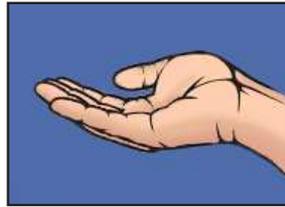




We Were Content and Generous?

The multimillionaire, John D. Rockefeller, was once asked, "How much money is enough?" He answered honestly, "Just a little bit more." We have to be careful that we don't live in a mindset of discontentment, always wanting more than we have. When we fully trust that our good God will give us exactly what we need at just the right time, we'll be free-free to quit chasing after the next thing and free to be generous to others.



Day #1: Just Right

You probably remember the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. When the curly-haired girl tried Baby Bear's bed, why did she like it so much? (It was just right!) Do you trust that God knows what is "just right" for you?



(Lord,) Don't make me either poor or rich, but give me only the bread I need each day. If you don't, I might have too much. Then I might say I don't know you. I might say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I might become poor and steal. Then I would bring shame to the name of my God. - Proverbs 30:8b-9

The Psalmist asked for God to give him just the right amount of money—whatever amount God determined. We understand him asking not to be poor. If the Psalmist didn't have enough money to buy food, he might be so desperate that he would steal, and that would be breaking one of God's commandments. So of course he didn't want that. But praying not to be rich might seem a little strange to us.

But the writer was also wise enough to know that if he had too much money, he might just think that he didn't need God anymore. If he could go out and buy anything he wanted, he might not bother to spend time with God every day. This would be a terrible shame! God is much more than a giver of "stuff." He shows us how to live the fullest life. He keeps us from danger and guides us into joy. He is wise enough to orchestrate our experiences so that we become more like Jesus. Our relationship with Him is eternal life (John 17:3).



Praying for not too little and not too much is a wonderful prayer of contentment. It shows God that you trust Him to decide what you should have. Can you pray this prayer earnestly right now?

Day #2: Contentment Rules

In the book, *Calm My Anxious Heart* by Linda Dillow, we find the story of a woman named Ella who left the comforts

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of her own country to move to a very poor part of Africa. She moved there so she could tell the people there about Jesus. Life in Africa was very different from her old way of life.

In her new home, there was no electricity. That means there were no refrigerators, no fans, no computers or TVs. And maybe most challenging of all, there was no air conditioning. Some days were so hot that the thermometer couldn't even register it, because the thermometer only went as high as 120°. That's incredibly hot! Can you imagine trying to sleep in heat like that with no hope of cooling off?

Yet, through all the hardships, Ella was known for her good attitude and her contentment. Years later, Ella's daughter found something wonderful in Ella's diary. She had kept a list of rules for being content:

1. Never allow yourself to complain about anything—not even the weather.
2. Never picture yourself in any other circumstances or someplace else.
3. Never compare your lot (your life) with another's.
4. Never allow yourself to wish *this* or *that* had been otherwise (different).
5. Never dwell on (think about) tomorrow—remember that tomorrow is God's, not ours.

Ella lived in Africa for 52 years. Rule #5 shows us that she trusted God. She knew the same secrets that Paul did. God uses everything—even long days and blazing heat—for our good, and He wants to make us more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29). And when a difficult situation seems like too much for us to handle, Jesus will give us the power and strength to thrive.



I can do everything by the power of Christ. He gives me strength. - Philippians 4:13



Read through Ella's list again. Is there any rule you would add? Try living these out this week and see how much your peace will increase!

Day #3: Tailor-Made

Look at the tag in the back of your shirt. (You may need a mirror to see it!) Shirt tags have sizes, don't they? Have you ever seen a tag that says "One Size Fits All"? It probably wasn't on a shirt. It might have been on an adjustable ball cap, or on an apron with loose strings long enough to fit anyone. But, one-size does not fit all in God's plan for us.

Comparison is the enemy of contentment! If you compare what you have to what someone else has, it is bound to make you discontent (and it might just make you miserable). The funny thing is, we usually compare

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ourselves with people who have *more* than us and it makes us feel cheated. We rarely compare ourselves with people who have *less* than us and think how blessed we are.

The truth is, there is not a one-size-fits-all plan for our lives! God knows what we should and should not have. God's ways are so much better than our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). We are usually interested in having an "easy" life. But God is interested in giving us a "godly" life (1 Timothy 6:6).



For God knew his people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. - Romans 8:29

God knows you better than anyone else knows you; He even knows you better than you know yourself. He knows what's in your future and He knows what areas you need to grow in. He is wise enough to line up all of your experiences so that you become more like Jesus (Romans 8:29). For example, Jesus is compassionate; His heart aches for people who are suffering. So, God may allow you to have a hardship that will help you to understand how other people feel when they suffer.

If you are without something that you want or feel like you need, it's not because God can't give it to you. He has no shortage of supplies; He owns everything (Psalm 50:12). So it must be that He knows some good will come out of you having not having it, or not having it yet (Romans 8:28). Will you trust God in this?



Is there something that you have been bitter about not having, or a situation you don't like being in? Instead of being discontent, thank God for it (Philippians 4:6). Ask God to use the discomfort to make you more like Jesus!

Day #4: For Him

When the Philippians sent gifts to Paul, who were they really for? Paul said, "They are a sweet-smelling offering. They are a gift that God accepts. He is pleased with it." (Philippians 4:18b)

The Philippians may have thought, "We didn't send those to God, we send them to Paul!" But there's an amazing truth in the Bible. Jesus told this parable about Himself:



"Then the King will speak to those on his right. He will say, 'My Father has blessed you. Come and take what is yours. It is the kingdom prepared for you since the world was created. I was hungry. And you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. And you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. And you invited me in. I needed clothes. And you gave them to me. I was sick. And you took care of me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me.'

"Then the people who have done what is right will answer him. 'Lord,' they will ask, 'when did we see you hungry and feed you? When did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you as a stranger

Day #4 continued:

and invite you in? When did we see you needing clothes and give them to you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

"The King will reply, 'What I'm about to tell you is true. Anything you did for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.' - Matthew 25:35-40

The Lord cares so deeply for His believers that to show kindness to them is the same as showing kindness to Him.



What can you give to someone in need? Maybe you could give your extra winter coat to a clothing drive. Maybe a widow neighbor would love a short visit. Make a plan to do something before the week is over. Remember that you are really giving to the Lord!

Day #5: God's Math

Do this word problem: Johnny has 6 apples. He gives away 5 to his neighbors who are hungry. What does Johnny have left? You probably guessed 1 apple. But God's equation is a little different! Read this passage, then we'll come back to Generous Johnny.



Here is something to remember. The one who plants only a little will gather only a little. And the one who plants a lot will gather a lot. You should each give what you have decided in your heart to give. You shouldn't give if you don't want to. You shouldn't give because you are forced to. God loves a cheerful giver.

And God is able to shower all kinds of blessings on you. In all things and at all times you will have everything you need. You will do more and more good works. It is written, "They have spread their gifts around to poor people. Their good works continue forever."

God supplies seed to the planter. He supplies bread for food. God will also supply and increase the amount of your seed. He will increase the results of your good works. You will be made rich in every way. Then you can always give freely. We will take your many gifts to the people who need them. And they will give thanks to God. - 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

God promises that when we give to others, we'll end up with more than we started with. Johnny might be left with only one apple, but there's no telling what God will add. He may bless Johnny with another neighbor who has a feast to share with him. Or God can give Johnny a strong body that can work hard, or He can make sure the tires on Johnny's truck don't wear out, or He might just make sure that Johnny's apple tree is bursting with fruit next season.

You see, you can't out-give God. Just try! When we give to God, He will give back blessings that we can't even imagine (Malachi 3:10).



Do you want God to bless you a little or a lot? Ask God to give you a heart like His. Jesus gave His very life for us. He is the most gracious giver of all!