

*In search of...*



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# Do I Really Need This?

Recently a friend of mine was recounting an exchange he heard between a father and a daughter at the mall. The young girl was asking her Dad if she could have a certain toy that was on the shelf. The father explained, "Honey, you already have one of those." To which the daughter replied, "I know, but I want another one."

After hearing this story it led me to think about the times when I want more than I truly need. As the economy worsens

and the threat of job loss and income reduction looms large for many of us, I have begun to reevaluate what I truly need in my life. How many physical things in my life do I depend on to define myself or make my life "fulfilling"? The Bible has much to say about what we truly need to be content in this life. But how do we become content? This question drove me as I searched the Scriptures to uncover the answer. As I discovered, I have much to learn.

## CHOOSE OUR ATTITUDES

According to the writer of Ecclesiastes three major components of contentment are to be joyful, to do good in our lives, and to enjoy life and work (Ecc. 3: 12 – 13; 8:15; 9:7-9). The writer explains that all of these things are gifts from God (2: 24; 3:13). Fortunately, it is within our control to choose how we are going to receive these gifts. We all experience challenging seasons in our lives which can make it difficult to appreciate these gifts from God. However, we must remind ourselves that we have the opportunity and ability to choose whether or not we are going to be joyful, to do good things, and to enjoy our lives. The writer tells us that this will lead us to the best life we can experience on earth.

## REALIGN OUR EXPECTATIONS

In 1 Timothy 6:6-8 Paul instructs young Timothy that if we have food and clothing we should be content with that. Living in the United States this almost seems unfathomable. Just food and clothing? What about shelter, electricity, indoor plumbing, the internet?

When we read the Gospels we can read about Jesus eating and we know He had clothes, but we don't read about any other possessions that Jesus had during His ministry. The Father provided

for the Son only what He needed to do the most important job ever to be done on Earth. The lifestyle that most in this country enjoy goes well beyond food and clothing, so adjusting the way we think about what we actually require to live is healthy, freeing, and continually challenging.

## DON'T LOVE MONEY

There is a connection between contentment and not desiring money. In Hebrews 13:5 the writer instructs his readers that their character should be free from the love of money and they should be content with what they have. He explains that this should be the case because God said He will never leave them and will be their helper (Heb. 13: 5- 6). In Ecclesiastes the writer explains that those who are not rich sleep well, while the wealth of their rich counterparts will not allow them to sleep (Ecc. 5:12-13). The desire to have money pushes our dependence on God to the back of our minds. The focus of our lives moves to our own strength, our own desires and out of proper alignment with God's will.

## FOCUS ON THE CORRECT THING

Paul instructed the Corinthian Christians to stay in the same life situation they found themselves when they became Christians (1 Cor. 7:20). He gives the example of

being a slave. Paul taught to not worry about being in slavery, but if one had the opportunity to be free they should (1 Cor. 7:21). This can sound a bit foreign to our twenty-first century American ears. As we know, a civil war was waged over this matter in the United States and we are still working with Civil Rights concerns today.

Certainly physical freedom is to be valued, however, Paul focused on the more important issue. He focused on one's spiritual freedom. Had Paul focused on his physical circumstances he may not have accomplished his mission of communicating spiritual freedom to the Gentiles. His life was far from comfortable after becoming a Christian and at times his physical freedom was taken from him when he was imprisoned. Yet because Paul did not lose focus of what was most important he was able to say, "I fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith..." (2 Tim. 4:7).

Paul taught that when given the opportunity to improve our lives we absolutely should take advantage of that blessing, but that is not to be our focus in life. When we remove the focus from being on this life it frees us to focus on serving God and that will ultimately bring us the fulfillment

we were striving for to begin with.

## LEARN OUR SOURCE OF STRENGTH

In Philippians 4: 11 – 13 Paul states that he knew how to deal with lean times and times of abundance. Paul says that he learned the secret of being content regardless of his physical circumstances. That secret is spelled out in famous verse 13 when he says, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Paul does not explain exactly how he learned this but one can conjecture that when faced with shipwrecks, snakebites, and contentious silversmiths Paul learned that strength comes from God and not from himself.

I don't know how the father responded to his daughter in the mall that day. However, I do know how he most likely felt. It never feels good to have someone you love ask you for something you have already provided to them. God gives us so much and I shudder to think about how many times I have returned to the well when God has already given me a waterfall.

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# Exiled to Babylon

W M H U A Z S N K J I S R V W Z D B J M  
S V W I Q I H G F L O Y Z O T W P Q J E  
D D C R H C J R A B E D N E G O K F K X  
N V P C Z L N M I Q Y P H U Z P J G A C  
B P Y R N I V J T P C T B K M T Z U Z E  
L K S Q U N I F H A N A N I A H C F U V  
D M C L U K B T F K G Z M S L K N O W B  
F Z X K W J W D U K U N E U U A E B M A  
A R J G U S Q W L V M D S L C F B J D O  
S L M T R Z E B T C V C H I E C U I F V  
H D A N I E L X W A G B A Z O C C M R F  
P C S D W J R M L C D N C B A L H E K Z  
E A H C J Z L A S M I S H A E L A J W G  
N J A Y Y A J H D Y C A E N S E D I H H  
A P D G E L U A H T E Z O J T K N I F V  
Z G R R M R V W W H G A U E U S E Y B E  
U E A A W T G Z R O W R C P C P Z M B K  
V C C E V A Y D A C Y I J K X A Z X H M  
Q E H X K P Z D G B S A B V T O A J N N  
I L R T X B E L T E S H A Z Z A R C K E  
H W V M B K G K H A P T M G U A V J A H

- The king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar
- His chief eunuch was named Ashpenaz
- Four youths of Israel were to be educated; they were Daniel,
- Hananiah,
- Mishael,
- and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. But they were renamed:
- Belteshazzar was what they called Daniel
- Shadrach was what they called Hananiah
- Meshach was what they called Mishael
- and Abednego was what they called Azariah
- Far from home, they remained Faithful to God