

## Contentment from the Proverbs

He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.

— Epictetus

The following three categories of contentment (1. Life in general, 2. Finances, and 3. Marriage) evidenced in Proverbs will be applied through the use of story, dialogue, and practical advice. Three groups will be given a set of proverbs that deal with their specific category and a situational story. They will use the proverbs and related NT passages to evaluate and advice those in the story on what choices need to be made. The advice should be Biblically consistent and have in mind that Proverbs 1:7 “Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Serves as the basis for our discussion.

### Proverbs 1:20-33

20 Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares;

21 at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:

22 "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?

23 If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.

24 But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand,

25 since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke,

26 I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you-

27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you.

28 "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me.

29 Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD,

30 since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke,

31 they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

33 but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

## “At His Wits End”

Rick, a bright charismatic 29 year old, graduated from DTS four years ago at the top of his class. He could parse Greek like nobody's business and wow his preaching profs with exegesis and eloquence. Everyone knew he was destined for greatness. When he graduated, he had plans to pastor a church. "I'd probably settle for a 500 person congregation," he used to quip. He went through the normal channels, but nothing seemed to fall into place. So, he decided to get a secular job to pay the bills. After several years of selling copy machines, hope that he would find a pastoral position faded and made way to depression. The days of living in Lincoln Hall with constant companionship were gone and in its place were an efficiency and few friends. Several months back he stopped going to church because he had to take a second job in order to pay the bills. Rick now has begun to question his faith and wonders if the last eight years were a waist of time. "It's like God played a huge joke on me. I hoped to serve Him in ministry and I got stuck with \$20,000 in school loans," he thought. Rick's emotions have turned from passion for ministry to anger and resentment. To top it off, the partying non-Christian 20-somethings that live in his building seem happier than he does.

What advice would you give Rick? Use the following proverbs and NT passages and come up with a plan to restore contentment back into Rick's life. Feel free to use personal stories of how others overcame life's trials.

14:30        A tranquil heart is life to the body, But passion is rottenness to the bones.

19:23        The fear of the LORD *leads* to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

17:22        A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

23:17,18    Do not let your heart envy sinners, But *live* in the fear of the LORD always. Surely there is a future, And your hope will not be cut off.

New Testament – Matthew 5:12; Romans 5:1-11; **Phil 4:10-14**; Heb 12:1-3; James 1:2-4

## “Caught in the Middle”

Allison grew up dirt poor. She wore hand-me-downs as a child and a that’s-so-70s dress to prom. Yet, she was happy. She served in the children’s ministry and that became her passion. She poured countless hours into puppet shows and VBS crafts.

When she finished high school, she was determined to graduate from college at the top of her class and become filthy rich so that she could help her parents (and herself) have a better life. And she did just that. She was 23, owned her own interior design company, and was well on her way to becoming a millionaire before she turned 25. As a model Christian, she tithed at church, gave to charity, and helped her family pay the bills. Yet, after several years, she became so obsessed with money that she began to work 7 days a week, stopped going to church, and didn’t have time for her family.

Although she worked 80-90 hours a week, she still made time for “friends.” She threw the best parties and became the envy of everyone who knew her. After long days of work and social events, she would return to an empty house. She would often lie awake at night wondering if there wasn’t something more. She missed her family, church, and spiritual life. “Where had the joy gone?” she frequently thought.

In August 2006, she landed a mind-blowing contract with a local hotel that ironically turned out to be her financial demise. Because of several awful decisions, the hotel refused to pay for her services and in turn sued her. She lost the suit. With little money, she was forced to file for bankruptcy. Her friends had no use for her now that she wasn’t throwing lavish parties. “Like, oh my gosh, she’s so yesterday!” they would say over cob salads and sushi.

She ended up moving back home with her parents wondering how life turned out this way.

What advice would you give her? How do you find contentment? Use the following proverbs and NT passages and come up with a plan to restore contentment back into the life of Allison. Feel free to use personal stories of how others overcame life’s trials.

### Proverbs

- 12:14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth: and the recompence of a man’s hands shall be rendered unto him.
- 16:8-9 Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice. The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.
- 17:1 Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of feasting with strife.
- 23:4-5 Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration *of it*. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens.
- 25:16 Have you found honey? Eat *only* what you need, That you not have it in excess and vomit it.

New Testament - Matt 6:19-34; Luke 12:15, 12:33-34; **1 Tim 6:7-11**; Heb 13:5.

## **“Controlled Abandonment”**

Woo.. yay! The crowd screamed as the limo whisked away the newly wedded couple, George and Stephanie. They were destined for a lifetime of wedding bliss. Yet, ironically, as the years passed and their family grew in number, so did their problems. It did not take long for the honeymoon experience to fully wear off.

George worked as a software engineer and earned a six-figure salary. He worked late and sometimes on Saturdays. His Sundays were spent teaching Sunday school and running the sound board. He had little time for family activities. Stephanie managed the home and took care of the kids. Life as a mother was not all she had envisioned. Adult conversation had made way to diapers and pooh pooh. Conversations with her husband centered around the kids and money. Their most intimate moments were only a memory of what life was before kids. Because of her feelings of isolation at home and lack of adult interaction, Stephanie spent her afternoons in the mall. She felt abandoned. So, she sought contentment with her credit card. At first, she thought a new pretty black dress might bring back the luster in her marriage. Yet, as the months went on, she only found solitude in things. Hence, she went on a shopping spree. Due to his wife’s overspending, George began to obsessively monitor the credit cards and debit card online. They began to fight about money, which further isolated Stephanie and invigorated George’s controlling spirit. In response to his dictatorial nature, Stephanie put the kids in day care, opened her own checking account, and started working. Their marriage was turning into a roommate situation. Consequently, George began to work more hours and began entertaining the idea of an affair. He knew that it would be wrong, but he began to convince himself that it was ok to have friends that just happened to be female. They both wished things were different, but resentment got in the way of reconciliation.

What advice would you give George and Stephanie? Use the following proverbs and NT passages and come up with a plan to restore contentment back into their marriage. Feel free to use personal stories of how others overcame life’s trials.

5:18-20 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. *As* a loving doe and a graceful deer, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love. For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner?

6:23-35 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the wife of another, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; for a prostitute’s fee is only a loaf of bread, but the wife of another stalks a man’s very life. Can fire be carried in the bosom without burning one’s clothes? Or can one walk on hot coals without scorching the feet? So is he who sleeps with his neighbor’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished. Thieves are not despised who steal only to satisfy their appetite when they are hungry. Yet if they are caught, they will pay sevenfold; they will forfeit all the goods of their house. But he who commits adultery has no sense; he who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. For jealousy arouses a husband’s fury, and he shows no restraint when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation, and refuses a bribe no matter how great.

New Testament – 1 Cor 7:1-6; Eph 5:22-33; Heb 13:4