

# Grow Where You're Planted

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Exodus 20:17, Psalm 1, Matthew 5:27-30, 6:22-24, Philippians 4:11-12,

1 Timothy 6:6-16, Hebrews 12:1-2

Detailed outline from the Sermon on August 26, 2007

What steals your contentment? (Dialogue)

Problem: A lack of real contentment

“The grass is greener...” worry, agitation, sleeplessness, covetousness, wanderlust. That deep sense of peace and confidence that defies worry and thwarts covetousness and trumps agitation, wanderlust and general unrest with our lives.

Wanting what isn't mine

Wanting things (possessions, positions, partners, powers) that aren't ours to have, may never be ours to have, and quite likely aren't on God's wish list for our lives.

- *Breeds a lack of contentedness*
- *Agitates toward Godless ambitions; wanting what isn't mine teases me to strive and aspire along pathways that are detours from God's better work or plan.*
- Causes us to *miss* what God *is* doing, He really wants to accomplish in and through us. He's gracious. He's a great redeemer who can bless wrong paths with so much mercy that we may not even know we've strayed. But don't we ever get tired of forcing God into a plan B mode? I know I do. His patience is immeasurable, but there comes a time when his patience *inspires* me not to *try it* again and again.
- Can lead to a critical eye regarding the things that *do* belong to us; the people and circumstances that are ours to experience and enjoy are subject to terrible scrutiny when we're forever comparing them to what we wish we had. This can make us very hard to live with.
- Endangers our hearts and minds. A subtle poison; a *tainting* or *erosion* of the *core self*. (Proverbs 4:23 “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”)

In much the same way wanting what belongs to others puts us at risk.

- Breeds needless *competition* and *comparison*. We all know that some competition is natural and even good. In some healthy contexts, competition can bring out every good kind of determination and a commitment to excellence. But the seed of most completion is *pride*, which is, of course, double-edged. There is a good side called dignity and even deep satisfaction from achieving and accomplishing worthy things. The dangerous edge is really sharp and cuts deep. To point, comparing ourselves with others is a formula for *misadventure* and *disaster*. Be who you are. Be the best you that you can be; but keeping up with the Joneses or trying to be who or what you aren't – this will steal joy and thwart the Master Artist's efforts to make you who he actually wants you to be. He doesn't want you to be more like the Joneses.
- Causes *resentment*. We are tempted to resent the one who has what we want; or we are prone to resent the people we perceive are preventing us from getting what others have. We even learn to resent ourselves and our inability to make that grab (depression); and in all of this we misplace our resentment. In some deep place, we're telling God, "Why did you give me *this* life instead of *that* life; *this wife* instead of *that wife*, *this job* instead of *that job*; *my* lot instead of *her* lot? God, you sold me short!"
- Encourages the *roving eye*...as the Old Testament puts it, lusting after my neighbor's wife or my neighbor's ass.
- All of this leads to the devaluation of what belongs to us. Our spouse will feel devalued if he or she is losing the comparison game. Our children will feel devalued if they're always losing the comparison game. We actually devalue ourselves when we ignore or reject who God made us and how God made us. And we do harm to ourselves and others.

Let's talk Solutions: Keep Christ at the center.

- *Accept Jesus* ...follow Jesus...know Jesus...copy Jesus...learn from Jesus...let Jesus transform you...
- *Be a student* of the Word and *doer of the Word*. (Psalm 1) Learn the promises and principles, embrace them and groove them until this new second nature in Christ becomes first nature.

- *God's general and specific will* – Understand why you're on the planet. (Ephesians 2:10) And if you're here to dream with God, adventure with God, aspire with God, go for it! There's nothing bad about striving if we're going after something God wants for us.
- Surround yourself with people who encourage you and bring out the best in you. (WE NEED CHURCH!) We need *functional* church. (How many times do I see *the bad friends phenomenon*...we like to be the best person we know? We like to have someone blame? We like the adventure that poorly functioning people bring into our lives?)
- Keep Christ at the center by going deeper and reaching farther. Stretch your roots deep through prayer and spiritual disciplines, and grow your reach by taking risks, going to greater length to serve others.
- Stay open to correction. Humility is the best soil for real growth.
- Keep full circle. Fix your eyes on Jesus. (Hebrews 12:1-2) contentment is a byproduct of life in Christ. It is not actually something we strive for. We live for Christ..."Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

Keep Christ at the center and keep culture at bay.

- Don't believe the commercials. You *don't* need *that* to be happy.
- Don't let images bombard you.
- Don't be a fool for options...things that promise to enrich and simplify life, but actually clutter our lives and distract from us better things.
- Don't fall prey to "covenant slide," the trend in our culture to be dismissive about keeping our vows and staying loyal to our word.
- Don't bow down to the "easy" idol thinking that God's intention for our lives is to make them as easy as can be. On the contrary, investing in others heartily puts us at risk of all kinds of hardship, but with a purpose that feeds the soul to the point of lubricating the Christ life with extraordinary contentment. Here's the irony, according to Jesus, we find life by giving ours away.
- Don't let cultural Christianity infect you and especially the weird distortions that we see on television.

- Don't buy the lie that all religions are the same, and that all roads lead to the top of the mountain. Jesus didn't say that. He said, "I am the way..." and "the road is hard and the gate narrow that leads to salvation." If Christianity can't withstand the test of relative merit, then don't go this way. And if it can, then do. Please do.
- We all get infected by culture. Don't let the infection settle in. Seek help.

Keep celebrating the life you have.

- Celebrate the *beauty* of creation...*we're* part of it! So many *capacities*...so many *people*...
- Celebrate your story...your gifts...God's provision all along the way.
- Celebrate family...friends
- Celebrate purpose...opportunities
- Celebrate God's promises...future blessings
- Count your blessings and fight off the ghoul called cynicism. (BUT YOU DON'T KNOW HOW OFTEN I'VE BEEN DISAPPOINTED. YOU DON'T KNOW MY LIFE. YOU DON'T KNOW MY PAIN!)
- No, but God does. All of us suffer losses, all of us have to survive disappointment...all of us need help. When we daily grieve well or heal well, we project resentment or depression into our futures. Get the help you need to process sadness, anger, loss in the healthiest ways. And go forward.

Live the life God has for you.

- Freedom
- Joy (not mindless Pollyanna giddiness, but deep satisfaction and resolution with the added pleasure of noticing and exulting on the good and participating in it.)
- Peace
- Hope

Of course God uproots us all at times. Change is inevitable. But until he makes really clear the need of some major exodus, *this* is our life. The grass isn't greener on the other side of the fence, or on the other hill; and if it is, and we abandon our patch of earth to claim someone else's, green will likely turn brown.

Cultivate growth right here, where we live. Grow where you're planted.