

# MAINTAINING BIBLICAL CONTENTMENT PART FIVE

There were probably only two other Apostles alive, Paul and John, when Peter sat to write his final words in the mid 60's AD. His final chapter reads like it was custom made for 1994. What is his advice for us? Godly Contentment. Let's read II Peter 3:1-18.

Remember this series on Contentment is actually just POINT ONE of our study from Revelation 18 on How TO SURVIVE THE 90's. That first point was: BUILD YOUR LIFE WITH THE FIREPROOF MATERIAL OF CONTENTMENT.

## *NINE STEPS ON THE PATH TO BIBLICAL CONTENTMENT*

### 1. GET TO WORK.

- The Christian life is always described as a struggle in the NT. It is hard so get to work! The New Testament describes the Christian life with 3 metaphors.
  1. A RACE as we look toward our goal of Heaven (Phil. 3:14). This is the metaphor most often used of Christians in the N.T. (1c9, Ph 3, 2Tim4, Acts 20, Heb 12)
  2. Boxing in a match as we fight against the Enemy within us (I Cor. 9:26-27)
  3. Wrestling as we face the constant onslaught of the powers of darkness around and beneath us. (Eph. 6:12)

### 2. DIVORCE YOUR THINKING FROM SOCIETY'S RELATIVISTIC STANDARDS.

- "God says be content, not be content if...Never allow the affairs of others to rob you of your contentment."
- Colossians 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (KJV)
- Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And be not conformed to

this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (KJV)

### 3. TURN OFF THE ADS AND TUNE OUT THE LIES.

But the disturbing truth, as studies by the secular networks as well as the Christian Broadcasting Network show, is that the viewing habits of Christians are no different than those of non-Christians!

Since TV is a business, it gives its customers --the public -- what they want. It is but a mirror image of us. The Christian community is putting the same input into its collective computer as is the rest of the world. According to A.C. Nielsen, the TV set in the average home is on seven hours and seven minutes a day, and the average viewer watches four and one half hours each day. The statistics for religious homes is just a half hour less.

A renowned media expert, Professor Neil Postman of New York University says that between the ages of six and eighteen, the average child spends some 15,000 to 16,000 hours in front of the TV, whereas he spends only 13,000 hours in school. Postman says that during the first twenty years of an American child's life, he will see some one million commercials, at the rate of about 1,000 per week!

As to television's effects, the results are infamous:

- Shortened attention span.
- Diminution of linguistic powers.
- Reduced capacity for abstraction.
- Homogenization of adulthood and childhood.

To attract and hold its audience, the TV industry feels it has to parade the taboos of culture: adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality, incest, violence, and sadism. As a result the lowest of activities become commonplace, and even morally cachet.

There is a distinct connection between these things and the background of TV executives as compared with the viewing public. Only 7 percent attend church regularly, as compared to 55 percent of the viewing public; 44 percent have no religious affiliation, as compared to only 10 percent of the viewers having no such affiliation. To deny there is a conscious assault on the Christian mind and its traditional values is like believing Saddam Hussein is building a "kinder, gentler world."

I am aware of the wise warnings against using words like "all," "every," and "always" in what I say. Absolutizing one's pronouncements is dangerous. But I'm going to do it anyway. Here it is: *It is impossible for any Christian who spends the bulk of his evenings, month after month, week upon week, day in and day out watching the major TV networks or contemporary videos to have a Christian mind.* This is *always* true of *all* Christians in *every* situation! A Biblical mental program cannot coexist with worldly programming.

If we are to have Christian minds, there are things we must put out of our minds -- and this extends beyond TV, to what we read, listen to, and laugh at. My advice? Stop watching television. I mean that sincerely! Not watching TV will liberate so much time, it will become virtually impossible not to become a deeper person and a better Christian. Even if you play poker with your friends, you will be better off, because you will be relating to human beings!

I am not suggesting a new legalism which forbids TV and the cinema. (There are many worthwhile things to view; moreover, while Christianity is by nature countercultural, it is not anti-cultural). But I am calling for believers to take control of their minds -- what comes in and what goes out. If you cannot control what you watch and read, perhaps it needs to go. "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away," says Jesus (Matthew 5:29). My wife and I chose to raise our children without a television for this very reason, and we have no regrets. What we did is not for everyone, but it may be for you.

The Psalmist gives sage advice for those living in the media age: "I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing" (Psalm 101:2, 3). We need to allow Christ to be Lord of our prime time. Some of you need to schedule a confidential conference with your spouse and prayerfully seek God's will regarding this. And you single men who have so much trouble with your minds need to likewise seek God's will -- and someone to hold you accountable. Let us not settle for being like other Christians or having a church that is like other evangelical churches. May we be different because we have Christian minds.<sup>1</sup>

- A. THINGS NEVER SATISFY Isaiah 55:2<sup>2</sup> Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which* is not bread? and your labour for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which* is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. (KJV)
- B. GOD HATES WORLDLINESS James 4:4-5<sup>4</sup> Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.<sup>5</sup> Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (KJV)
- C. WORLDLINESS IS SATANISM 1 John 2:15-17 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (KJV)

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, *The Disciplines of a Godly Man*, pp.75-76.

#### 4. DEFER TO GOD'S OPINION CONCERNING YOUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.

*"How often, particularly in modern America have we seen the devastation visited upon families through the 'if only' syndrome...if only my wife were more appealing...if only my husband made more money, or had more hair. Infidelity, even in thought, is greener grass only because it's been spray painted by the Deceiver himself. Contentment keeps our eyes on the right side of the fence."*

A careful look at Hebrews 13:1-7 can give us some enduring guidelines to protect and promote contentment in all areas of our lives:

1. LOVE ALL CHRISTIANS AS DEAR FAMILY <sup>1</sup> Keep on loving each other as brothers.
  2. SHOW HOSPITALITY TO NEW PEOPLE <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.
  3. MINISTER TO AFFLICTED REGULARLY <sup>3</sup> Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.
  4. PRESERVE A SINGULAR FOCUS IN MARRIAGE <sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.
  5. FLEE ALL TYPES OF DISCONTENTMENT <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"
  6. LOVE YOUR GOD GIVEN SHEPHERDS <sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. (NIV)
5. SET NEW STANDARDS.
  6. DEVELOP COUNTER HABITS.
  7. SUBTRACT FROM YOUR NEEDS.

8. ACCEPT FROM GOD'S HAND THAT WHICH HE GIVES.

9. IF YOU STILL DO NOT FEEL THE STIRRINGS OF CONTENT -MENT  
WITHIN, ARGUE WITH YOURSELF AND TELL YOURSELF THE TRUTH.