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DEALING WITH DISCONTENTMENT

(Jerry Bridges is on staff with The Navigators' collegiate ministry and has been publishing books (brilliant books) for several decades. I want to share some insights from his book, Respectable Sins, which considers the sins that we Christians tolerate and excuse but which are destructive to our loved ones and to our relationship with God. He identifies these common sins as:

Ungodliness (living as if God doesn't exist); Anxiety and Frustration; Discontentment; Unthankfulness; Pride; Selfishness; Lack of Self-Control; Anger; Judgmentalism; Envy and Jealousy; Sins of the Tongue; and Worldliness. Quite an ugly list. His insights about discontentment spoke to me, and convicted me, so I am going to jump into that subject:)

"Anxiety is a fearful uncertainty over the future, whether short-term (as in my plane trips) or long-term, as from a job loss. Frustration is usually the result of some immediate event that has blocked my plans or desires, such as a road blocked by an accident. Discontentment, the subject of this chapter, most often arises from ongoing and unchanging circumstances that we can do nothing about.

The most frequent warnings in Scripture against discontentment concern money and possessions, but in this chapter I want to address a more common form of discontentment among committed Christians, an attitude that may be triggered by unchanging circumstances that are trials to our faith.

Here are some examples of such unchanging circumstances:

- An unfulfilling or low-paying job
- Singleness well into midlife or beyond
- Inability to bear children
- Physical disabilities of our own or our loved ones
- Continual poor health
- There are certainly many other painful circumstances I haven't included in this list

In addition to the really painful circumstances of life, the cause of our discontentment may even be trivial at times. For instance, having to deal with administrative details is a burden to me and tempts me to be discontent.

It's not that I am unacquainted with some of those more difficult areas. I was almost thirty-four when I got married, so I know something of the loneliness of single adult life. Then in June of 1987 we discovered that there was a malignant tumor growing in my wife's abdomen. After it was removed, we learned that it had metastasized into her lymph system and after 17 months

of suffering she died. And then there are physical disabilities. All my life I have had both a visual and a hearing disability, neither of which is treatable. I remember the feeling of rejection as I was growing up when I could not play sports because of my visual disability.

I don't intend that last paragraph to sound like a pity party as I recognize that the circumstances I deal with are minor compared to what many believers experience. But I want you to know that if you struggle with discontentment, I'm right there with you. The truth is, it is our response to our circumstances rather than the degree of difficulty that determines whether or not we are discontent.

Whatever situation tempts us to be discontent, and however severe it may be, we need to recognize that discontentment is sin. That statement may surprise you. We are so used to responding to difficult circumstances with anxiety, frustration and discontentment that we consider them to be normal and acceptable. They are not according to God's Word. By these attitudes we are questioning God's goodness, His faithfulness, and His promises. When we act in such ways, we fail to recognize that we are responding no differently from unbelievers who never factor God into their situations. We believers tolerate these sins with hardly a second thought. That can open the doors to resentment or bitterness toward God or other people.

The second purpose of this book is to suggest means of dealing with these sins. For me, appropriate passages of Scripture are my first line of attack. Psalm 139:16 helps me with frustration:

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

"Days ordained for me" refers not only to the length of my life but to all the events and circumstances of each day of my life. This is a tremendously encouraging and comforting thought. So when something happens that tends to frustrate me, I quote this Psalm to myself and say to God: "This circumstance is part of your plan for my life today. Help me to respond in faith and in a way that honors You and Your providential will. And please give me wisdom to know how to address this situation."

You can see that I am depending on God's Word and on the Holy Spirit through prayer to enable me to respond in a godly manner.

It is also helpful to ask God if there is something I need to learn or be attentive to. Remember and acknowledge that there are no events in our lives that do not ultimately come to us from the invisible hand of God, and: *All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.* (Acts

8:28) God's purpose, however mysterious and inscrutable they may be to us, are always for His glory and our ultimate good.

For those of us who face physical disabilities or even physical appearance issues, Psalm 139:13 can help us: *You formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*

God directed the DNA that determines our physical makeup. That is an incredible thought! You and I are who we are physically (and largely mentally and emotionally) because that is the way God made us. And He made us this way because that is how we can best fulfill His plan for our lives. For some with severe disabilities, that plan may seem meaningless. But when we learn to accept our disabilities as part of His plan, then we believe that He can use them for His glory and for our ultimate good.

Let me repeat that anxiety and frustration and discontentment are sins. They are not to be taken lightly as if they are trivial and irrelevant. They can lead to a train wreck of our faith! Can you picture Jesus ever being anxious or frustrated or discontented?

A recurring theme running through this book is the importance of a firm belief in the sovereignty, wisdom, and goodness of God in all the circumstances of our lives. Only by believing in these truths can we respond to all the trials that come into our lives in a God-pleasing way. We must do this by faith; that is, we must believe that the Bible's teaching about these attributes really is true and that God has brought or allowed these difficult circumstances in our lives for His glory and our ultimate good. I pray that these principles will be helpful to you."

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WHAT IS GOD'S NAME?

Bobby Schuler explained something in a recent sermon that I had never thought about but once he said it I had one of those "Aha" moments because it was so obviously true. He said that "God" is not God's name but His office, His title.

Pastor Kirk and Pastor Cory are the co-pastors of our local church (and we are doubly blessed to have them), but "Pastor" is not their name but their office.

When God appeared to Moses in a burning bush, Moses asked Him, "Tell me your name." God answered, "I Am" is my name, which loosely translates as "Yahweh." God has many names in the Bible because each name identifies some facet of His character.

Yahweh is God's "covenant" name, the name used when God was making or displaying His covenant relationship with His chosen people. There are seven compound names of God in the Old Testament connected to Yahweh: some of them are Yahweh-Raah (God our Shepherd); Yahweh-Shalom (God our Peace); Yahweh-Tsidkenu (God our Righteousness); etc. The first is found in Genesis 22 when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. At the last moment, God substituted a ram in place of Isaac, and Abraham named that place Yahweh-Yireh, or Jehovah-Jirah, which means "God our Provider." The New Testament reveals

that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is Yahweh-Yireh. Jesus was the "ram" or the "lamb" that was sacrificed. Yahweh-Raah is "God our Shepherd" from the 23rd Psalm. Jesus fulfills that name for He is our Shepherd, as stated in John 10:11. Jesus is also Yahweh-Tsidkenu, our righteousness, and so on for all seven compound names. Jesus is Yahweh.

The 3rd Commandment states: "*You shall not take God's name in vain.*" (Exod. 20:7) Bobby explained that we usually think that using God's name followed by a damn is breaking this commandment. While it is certainly sinful and abominable for people to curse in that way, that is not really what the 3rd Commandment means. Examples of taking God's name in vain are:

- a. The Crusades - the time when armies went out from Europe to reclaim Jerusalem from Muslim rule. Those armies rampaged through Asia, murdering Jews and Muslims, burning down Synagogues and Mosques, while singing Christian songs and carrying big crosses.
- b. The Inquisition - when multitudes of people were tortured and murdered - in Christ's name - to force them to confess their sins.
- c. The Civil War - when Christian churches in the south "proved" that slavery was God's will and supported a war for disunion. It is to be noted that none of those Christians in the south volunteered themselves or their families to go into slavery. Slavery is God's will - only for other people.
- d. Nazi Germany - the great majority of churches supported Hitler even when his pogrom against the Jews became known.
- e. In what ways have you and I taken God's name in vain by our words or actions or choices?

DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?

That question is almost irrelevant because "God" means so many different things to different people. The question is, Do you believe in Jesus Christ? and is He the Lord or your life? Jesus is Yahweh. That is God's covenant name. Are you in a covenant with Him? If you don't believe in Jesus Christ, then you don't believe in the God of the Bible. Jesus said to the Jews in John 8:42 - *If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God.*

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THE EXTREME PERSPECTIVE OF THE BIBLE REGARDING:

a. THE BIBLE

The Bible's perspective of the writings in the Bible is extreme. It claims to be the very words of God, the Creator. It acknowledges that there were human authors of the Bible (prophets, priests, kings, disciples), but claims that God "breathed" through those men so that the words in the Bible are both human and divine. More than 2,000 times the authors of the Bible said: "Thus saith the Lord," or "God said," or "and God spoke," etc. That is extreme, isn't it? What do you believe about the Bible?

b. THE WORLD, MANKIND

The Bible's perspective of the world, or mankind, is extreme. The Bible says that the world, mankind, is evil and that this present time is also evil.. The Bible says that we (mankind) are dead to God; that we live in utter darkness and sin; that we are without hope.

We are like an unclean thing, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6) *This present evil age.* (Gal. 1:4) *If you, then, being evil..* (Luke 11:13) *We were dead in trespasses.* (Eph. 2:4) This is the dominion of darkness. (Col. 1:13) *You are enemies of God in your minds.* (Col. 1:21) *(God) turned against them as an enemy.* (Isa. 63:10) *The Gentiles walk in futility.* (Eph. 4:21) *The darkness of this age.* (Eph. 6:12) *The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.* (1 John 5:19) *Having no hope and without God in the world.* (Eph. 2:12) And so forth, for hundreds of verses.

The picture of mankind and of life on earth in the Bible is extreme.

c. THE GOD OF LOVE

The Bible's perspective on God is extreme. He is revealed as righteous and holy but above all as a God of love. *For God so loved the world that He gave.....*(John 3:16) God is not sitting passively in heaven, unconcerned about you and me, aloof, above it all. He is intimately involved with us, passionate, tearful. He is like a husband betrayed by an unfaithful wife (Hosea); like a Shepherd going in search of a lost sheep; like a Father waiting and yearning for His prodigal son.

The picture of God in the Bible is extreme.

d. JESUS CHRIST: GOD'S SOLUTION FOR OUR HOPELESS CONDITION

God's solution for our predicament is extreme: He sent His Son to die for our sins. *He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) Just as the Bible, God's written Word, is both human and divine, Jesus Christ, God's living Word, is both human (born of a woman) and divine (a Seed planted by the Holy Spirit). All of the Bible is about Jesus Christ. The 39 books of the Old Testament prophesy about the coming of the Messiah, the Christ. The four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell about His arrival, his life, ministry, death and resurrection. The book of Acts tells about the early history of the church as the Good News spreads around the world. The 20 epistles of John, Paul, Peter, James and Jude tell us how we are to live as disciples of Yahweh, Jesus the Christ. The book of Revelation tells about the summing up of all history.

e. YOU AND I

Our response to Jesus Christ must also be extreme. God created each of us with a purpose in mind. We can only find and fulfill that purpose as we believe in Jesus Christ (seek Him; obey Him; follow Him where He leads; love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.) Anything less than this kind of extreme commitment to Jesus leads to futility and emptiness in this life and eternal loss in the next life. That is extreme.

If you can't make up your mind whether to get extreme with Jesus and think you are on the fence, you

are mistaken. There isn't any fence. Jesus said that: *Anyone who isn't with Me is against Me.* (Matthew 12:30)

If you resist obeying God and surrendering your life to Jesus Christ, then God considers you His enemy. Consider these somber words from John 3:18 - *Anyone who does not believe in Him (Jesus) has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son.*

PEPE'S FIRST EVANGELISTIC CAMPAIGN

(From my Ancient Files. Jose' (Pepe) Quiroz is a well known evangelist in the Mexico City area. Lynne and Fred and I worked with Pepe and his son, Israel, for more than 25 years. They and their families have become like personal family to us.)

When Pepe was in his 20's and had just finished classes at a Bible School, he went to Renosa, across the border from McAllen, Texas, to hold his first evangelistic service. He invited all of the area pastors to meet him at his motel so that he could introduce himself and ask for their prayers and cooperation. The pastor of the biggest church in town looked at Pepe and said, "Quien es?", "Who are you?" and walked out, with all of the other pastors following.

Pepe rented a dining room connected to a bar, hired some Mariachi singers to draw a crowd, distributed flyers for a 3-night campaign, prayed and waited. The first night a fair group turned up to hear the Mariachis, then when Pepe got up to preach they all walked out. The second night the same thing happened. The final night the same thing, except that several bar-girls came in on their break and sat around, scantily dressed, and ignored Pepe as he was preaching. (Pepe said he was praying, "Oh, Lord, don't let me be tempted!) But finally one girl slid down to her knees and big tears started falling from her face. Pepe led her to Christ. Her name was Yolanda. And that was it.

Twenty years later, Pepe and his preacher father, Maximo, attended a conference in McAllen. The conference people announced on the radio the names of all the preachers attending the conference during the day and said they would be free in the evenings if some church wanted any of them. One church called and asked for Pepe to come on Saturday night. He and his father found the church and there was a big sign that said, "Welcome home, Papa!" Pepe assumed that it must be Father's Day in the U.S.

Then a woman came up, threw her arms around Pepe's neck, started crying and kissing his cheeks and saying, "Oh, Papa!" Pepe's father, Maximo, said, "Pepe, who was that?" Pepe said, "I don't know, Dad." Then a big guy with tattoos came up and hugged him and cried and said, "Welcome home, Papa!" Maximo said, "Pepe, who is that guy?" Pepe said, "I don't know, Dad." Then the lady came back and identified herself. She was Yolanda, and she was the pastor of that church! Yolanda and her husband cried, Pepe and his father cried, and everybody cried.

Which says that what may appear to us to be a total

failure may not be a failure in the accounting books of heaven. Our heavenly Father said that His Word would not return to Him void, so we can put our little efforts to serve Him into His hands and wait with patience and faith for our report card.

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THE BRILLIANT LOGIC OF EVOLUTION

The scientific evidence that the universe did not always exist but had a beginning seems to be indisputable. Therefore, various theories about how it began have been promulgated. The generally accepted theory, "The Big Bang," goes something like this:

In the beginning there was nothing. Then it exploded, casting immeasurable quantities of stuff out into an ever-expanding universe. This huge explosion resulted eventually in the formation of stars, planets, and galaxies which follow complex natural laws. That original vast explosion, which started smaller than the head of a pin, precipitated the majestic and beautiful universe that we have today.

The way that happened was that over a period of time, matter spontaneously formed itself into increasingly complex forms! Such a strange phenomenon has never been seen by human eyes, but that must have been the way it happened.

One day lightning struck some goo in the ocean and life spontaneously happened! Although no one has ever seen such a thing happen or been able to replicate the process, it must have happened that way as every intellectual and above average person must acknowledge. Then followed a period of many days and weeks when amoeba became frogs, became dogs, became dinosaurs, became birds, became apes, became men! All of this "just happened" by fortuitous accident.

Since man is alone in the universe, except for many other folks on distant planets whom we are even now trying to reach by cell phone, and since all of us are merely the result of the impersonal laws of nature, there is no meaning or purpose to existence, there is no God, there is no right or wrong, no good or evil, and nothing beyond this physical life. All kids must be rescued from the bigoted rubes who deny these incontrovertible facts and indoctrinated with these liberating truths.

Anyone who won't bow down and acknowledge this brilliant theory is to be cast into a furnace of public scorn and ridicule and dismissed from their teaching job.

Another possibility: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

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QUIZ: WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LIFE?

Although our state religion, humanism, denies that there is any transcendent purpose to life, something deep in the human heart knows differently. John Eldredge says that, "On our journey of discovery, first, we discern that our lives are not a random series of events, but they tell a Story that has meaning.....we are

in a Sacred Romance. There really is something wonderful that draws our heart, we are being wooed. God created us for himself and now he is moving heaven and earth to restore us to his side. His wooing seems wild because he seeks to free our hearts from the attachments and addictions we have chosen.

John Maxwell told about taking their one and a half year old granddaughter Avis to the zoo. He said it is a small zoo and he was totally blase' about seeing the monkeys and lions and bears. But when Avis saw them for the first time her eyes got big and she started clapping her hands and saying, "Ooooh! Ooooh!", and John got tears in his eyes as he saw afresh the miracle of those unique animals.

Remember when your heart was awakened to the reality of God? Following that awakening in my life, I can remember arising early on a winter morning and going quietly into our kitchen, and as the wonder of knowing God and seeing the world through new eyes struck me, I fell onto the cold linoleum on my knees and tears flowed down my face in a stream.

Our Lord does indeed have a purpose for each of our lives. That purpose is only discovered as we discover Him. He is not a tame little god. He is beautiful and awesome and wild. He is the Pearl of Great Price, for which a man should be willing to sell everything he has in order to possess that Pearl.

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RECOMMENDED

A video accessed via You Tube: "Kyle Searcy: 25 Year Old Shares Testimony of Heaven and Hell." Wow.

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Videos by Pastor Dana Coverstone. These are prophetic dreams or visions regarding God's judgment on our nation. These are not for the faint of heart.

In Dana's latest prophecy, he heard God say:

1. The church must have backbone; courage.
2. Corruption in the church will be exposed.
3. There will be a Great Harvest of souls!

Then he saw the church coming together to pray mightily regarding things that will happen starting during the month of September. Dear friends, we must all come together and pray for our nation.

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MEMORY VERSES

In a recent morning devotional time, the following verses really spoke to me. I believe they might be important for all of us to memorize and deeply reflect on in the coming days:

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Rev. 2:10)

Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17)

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.
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