
Contentment

Learning to Live with Limits

Dear Ann Landers: I could identify with "Class of '73." I've worked for the same company for more than 30 years. I drive an 11- year-old car and have lived in the same house since 1970. I have three daughters who are in high school and college.

My daughters feel lucky to have grown up in the same house and to have the same friends they've known all their lives. One daughter worried when I bought a lottery ticket. She told her mother, "Wouldn't it be awful if Dad won? I like the way we live, and I'd hate it if we suddenly became rich." I stopped buying lottery tickets.

Our daughters are better educated than their parents. They do not smoke, drink or do drugs. They are good students and fine human beings. Take a look at the children of some of those fast track successes. Can the same be said of them?

Signed: Content in Maine (The Columbus Dispatch 9/26/91, p. 2E)

1. What do you think of this man's contentment? Consider his comparison of his children with the children of "some of those fast track successes." Do you think he has a point? How many people do you think would be willing to change places with him?

A Contented Lifestyle

2. Read I Thessalonians 4:11. How closely does this verse match the description of the letter to Ann Landers above?

3. Read I Thessalonians 4:11. How closely does this verse match the description of the letter to Ann Landers above?

4. Describe a lifestyle that would be the opposite of what is described in this verse.

A Contented Standard of Living

5. Read Luke 3:7-14. What was the issue behind this instruction by John the Baptist?

6. Consider the instruction in verse 14. What political/military situation was John referring to? (You may need to consult a commentary for this.)

7. If I have a job with low pay I should: (Choose one)

- Be content and not look for another job.
- Be content and look for a better job.
- Refuse to be happy until I find a better job.
- Give up and go on welfare because it pays the same for doing nothing.
- Other

8. Read Philippians 4:10-14. Is it possible to be content with humble means? Is it possible to be content in prosperity? How is contentment arrived at according to verse 11?

9. Which condition is more desirable: Contentment with humble means or contentment in prosperity? Which is more "spiritual?"

Once when Diogenes was sunning himself, Alexander the Great visited him and said, "Ask any favor you wish from me." Diogenes responded, "Please move out of the sunlight." To which Alexander said, "If I could not be Alexander, I would be Diogenes."

10. Read I Timothy 6:1-11. What does Paul mean in verse 6?

11. Does verse 8 forbid owning a car or a swimming pool or a boat?

12. What is the danger Paul has in mind verses 9 & 10.

Contentment in Life's Uncontrollable Circumstances

"Learning to stop pining for the ungiven and to give thanks for the given is a gateway to happiness." -Elizabeth Elliot

13. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. In what way does this passage reflect Paul's contentment with life's uncontrollable circumstances?

14. As far as we know, this "thorn in the flesh" (whatever it was) stayed with Paul the rest of his life. Did he succeed or fail because of it? What caused that result?

"To be upset over what you don't have is to waste what you do have." -Author unknown

15. Read Psalm 103:2. What is often forgotten in times of trial?

When we were children we were thankful to those who filled our stockings with all kinds of goodies. Why are we not also thankful to the One who fills our stockings with LEGS?

Applying

16. Is contentment a certain level of attainment or an attitude?

17. What should I do to be more content?

18. How should my lifestyle change to reflect the truths of these verses?