

On your sermon outline can you name the Ten Commandments?

1. No other gods before me.
2. Not make any graven images
3. Not take the name of the Lord in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath
5. Honor father and mother
6. Not murder
7. Not commit adultery
8. Not steal
9. Not bear false witness

How many of you know what the 10th commandment is?

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. Exodus 20:17

Have you ever thought about the 10th commandment being the foundation, the root, of all the other commandments? Think about it... Why do people steal? Why do people murder? Why do we commit adultery? Because our natural desire has been twisted and gotten out of control.

Desire is natural; our desire for food reminds us to eat. Our desire to do something useful motivates us to work. Our desire for friendship draws us into community. And the greatest of all desires is the desire to know God and to please God. Those are all good things we desire; but desire gone bad turns into coveting.

Coveting begins with us wanting something. Advertisers are adept at getting us drooling over the next best thing... Take a look at this...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZAAZ7iXN-o>

Then we start thinking about how much we want it. Soon it starts to dominate our thoughts, until finally it becomes an obsession. When it gets to that point sin has had its way with us! And before we know it, we've even broken the first commandment. That thing we covet has become for us a god.

Some of you think you've kept the Ten Commandments, but you need to look again. Coveting is why you focus on what you don't have instead of being grateful for what you do have. Coveting is what causes that little twinge of disappointment whenever someone else gets what you want. It's how you react when a coworker gets the promotion, when your roommate finds romance and you're left single, when your friend goes on a dream vacation and you're sitting at home.

All that leads me to ask a couple of questions this morning;

'How content (satisfied) are you with your life?'

'What is the basis of your contentment (satisfaction)?'

The apostle Paul was a prisoner when he wrote the book of Philippians. Yet even in that situation Paul's letter to the Philippians is marked with a tone of joy that reaches its climax when he says: "Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice!"

It is shortly after that statement that Paul writes these words from Philippians 4:10-12 in thanks to the Philippians for their gifts of support while he is in prison.

¹⁰ I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Let's focus for a moment on verse 11 and I want you to read this with me:

"I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances."

Contentment, Paul says, is something we learn.

Many people would assume that you learn contentment when you don't have anything. When you are poor you simply learn to be content with what you have.

In Sierra Leone we passed through a number of villages where children were playing with rings that they kept rolling with the aid of a stick. I remember the discussion that we had about most kids in the States not knowing what to do if they didn't have electric to power their games, computers and televisions. They would never be content with a stick and a ring.

But Paul is saying that you also need to learn contentment when you're in a time of abundance. "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."

Sadly, it is often the people with the most who are the least content. As I may have mentioned last week, I saw more joy on the faces of people living in the poverty of Sierra Leone than I regularly see on the faces of people in the USA.

Why is that true? Why have we not learned to be content whatever the circumstances?"

Probably, because as we mentioned last week, most believe that contentment comes with things. But here's the bottom line: *Contentment has nothing to do with your external circumstances.*

Contentment is not found in things- but in a person- Jesus Christ and in him alone.

What did Paul learn in times of plenty and times of want? He learned that in the end the only thing that satisfies is Jesus.

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

I can be content in times of plenty and want; well fed or hungry; good times or bad; all because of Jesus.

The hymn writer Horatio G. Spafford wrote "*It Is Well with My Soul*" following the tragic death of his daughters. Lost at sea when the ship they were traveling on sank, only Spafford's wife survived. Horatio, who was still behind in the US had to sail to Europe to meet his wife. When he crossed over the spot where the ship sank he penned these words.

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Refrain:

It is well with my soul,
it is well, it is well with my soul.

2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control,
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and hath shed his own blood for my soul.
(Refrain)

3. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
(Refrain)

4. And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
even so, it is well with my soul.
(Refrain)

Spafford understood what it meant to find contentment in Christ alone.

There is a story which Paul tells in 2 Corinthians 12 which I believe illustrates what Paul 'learned' about contentment. Paul was hampered in his life with something he called his 'thorn in the flesh.' Some have said it was his wife, others his bad eyes; but whatever it was Paul prayed- pleaded- with the Lord to take it away. But in the end God said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

What Paul learned here was to embrace his situation and depend on God in a way he'd never had to before.

Contentment has nothing to do with our circumstances; nor does it have anything to do with our feelings; it all has to do with our faith and where we place our faith. What matters in life is faith- faith in Jesus Christ that will take us through life whether in times of plenty or of want.

I have to ask you this question: Have you learned this secret Paul is talking about in Philippians 4? That no matter what the economy does, or how bad your situation is, you're saying, "By faith in Jesus I will be at peace."

Like Paul tells Timothy, if we've got food and clothes, we'll be content with that. I get to eat today, I'm good.

But how many people have you met with that attitude? How many people have you met that have that type of contentment so others demand an explanation: "How can you be that content? You just lost everything, you should be stressed out, you should be angry."

Then you reply, "I'm okay. I've learned the secret Paul's talking about, that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, so I don't need this to be happy. I don't need that to be happy. I'm content wherever I am." Have you learned that?

What we need to learn is the meaning of contentment as Paul expressed it here in Philippians 4. For Paul, and for us, contentment is being at peace in Christ's sufficiency.

Listen to the verse again: I can be content in plenty and in want through Christ who gives me strength.

If we begin living in that type of faith people are going to begin asking questions about you. I came across this quote this week which reads: "We need to live lives that demand an explanation."

We need to live a life where people say, "Your life doesn't make sense. Explain it to me? Why would you live this way?"

Paul's life certainly didn't make sense. He was in prison and was writing about joy. Paul was content in prison and he was telling others to be joyful. That doesn't make sense, how is Paul at peace.

Paul's peace was found within; it was not controlled by the external things of life. Paul's peace came from knowing the God who loved him and sent his Son. Paul's peace came from trusting that God would meet all his needs. And with that came a desire to know what God desires for your life and not what you desire, or covet. And being filled up and satisfied with faith in Jesus means that you can rejoice in whatever your circumstances of life.

Go back for a moment to that statement: "We need to live lives that demand an explanation."

Paul said to the Philippians: Rejoice in the Lord always. If we learn to live joyfully through faith in Jesus Christ we can live lives that demand an explanation.

So do you live a life that demands an explanation? Do others notice something different about you?

Think about it? Does joy mark your life? Not a joy determined by things and circumstances; but true joy that comes by faith in Jesus Christ. Do people look at your life and demand an explanation?

Contentment is the end result of living by faith in Jesus. Contentment is being able to say, "I have Jesus and that is enough."

'How content (satisfied) are you with your life?'

'What is the basis of your contentment (satisfaction)?'

Too many of us think that contentment is found in things. As a result we get caught up in covetousness. People all around us are trying to find satisfaction in everything but Jesus.

You see, the world looks at those people in Sierra Leone as having a very poor standard of living. However, if you look at their spiritual standard, they are living way above us because they are content and joyful.

We need to confess that we have made other things 'god' in our lives and as a result have come to find our peace, joy and contentment outside of faith in Jesus Christ.

Maybe you've been trying to find something that will meet the desires of your life. You've been coveting things that you believe will satisfy you once you have them.

My prayer is that today you've come to see that what matters in life is faith- faith in Jesus Christ and that is enough.

Contentment is being able to say, "I have Jesus and that is enough."

Sermon Outline

What Matters in Life: Faith
Pastor George S Reynolds
February 27, 2011 Linglestown Life

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The Tenth Commandment

Desire is natural.

_____ is twisted desire out of control.

Questions

How content are you with your life?

Content ----- Discontented

What is the basis of your contentment?

Philippians 4:10-12

“I have _____ to be content whatever the circumstances.” v. 11

Contentment has nothing to do with your external circumstances.

Contentment is found in Jesus Christ and in him alone.

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” v.13

My grace is sufficient...

2 Corinthians 12:9

Contentment is being at _____
in Christ's sufficiency.

Lives that demand an explanation

Contentment is the end result of living by faith in Jesus. Contentment is being able to say, “I have Jesus and that is enough.”