

A  
**MESSAGE OF HOPE,**  
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

**“Finding Contentment” by Kyle Murphy**

I've been wanting to get this newsletter out to you all for a few weeks now but have been at somewhat of a loss as to what to share. I have felt the Lord speaking to me the word “contentment” over and over these last several weeks but wasn't sure if it was a word to share or for me. Sometimes, I believe God gives me a word that is just for me. It is possible maybe He wants to teach me something, or to help me understand something that I am struggling with from my past or in my present, or maybe He is preparing me for something that is coming in the future – whether it be a storm or an opportunity. Other times, I believe God gives me a word to share.

I have sat down several times with a plan to write about contentment but I haven't felt at peace with what I wanted to share. This is rather common to me. Sharing my thoughts in a conversation is one thing – it allows for a back and forth. But in this venue, when the conversation is one-sided, I am much more reluctant to share my personal words or thoughts on a subject. If/when it is clear to me that it is God who is speaking then, by all means, I am willing to be the conduit through which He speaks, but I don't want it to be simply my words and my message. As I've been working through this time of contemplation and meditation – a co-worker gave me a book called “I Heard God Laugh” by Matthew Kelly. The book emphasizes the importance of prayer and having daily time with God in prayer. [I will enclose a simple method he teaches called The Prayer Process which is supposed to help those who maybe don't fully know how to pray or where to start.] The author also discusses how we can find contentment and peace through fostering a closer relationship with God and spending time with Him daily.

Matthew Kelly wrote the book to go along with a workbook and video series he put together for Lent. Today (February 17<sup>th</sup>) is the first day of Lent and as I listened to the 3-4 minutes video, I thought to myself, “Wow, now this would be worthwhile to share.” I decided to listen to it again and try to type out all of what was shared. I set the thought aside for the moment and moved on to the daily journal and book reading. I was struck by a quote on the last page of the Day One journal questions. “You can learn to live with your discontent, or you can accept it as an invitation.” There it was again...God speaking to me about contentment/discontent. The last page of the journal also asked a question: “What is God saying to you?” to which I wrote the following:

God is saying the same thing He's been saying to me for the last several weeks. He's been speaking to me about contentment. He's telling me, “You need to find contentment in Jesus and in Jesus alone. If you want to have the peace that surpasses all understanding, the kind of peace I have promised you, you will only find it when you learn to find contentment in Jesus and in Him alone. The best way to do that is through spending time daily with Him.”

I laughed to myself at how the Holy Spirit continued to repeat the same word and theme to me and how He did it in so many different ways and through so many different avenues. Over the years I've learned that when God wants me to truly grasp something, He will provide ample opportunity for me to do so. I've also learned that He is very patient!

The last part of the daily Lent devotional was to read an excerpt from the accompanying book. I actually already read the book a couple weeks ago but pulled it off the shelf anyway and flipped to the page I was told to read. What did I find? Lo and behold! The reading was exactly what was shared on the video! So, you know what that means. I didn't have to attempt to type 3-4 minutes of video. The work had been done for me. Thank you, God! If there was any question as to whether or not this is part of what was to be shared, God put that question to rest by making it so amazingly clear and simple for me.

Here is the devotional Matthew Kelly shared and the thoughts he asked us to reflect on in the first day of the Lent journal and book. It helps to open us up further to the invitation God is giving us when that feeling of discontent begins to rise up within us.

Is your life unfolding the way you thought it would? Life doesn't turn out the way we expect. In some ways it exceeds our expectations, and in other ways it disappoints them. There may be hopes and dreams that were part of the life we expected that we need to grieve because they didn't materialize. But there are also hopes and dreams we had when we were younger that we are glad did not come to be. We see now that we were ill-suited for them, and they were ill-suited for us. At the same time, there are things about the unexpected life that surprise and delight.

Life doesn't unfold as we plan. We all live unexpected lives in one way or another. But sooner or later, we have to decide how we are going to make the most of the unexpected life. It is then that we come face-to-face with two enduring truths: we cannot live without the hope that things will change for the better, and we are not victims of our circumstances.

You are not what has happened to you. You are not what you have accomplished. You are not even who you are today or who you have become so far. You are also who and what you are still capable of becoming. You are your realized and unrealized potential. God sees you and all your potential, and He aches to see you embrace your best, truest, highest self. He yearns to help you and to accompany you in that quest.

Wherever you are, whatever you're feeling, however life has surprised and disappointed you, I want to remind you of one thing: The best is yet to come! There are times in life when this is easier or harder to believe, but the best is truly yet to come. Open yourself up to it, so you can see it and embrace it when it emerges!

Is your life working? It's a simple question, really. We cannot look at another person's life and know, but most of the time, we know how well our own life is (or isn't) working.

Nothing will change your life so completely, absolutely, and forever like learning how to really pray. In prayer we learn who we are and what we are here for, what matters most and what matters least. Through prayer we discover the best-version-of-ourselves and are given the courage to celebrate and defend it in each moment of each day. In prayer we learn how to love and be loved, because we discover that we have been loved, are loved, and will continually be loved by God.

It is an unavoidable fact that our lives do not unfold as we hope and expect them to. It is also worth pointing out that very often we are defined by how we respond to the unexpected events of life. The unexpected, whether good or bad, reveals character. How then do we prepare for the unexpected? Prayer. Prayer is the ultimate preparation for the unexpected. Prayer helps us develop the awareness, virtue, and character that are essential when your life gets turned upside down. Prayer is life's essential daily habit. (I Heard God Laugh, p. 3-7, abridged)

The challenge he gives is to spend 5-10 minutes a day in prayer, for the next 40 days. I don't know about you, but when I actually do this – take time to pray – a transformation begins to occur within my soul. This transformation in my soul then leads to changes in my attitude, behavior, thoughts, and even my overall outlook on life. The more time I spend with God, the more I see Him at work in my life and the more I am aware of His presence. It's through this transformation, and in these moments, that I begin to glimpse what Paul was talking about in his letter to the church in Philippi when he wrote:

“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” (Philippians 4:11-13)

Remember, Paul was in prison when he wrote this, but he had come to realize that his circumstances did not dictate his level of contentment. When the unexpected came, Paul was prepared and he could still be content. It was the strength given to Him through his relationship with Jesus that led to his contentment. The same is true for us. Regardless of our situation, circumstances, or how our life is unfolding; regardless of if our life is turning out the way we expected or not; we know the secret to being content – Jesus!

I invite you to join me in setting a goal (whether it be a week, month, 40 days, etc.) in which you commit to spending at least 5-10 minutes with God each day in prayer. Don't know where to start or how to pray? Check out the enclosed handout for some suggestions. May God bless you in your efforts! And, let us know how He helps you in finding contentment!

# Blessing

“The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

(Numbers 6:24-26; Romans 15:13 NIV)