

Day 1 Obedient Contentment

One of my favorite snacks to this day is beef jerky. I remember an instance when I was going to a rodeo with my family in Texas and we stopped at a gas station. My dad and I went inside to get some snacks and drinks. My dad was ready to pay for the stuff when I spotted the beef jerky. I ran as quick as I could to grab it and he said no. I remember trying to use any form of persuasion I could to get the jerky to no avail. When finally got up to the register, I did one last ditch effort of simply placing the bag on the counter to get rung up. My dad quickly grabbed it and told me to go put it up. I obeyed, but was needless to say less than content. The cashier actually knew my dad from the past and they were small talking when I came back. My dad was telling them our plans and that there was this famous bull rider at the rodeo that we were going to. He just couldn't remember his name. He snapped, blinked, thought hard, and even resorted to stomping his foot in attempts to remember, but still no name game to mind. I simply shook my head and stayed silent. By this time the cashier had enough and told us to leave the store. Upon walking out the front door my dad looked me straight in the eye and said, I can't believe you couldn't remember that bull rider's name. I looked him square in the eyes and said his name is Tuff Hedeman. Directly after that statement, my dad asked me why I didn't tell him in the store. Upon which, I said why didn't you buy me some beef jerky. Unlike my story, the story we are going to look at today shows us what obedient contentment is.

Today, we are going to take a look at the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and see what we can learn.

Read Matthew 26:36-46

Do you always do what your parents ask you to do? Why or why not?

Why couldn't the disciples keep watch with Jesus? What was Jesus praying about?

Did Jesus really sweat drops of blood? Does this really matter?

Why do you think God allowed this passage to be in the Bible? Do you really think God would change his mind? Does God change His mind because of our prayers?



Day 2 Action Contentment

Mowing grass has been a way I made money at different times in my life. I cut a few lawns when I was young and then worked briefly for a college roommate who had a landscaping business. It doesn't bother me to cut grass. Some people can't stand it, but I actually kind of enjoy it. There is a sense of fulfillment that comes when you can see the results of your effort so quickly. I was taken aback a few days ago when my son said something very similar. One of the things my dad told me growing up is that no job is beneath you and that you need to always do your best. I have since attempted to instill this same philosophy into my boys. All of us are given the same amount of time in the day and it is up to us to decide how we spend it. When the day comes to a close, it is on us how we spent our day. We can't blame anyone else for what we did or didn't do. We are responsible for our actions and need to be content or settled in how we choose to spend them.

Today, we are going to look at the story of Mary and Martha to see what they have to show us about action contentment.

Read Luke 10:25-42

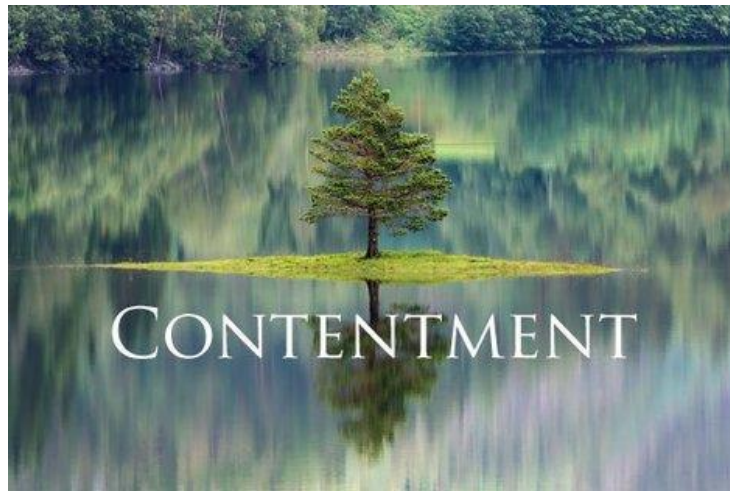
What do you fill your time up with?

Who did what pleases God in today's reading? Explain.

How do you know if what you are doing is pleasing to God? Explain.

Does spending time with God change us? Why was Martha troubled?

Are you more like Mary or Martha from the reading today? How can we become more like Mary?



Day 3 Possessional Contentment

It is amazing to me to think about how quickly we can grow envious of other people's things. This is something that has not changed over the years. It has just evolved from what it used to be. I mean when I was a little kid, the Toys-r-Us big book would come out before Christmas. It was basically a huge catalog showing all the toys that would be coming out. I remember going through them as a little kid with a marker circling the items I wanted. To this day I don't really get why my parents let/had me do this. I didn't ever get everything I circled in the catalog. I remember going over to my friend's houses and playing with some of the items I circled that they had received for Christmas. Don't get me wrong, my parents did spoil me way more than they had been when they were little, but we definitely were not keeping up with the "Jones." The time I felt it the most was when I was in middle school. The new Penny Hardaway Reebok Pumps came out and I wanted nothing more than to own these shoes. My parents decided that they were simply too expensive. I begged and pleaded to no avail. I remember walking into the locker room and my friend Todd opens his bag to show us all that his parents had purchased the pumps. I was beside myself jealous. He has what I wanted and felt like I needed in order to be happy and there was nothing I could do about it. I wish I could tell you that I was excited for Todd and his possession, but that wasn't the case. It is funny that so many years later, I can still remember those shoes.

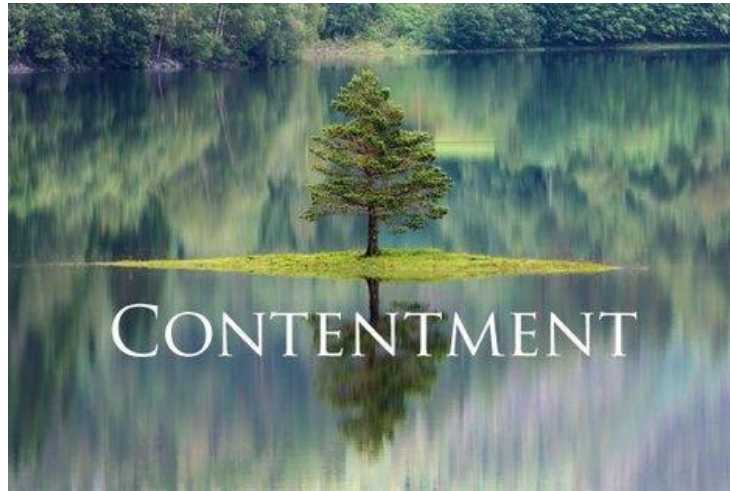
Today, we are going to look at the conclusion to the story of Jacob and Esau. This part of the story takes place years after Jacob cheated Esau out of his birthright and blessing. Let's take a look and see what we can learn.

Read Genesis 33

Why did Jacob parade his belongings before Esau?

What did Jacob hope to accomplish with the parade? How does Esau respond to seeing his brother?

How would you have responded if you were Esau? Do you respond to people who have mistreated you the way that Esau did? How can you become more like Esau?



Day 4 Godly Contentment

Throughout our lives, we will have a variety of people who pour into us. My neighbor, Grace, is a lady that poured directly into my life spiritually speaking. She was my Sunday School teacher and has a great love for God and helping people see Him more clearly. She encouraged me dramatically over the years and even to this day, I stop by and visit with her about life. She told me when I was about to graduate from high school that either my best friend, Jared or I were going to become a pastor. I remember kind of laughing at the prospect since I had already planned out my undergraduate program through medical school at the time. I remember thinking that I wanted more money that what being a pastor would supply. I can honestly say that God has above and beyond provided for my needs and the needs of my family. Grace is a person that still looks for the great inside the people she comes into contact with. She in a lot of ways helped me become much of the man I am today. 1 Timothy 6:6 is a verse that she brought to my attention so many years ago and so happens to be a part of today's reading. It says, godliness with contentment is great gain. I don't think I will ever be able to thank Grace adequately for the investment she has made in my life, but at least now more people can be affected by this little old lady who taught me Sunday school so many years ago.

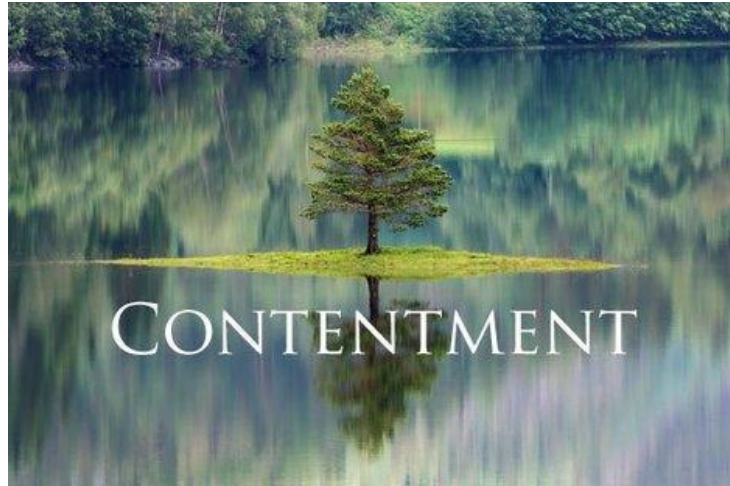
Today, we are going to look at some words from the Apostle Paul to Timothy. Let's take a look and see what we can learn for ourselves.

Read 1 Timothy 6:3-16

How do you know if someone is telling you the truth? Are you the type that fact checks the things you hear?

Are you the type of person that enjoys drama? Why or why not?

How much financial security do you hope to have? Are you more concerned with that than your relationship with God? Read Matthew 6:26-34. How does this apply to what we read today?



Day 5 Submissive Contentment

Pride comes before the fall. I have heard this quoted to me by many a coach in my lifetime. I am sure you probably have as well if you have been a part of any type of winning team. The interesting thing is that it actually comes from the Bible. Proverbs 16:18 says, Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. When we begin to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, we can rest assured that a dose of reality will be coming our way. I think that is why I have so much respect for people who excel at things are still able to maintain a sense of humility. God desires that we have a right outlook on ourselves and surrender our all to Him. When we fully surrender, we find that we can accomplish more than when we try to do things in our own accord. The Apostle Paul knew this truth full well.

Today, we are going to look at what we know as the thorn in the flesh scripture. We don't ever get clarity on what exactly it is, but we can sure learn some deeper truths from this text. Let's take a look and see what we can learn from it.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

How thankful are you for the things you have?

How would you handle it when traumatic things happen? What about if you lost the ability to see, walk, or hear?

How many times do you pray for things? Do you pray until you forget or until you feel that it has been answered?

What are you going to do this week as an action step based off of what you learned through these devotionals? I want you to be prepared to share it with the group during our discussion time.