

## The Art of Contentment

The art of living a contented life doesn't come naturally to us; it is a learned attitude, not something we are born with. We always want what we don't have or what somebody else has. Contentment is something we learn as we grow. Paul told us, **Philippians 4:11-12**: *"Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need."* Note the key phrase, *"I have learned to be content."* Paul didn't enter the world with a huge reserve of contentment. He learned contentment through experience, including both comfort and hardship, and by honestly evaluating the value of wealth against the value of his connection with Christ, all under the continual influence of God's Spirit in his life. Fast-forward to today. We see, hear, or read about it daily. This rampant addiction to money and reports of accelerating societal inequality. Amid a culture rushing toward dependence on wealth, position, possessions, and covetousness, it's rare to find anyone truly satisfied and content with all the circumstances of their life. Satan loves to influence and deceive believers about the cost of following Christ. This lust for wealth and other vices will accelerate markedly in the last days, a time we are living in now. The Bible teaches us to distance ourselves from the craving for this materialistic lifestyle and to cultivate a simple biblical attitude: contentment. **Hebrews 13:5**: *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"* **Ecclesiastes 5:10**: *"Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless."* The Ten Commandments end with the prohibition against covetousness, the desire to possess someone else's wealth or possessions. "Thou shalt not covet." Covetousness is subtle because it's a condition that exists in our minds, an invisible internal turmoil that no one ever sees. On the outside, behavior appears normal, but inside, one lives a life of distress, craving, and being consumed by the desire to have what someone else has, which, if left unchecked, will eventually manifest externally. The Bible never says that being rich is a sin. Scripture offers many examples of God blessing His servants and children with tremendous material wealth. **1 Timothy 6:17** instructs the wealthy: *"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."* The difference lies in the heart. Both greed and contentment are states of the heart. Jesus said in **Luke 12:34**, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* When we choose to be content with the riches of our Lord Jesus Christ rather than pursue material wealth, our lives will be more in line with God's desire for us. **1 Timothy 6:6** says, *"But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment."*