we covered specific ways of how to find out what we should search for. All of these are available online.

III Sunday.

We finished our series on searching. But the actual work of searching never stops. Because we believe there is always better out there for us God wants to share with us. And one of the things God wants for us, and comes with a search for better, is finding this place of contentment. Not because we have everything we want. But, because there is something solid, real, and trustworthy inside of us that can hold us in place no matter what. Let's talk about contentment.

What does being content mean to you?

What causes discontentment in you?

What brings contentment?

We used two passages Sunday to help us unpack the idea and living in contentment. And obviously the search for it. Read **1 Timothy 6:6-10**, and **Philippians 4:10-14**, and we'll dig into them.

What jumped out to you from these passages?

What did they say to you about searching for contentment?

What specific practices, beliefs do you see that help you understand and frame contentment?

Kal mentioned 7, yes 7, specific things we can do to help us grow a sense of contentment.

1. Believe the place of contentment really exists. This is the first and foundational belief. We have to believe there has to be a place where you can actually feel content, satisfied and that you can put some practices in place, and journey towards this place. **"Do you believe no matter where you are, what situation you're in, you can find true contentment?"**

2. Contentment HAS to be independent of circumstances. Paul said; *“in every situation”*.

Describing your situation should not describe your spirit. You commit to growing this solidness, an anchor that is real to you, you can depend on it when everything else feels out of control. But that means there has to be this appropriate detachment, disengagement from the things of the world that are fleeting, shakable. And completely out of our control. To understand this well... make a list of what you hope for, want, out of life. How many of those can you control all of the variables of? You can probably put effort in the direction of those things, but you most likely can't promise the results. This is where you frame an understanding of contentment we can build practices on.

3. We have to LEARN to be content. This is a truth many of us know, but don't think about it when we feel discontent. Growing contentment is a practice of discipline...it's work. Training your body and spirit to know how to balance in the midst of disorientation. Paul said; *“he learned the secret of this.”* This is submitting to the work that produces contentment within us. But we first have to make the commitment to want to learn how to do this.

4. Contentment is born out of living in 'enough'. All of these truths are a necessary framework to live in contentment. But this is a truth that fuels contentment. And it stems from a relationship with God. But it also is born out of controlling our appetites. **What happens when you feed an appetite?** It grows...right? The primary root, and cause, of suffering is craving or striving. We will find 'enoughness', when we can let go of the things we're craving or striving for. Growing the discipline to be less and less distracted by shiny things. We have to grow the ability to reframe our relationship with those so we choose out of necessity or control rather than impulse.

5. Contentment requires us to resist social comparison. Life is not a competition. There is no prize being handed out at the end of our life for how much we have. The biggest barrier to experiencing true contentment is to get sucked into the belief true contentment is just one more/new, the next thing. This truth will help us hold onto things more loosely and live in generosity. Learning how to do this well will drive the ability to live in 'enoughness'. Most of our appetites are driven by social comparison. Not going to bash social media. That's too easy. **But social media feeds this inner dissatisfaction through social comparison.** Some of you are fine and you're not eaten up by; other people's pics of feet at the beach, (is it just me or is that a weird pic), airplane wings, kids being perfect, (we all know better), fancy meals, exotic locations, parties you weren't invited to. But some of us aren't at a place to experience other people's perfectly curated lives, and be happy for them. If you want to experience true contentment, know your limits, what you can handle, of other people's lives, and build sustainable boundaries to protect you.

6. Contentment requires us to be quick and sincere in forgiveness. There is a deeply emotional, spiritual and relational component to contentment. It's more than just having a healthy relationship with the things of the world. It's constantly managing our relationships with others. Want to live in constant lack of contentment. Hold on to grudges and hurts. Nurse negative emotions of when you were wronged, feed bitterness by how poorly you were treated and how unfair life is to you. This will destroy contentment faster than anything. WHY? Because **revenge, paybacks, NEVER satisfies.** There is no action that can be inflicted on someone who hurt you that would make you let go of a nursed hurt. WHY? Because you're just going to see them happy again, enjoying life, and you're going to be really mad...and not content. Learn to regularly let go of wrongs.

7. To experience contentment, we have to center ourselves on the person and life of Jesus. *"I can do everything through Christ."* This is where we as a church, corporately, and hopefully each of us individually, should live. True contentment, peace, wholeness, what all of us are actually looking for, has to start. To be centered, in the person of Jesus. And we need a reminder...and Jesus knew that. So, that's why we have to center our lives on the person and work of Jesus. He modeled what a life of pursuing contentment should look like. So, in all we do, as we go through our daily life, there must be a filter, template, awareness of Jesus to help guide us.

IV Challenge.

I know this was a lot of info. Too much to take in at once. Just pick a couple at first and put them into practice. Even if that first step is simply believing that contentment is a real thing and can be found. Contentment is the equivalent of peace, and a place Jesus wants to take us. Believe that it's possible, seek Jesus, and you will be on the right path to experiencing this journey towards true contentment. Keep searching, and seeking. Live humbly holding onto what you believe loosely so that you can be ready when God wants to reveal beautiful new truths to you.