

# Quotes and Comments Concerning Contentment

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Preacher: Chris Oswald

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

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Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 1 : 56 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. some of the church fathers in the past, beginning with Augustine, who reminds us that we are restless. Our souls are restless until we find our rest in thee. The human soul is restless until it finds its rest in God. And Jeremiah Burroughs, many, many years ago, not so many as Augustine, but many years nonetheless, Jeremiah Burroughs wrote what is the kind of ultimate book on contentment called the rare jewel of Christian contentment. And Burroughs speaks into this restlessness by talking about the size of one's soul. He says, my brethren, the reason why you do not have contentment in the things of the world is not that you do not have enough of them. The reason is that they are not things proportional to the size of that immortal soul of yours.

Burroughs is saying, your soul is super big. It can't be filled with the things of this world. It must only be filled with God. It can only be filled with God. And that's an important thing to understand that a big part of the Christian life involves reckoning with the real size of our soul, reckoning with the real size of our soul and understanding that even if we had everything, everything we could possibly want, it would not be enough to make our souls feel full, to make our souls feel satisfied. And so I want to talk about that today and talk specifically about how our speech is both revealing our contentment or discontentment and also sort of teaching our hearts to be content or discontent. You need to remember that we have two views of speech in the heart in the word of God. We have the one view in which Jesus tells us that out of the abundance of our heart, the mouth speaks. And so in some respects, our words convey the status of our heart.

But you need to also remember that that dynamic works in the other direction. This is a two-way street. And we have a number of instances in scripture where we are taught to teach our souls, to teach our hearts with our words, that we can both unveil the status of our hearts with our speech and also correct the status of our hearts with our speech. And so I want you to think about contentment because it's such a big issue. Like, well, we need to get handles on some practicalities. And I want you to think about contentment as contentment as it manifests in your speech, your relationship between your words and your sense or lack of sense of contentment. I came up with a few examples of discontented speech.

And the first one would be grumbling. Grumbling is revealing a heart that has yet to learn contentment. And more than that, I think that grumbling is reinforcing discontentment and low faith. We talked about this last night in men's ministry, the story of the Exodus, how folks actually were constantly degrading their faith by grumbling so that when they arrived on the cusp of the promised land and had only to fight a few giants to take occupancy, they had, through their grumbling, through their constant grumbling, been training themselves in the art of unbelief. And so that by time they got to the promised land, and it wasn't that long, but by time they got to the promised land, their constant grumbling leading up to that point had taught them that God was not good.

[ 6 : 08 ] Friends, I really want to encourage you to make sure that you are not a grumbler. There are very few things in scripture that are shown as clear evidences of a downward trajectory than a grumbling heart, a grumbling mouth. I think I've talked before about how this sort of thing becomes contagious. And at some homes, at some dinner tables, in some contexts, there is essentially a competition between individuals to see who can say they've had it worse. There's a sort of one-upmanship relationship about with grumbling. And so before you know it, the sort of common

communication style in a home is, oh, you think you had a bad day, or oh, you think you feel tired, or oh, you think your boss was bad, or so on and so forth. And boy, friends, this is just a constant degrading of one's faith. What you're doing every time you grumble is communicating to yourself and to others that God is not good. One of the best quotes from Jeremiah Burroughs in that book, *The Rare Jewel of Christian*

Contentment, is the following, it is but one side of a Christian to endeavor to do what pleases God. You must also endeavor to be pleased with what God does. So putting that in simpler speech, one half of the Christian life is to try to do what pleases God. But another half of the Christian life is to be pleased with what God does, to be pleased with what God does and what God does not do. And so grumbling is a really key area to keep an eye on. One of the things you really want to be careful of if you have children is to create a culture of grumbling, because it will soon become taught and understood to your children that the squeaky wheel gets the attention. And the one who can exude the most self-pity, the most victimization, the most, you know, clear and acute instance of them being treated unfairly, that somehow they get a leg up in the culture of your home, if they can whine and complain and so on and so forth. And really what we want to do is to sort of reinforce that that's not a way that we're going to talk in our home. That's not an approach we're going to take towards self-vindication.

And so essentially, in many respects, the squeaky wheel in a home needs to get the least attention and it needs to be constantly redirected toward gratitude. And as you're going to see, everything I'm talking about is essentially alternatives to gratitude, which should be the most common form of speech for every Christian who lives. The most common form of speech should be gratitude. There is an endless supply of things for which you can be grateful. And that needs to be the primary tone, the primary form of speech in your life. Well, in addition to grumbling, I also sketched down what I would call graspy talk, graspy talk. And that is using your speech to try to bring attention to yourself, using your speech to try to get people to think highly of you, using your speech to sort of pull in affection or esteem or so on and so forth. And this can include fishing for compliments. [ 9 : 46 ] This can include, you know, cutting yourself down in a falsely humble way so that someone else will tell you, oh, no, no, no, you're really very pretty. Or, oh, no, no, you're really very strong and so on and so forth. So graspy talk is another sort of kind of speech that works out of a discontented heart.

And like I said, it doesn't just come out of your heart, it goes back in too. And so you're sort of speaking out of discontentment and you're speaking into greater discontentment. So grumbling, graspy talk, using your speech to one-up others, to draw attention to yourself, to seek compliments, and so on and so forth. Constantly bringing the conversation back to you, moving out of an area that you don't seem to have much to contribute in, into an area where you feel more confident or able to contribute, so on and so forth. This is something you've really got to watch out for. And it's something that if you have a trusted loved one, like a spouse or a friend, it's the kind of thing you'd want to say, hey, would you help me to make sure I don't want to be a grumbler and I don't want to be a grasper? And would you just kindly call attention to times in which you think you see either of those things taking place?

And friend, if you're one of those who is called to hold someone accountable for these things, be careful. Yes, they've asked you. Yes, they've asked for permission. But make sure you follow, I don't know if I've ever taught on this, make sure you follow Jesus's pattern in Revelation one through three for how to exhort, encourage, and even challenge.

We typically think, this is a bit of a rabbit trail, but it's something I think is very important. We typically think that the sort of compliment sandwich approach is sort of a canned patronizing corporate approach to communication where you affirm someone and then you offer some criticism and then you affirm someone again. Well, that may be toxic to some degree and superficial to some degree in our workplaces. But friends, that's exactly how Jesus talks to the churches in the book of Revelation in the first three chapters. And so we can see Jesus say something like this consistently. I know you.

I see you. I see you. I know your works. Typically, Jesus has some good things to offer. Not always, but most of the time. And then he has some sort of challenge or encouragement or exhortation.

[ 12 : 28 ] And then usually follows back around again with some sort of encouragement of some sort. And so when you are the person who is helping someone else modify their speech and get their speech in a better state, a better Christian position, well, just remember how Jesus corrects

people.

And he does that all, of course, with total confidence. See the end of 1 Thessalonians. I said total confidence, total patience. And here I'm thinking of admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Okay, so we've got grumbling and we've got graspy talk. That's another G word, grading talk. What do I mean by grading talk? Well, I mean this tendency to shave other people down a little bit so that you feel taller. Shave people down a little bit so that you feel bigger, more important, more morally right to get the moral high ground and so on and so forth.

Using your speech to put others down is for us in our home growing up with the kids, we were just extremely careful, especially because with the age ranges, which y'all have that as well in your homes, you know, you've got one kid who was literally smarter than another kid.

And he's just older, his brain's more developed or her brain's more developed. And I see this especially among girls, older sisters in particular, this sort of tendency to lord their maturity over the younger. Well, that's grading talk. Again, what's going on there is a discontentment. It is not being satisfied with the world as it is. And you're trying to use your speech to sort of conjure up a new reality by emphasizing someone else's failures or weaknesses so as to emphasize by comparison your strengths and victories. And then the final G that I have written down here is ingratiating talk, there's nothing wrong with trying to ingratiate yourself to others so long as it's not flattery, or so long as it's not really dependent on you withholding offensive but true things that are necessary to say, but you're not saying them because you want to ingratiate that person to yourself. You see how all of these forms of speech are essentially little tactics, like I said, to conjure up a reality that you would prefer to the one that you are actually in.

[ 15 : 25 ] And this is all rooted in a dissatisfaction with what God is doing in a particular moment.

And you're sort of trying to jiggle the handles and get a better outcome with these different forms of speech. Last night in men's ministry, I told the guys to pay attention to the minivan as a microcosm of your family's health. Listen to the speech that is happening in the car. We would have concerns if all of the speech that was happening in the car was grumbly or grating or graspy. We would really want that time in the car to be a feast of gratitude. Thankful to God for all the many things that he is doing. Thankful for all the beautiful things that God is creating. Looking at wonder and curiosity at the creation as we drive through it. So I think the minivan is a great microcosm to evaluate the health of your family's speech, which not only reveals the state of their contentment, but also kind of is kind of projecting into the future of their contentment and whether they will or will not be content. Now, I promised last night in men's ministry that I would go through and read some more

Jeremiah Burroughs quotes because they're just so useful. And I did grab a few of those and I'm going to conclude our time today by just reading some of his quotes and then maybe expounding on them a little bit. They were written a long time ago and the language isn't as clear for us as it would have been for the original audience. The first one I have here is when God has given you your heart's desire.

What have you done with your heart's desire? When God has given you your heart's desire, what have you done with your heart's desire? In other words, sometimes we feel a little discontent with God because he's withholding something from us. We have some probably good desire and we see God withholding it. He's not supplying this or that desire. And Burroughs is pointing out that in the past, God has given you your desires. And what did you do with them? And the answer is a lot of times, and friends, let me put myself at the top of the line of guilty on this. A lot of the times when God does give us our heart's desire, what comes as a result of that is independence, pride, self-sufficiency, a sense of short term, in the short term, when God gives us our heart's desire.

Perhaps we are grateful, but over time we begin to take credit for this thing that God has given us. We tend to boast in it. We tend to, if not overtly, quietly begin to associate God's blessings with our own faithfulness. And as I read Doug Wilson once say, that's the quickest way to turn off the tap to the hard right of God's blessings is to start taking credit for them. So Burroughs is saying, well, you know, you have to understand things from God's perspective. He remembers the last time he gave you everything that you desired or gave you your heart's desire. And he can see that that's not always been the healthiest thing for your soul. Before I get back to the Burroughs quotes, one thing I did want to add that is, I think, an essential part of developing contentment is to understand that God is lavish and generous and a free giver. He is not stingy. He is not, he doesn't play a zero-sum game. The zero-sum game doesn't work in his world. He simply makes more of whatever he wants

there to be. In him are all things, all treasures, all joys at his right hand or pleasures forevermore and so forth. So he's not stingy. He's lavish. He's generous. And yet there will be times in your life when God will not give you what you really do desire and indeed will not give you a good desire. And you need to understand that that is in some ways so against his fatherly nature at one level, that you need to understand that what he is giving you by not giving you what you desire, it must be very important and very good.

So in the times when God withdraws, maybe even his own presence to some degree, it is not necessarily because he is disciplining you for something you have done. In fact, if you study the discipline passage in the book of Hebrews, you'll be hard-pressed to see what they've done wrong exactly.

They're undergoing persecution. We typically don't think of persecution as a discipline for something that somewhat the Christians have done wrong. When God withholds his hand, in the case of the Hebrews, he's withholding the hand of safety from them. The cultural antagonism toward Christianity is rising. They're feeling less secure. God's not giving them the comfort that they would like to have.

[ 20 : 59 ] And you have to understand that it's his nature is to give you comfort. His nature is to give you peace. His nature is to fill your life with good things. I was reading in Acts 14, I believe it is, where Paul tells an audience, a pagan audience, God has given you food and filled your belly with good things. And that's who God is. And so if he's withholding something from you that is good, you need to understand that what he's doing there is he's giving you something that is better. And that better thing is, amongst other ways of talking about it, contentment. He's teaching you how to be content.

He's teaching you the secret of how to be content with lack, with less. And that gift he's giving to you by his very nature has to be better than the thing you want. And so this gets us back to the other quote that I mentioned from Burroughs. One half of the Christian life is to do what God pleases.

And the other half of the Christian life is to be pleased with what God does. All right. Next Burroughs quote, you will not find one godly man who came out of an affliction worse than when he went into it. Though for a little while he was shaken, yet at last he was better for an affliction. But a great many godly men have been worse for their prosperity.

Does that track? Do you get that? Essentially, Burroughs is saying that we need to understand that hard times, which I think hard times are just, you know, God withholding something, you know, we want safety or we want health. We want financial blessings or so forth. Hard times are just God withholding something. And prosperous times are God not withholding something to some degree. Burroughs is saying that godly men always come out of affliction better off, but they don't always come out of prosperity better off. That's a really good thing to remember as you're assessing difficult circumstances. Burroughs in another spot asked this question. This one stuck with Ange, I think because she really likes it when the practical is just sort of there right in front of you. And Burroughs says this, what is the duty of the circumstance that God has put me into?

[ 23 : 28 ] In other words, instead of looking at your circumstances and noticing what they aren't or what you wish they would be, look at what they are and figure out how does God want me to behave in this particular set of circumstances. Another Burroughs quote, contentment is not by addition, but by subtraction. Seeking to add a thing will not bring contentment. Instead, subtracting from your desires until they are satisfied only with Christ brings contentment. This is the truth. Like, you can't get contentment by adding things. That is a fool's errand. Adding and adding and adding will never make you content. It's actually only by those times when things aren't going well that you learn true contentment. Another quote, so be satisfied and quiet. Be contented with your contentment.

Say to yourself, I lack certain things that others have, but blessed be God, I have a contented heart, which others have not. If you can get a contented heart, you will be elite. Just understand that.

Seven, eight billion people in the world. How many of them have a contented heart? It is by far one of the greatest treasures you could ever acquire is to have a contented heart.

Because then when you get more, more is more. But when you get more and you don't have contentment, more is never enough. All right. Another quote, there is more good in contentment than there is in the thing you want. There is more good in contentment than there is in the thing you want.

Here's another one. Burroughs was writing his book dealing with Christians who had gone through a lot of, and were going through a lot of ordeals and difficulties. This is just from my extraordinarily faulty memory. But I believe this book was written to his church, for his church. I think these were sermons or sayings from sermons that he preached to his church as the church had gone through, I believe not one, but two waves of plague, like the old school plague. And so he is really teaching them how to be content in some very difficult circumstances. And here's what he writes.

[ 26 : 05 ] In a clock, stop but one wheel, and you stop every wheel. It's kind of crazy that clocks were kind of new back then. It's interesting. Okay. In a clock, stop but one wheel, and you stop every wheel, because they are dependent on one another. So when God has ordered a thing for the present to be thus and thus, how do you know how many things depend on this thing? God may have some work to do in 20 years from now that depends on this passage of providence that falls out or that happens this day or this week.

God has an intricate plan for our lives, and a particular season of difficulty might indeed be a contingent cog in a future outpouring of his blessings 20 years from now. You can't think that way in terms of you can't do the extraordinarily complicated God math to understand how things connect. But down the road, you will be able most likely, at least in heaven if nothing else, to look back and say, oh my goodness, that period of not having wound up being so essential to a bunch of other good things that God did in my life down the road. You know, I'm particularly mindful of people who are single and don't want to be, childless and don't want to be, just these kinds of things that are good desires, and they're just not happening for you.

Well, friends, trust me, trust Jeremiah Burroughs, trust God. This thing is necessary. In God's eyes, it is necessary. If it were not necessary, it would not be so. And so you keep working, you keep doing the things you should do to change your circumstances. Absolutely nothing wrong with that. Only understand that in addition to working to acquire that thing that you desire, nothing wrong with that. You must always say to God, God, I do want this or I do want that, but I really want you.

And so I'm hopeful that I can get that thing with you. I'm hopeful that I can, you know, sort of be trusted and mature to the point where I can have these desires of my heart and also have you. But I do know that if, um, if, um, if, if, if that's not possible, I will be happier down the road forever having you. Uh, here's another quote here lies the bottom and root of all contentment. When there is an evenness and proportion between our hearts and our circumstances. So this is his effort to define contentment. I would say, uh, essentially a, a capacity within your heart to be satisfied in all circumstances, which is, you know, what we see in Paul's words in Philippians four.

Uh, another one, my brethren, the reason why you do not have contentment in the things of the world is not that you do not have enough of them. I read this one already. The reason is, is that they are not proportional to the size of that immortal soul of yours. Uh, do I have two more? Yeah, two more.

[ 29 : 51 ] This one I thought was super good. Discontentment. Now this is me talking, not Burroughs right now. I'm introducing it. Discontentment makes you extraordinarily vulnerable to temptation. Discontentment makes you talk stupid. It makes you act stupid. It makes you plan stupid.

Discontentment makes you extraordinarily vulnerable to temptation. And Burroughs is going on the flip side and saying that temptations will no more prevail over a contented man than a dart that is thrown against a brazen wall, a metal wall. So when you're content, you are far more resistant to temptation. When you are discontent, you are far more susceptible to temptation. Now, if there's a particular addiction you're trying to deal with in your life right now, um, and it really could just be anything, it could be a sexual nature, it could be financial nature, spendy, you know, um, buying things to feel better. It could be food. It could be, you know, drink, whatever. If there's something you're really trying to deal with right now, that is a kind of life besetting sin, take my word for this. Your contentment isn't going to appear overnight. It would be wonderful if, if you could just be content tomorrow, but, um, it's not going to happen that way. Contentment takes time. And so you just need to know your heart well enough to know that when those you're unsettled, when you're anxious, uh, when you're, when you're maybe at a, at a peak moment of discontentment, this is also a peak moment of vulnerability to various temptations. And this also gets back to grumbling. Um, I want to be careful because we got kids in the car listening to this and so on and so forth, but you know, you cannot grumble consistently about your spouse, even in your own heart and expect to resist temptations to be unfaithful to your spouse. You, you are essentially by grumbling against

your spouse consistently over time, creating a, um, a gap in your, in your fortress, a gap in your wall and the right temptation clothed the right way in the right circumstances won't even have to try to penetrate your, uh, fortifications. It will walk right in through that hole you've created through your own grumbling.

And this is also true, for instance, of financial grumbling. If you're grumbling about your lack of financial, um, prosperity and so on and so forth, well, friends just understand you're creating a hole in your fortress wall and the opportunity to cheat, to steal, uh, to manipulate, to get more will prove to be irresistible in the right circumstances. If you've been weakening your own walls with grumbling.

Uh, last one, I am discontented. This is from Burroughs. I am discontented because I have not these things which God never yet promised me. And therefore I sin much against the gospel and against the grace of faith. In other words, many times we are discontent with God for him not doing something he never promised he would do. And this would really be something that shows up a lot in our desire for things that are above and beyond what God has promised. And, uh, I think of this a lot of times in, in the sense of sort of having a healthy dynamic between husband and wife and a home, you know, it's a hard thing to understand that if you're a wife, what your husband has to do unto God, he's responsible for. And if he doesn't do it, he'll, he'll get church disciplined is he has to provide for you. He has to take care of your needs, has to protect you with his life, so on and so forth. But he's not responsible for making you as wealthy as your next door neighbor.

He's not responsible for making your life as good as so-and-so's life. He's responsible to God to provide for you. And Lord willing, we will, you know, his brothers in the, in the Lord, I'm one of them and, and you know, others, you know, his brothers in the Lord will help him to maximize his productivity and to do better and better. But let's be clear on something. There's a, there's a level of faithfulness that is required by the Lord. And then there's a level of fruitfulness that is wonderful to have, but not something you can hold against someone for not giving you. And there are equivalents to that, that men look at their wives with and so on.

[ 34 : 55 ] But the point being, understand what is lawfully required of others toward you, and then get your expectations appropriately in line from that. Okay. Well, I mean, I think that's a pretty good bit of time. That's 35 minutes worth talking about contentment. Do me a favor.

If you have kind of a noticeable anxiety, that's been a part of your life and so on and so forth, do me a favor. I don't have any specifics for you. I just want you to do something for me.

Start thinking about contentment, maybe do a couple of journaling exercises where you take about an hour in a quiet moment within a week, take say two instances within a week where you sit down with a few pieces of paper and a pen alone, and you just start kind of riffing on what is contentment. How does contentment connect with anxiousness? And, and just start really what I'm asking you to do is to sit along with the Lord, but not so, not so like without a pen and a paper, because I don't want you to just drift. So I'm asking you to do sit along with the Lord and just say, God, what am I discontent about? What are these anxieties I feel? To what extent are these related to contentment?

And what I'm really asking you to do is just have some conversations with the Lord. If you've never journaled before, the way I would do that is I would write out a prayer and, but, but let it be kind of free flowy, just write it. So that's, that's when you write something down, especially if you handwrite it, you're slowing your, your speed of thought down because you need to, you know, your speed of thought wants to go faster than your pen, but that's not, that's not okay. So, uh, journaling can be really helpful. Writing your prayers can be really helpful because it slows your speed of thought down to a level that you're actually able to sort of take thoughts captive for Christ. You're able to pray, uh, God, what am I thinking here? What's going on in this situation?

[ 37 : 07 ] Um, so on and so forth. Uh, okay. Well, that's, uh, that's where I'll leave us today. Have a wonderful rest of your week. And, uh, if, if you, I told the guys last night, there's two kinds of people in our church related to reading. There are those who will read big books and there are those who won't.

If you are one who will read Jeremiah Burroughs book on contentment, read it. But if you know yourself well enough to know that you won't do me a favor, Google Jeremiah Burroughs jewel of Christian contentment quotes and find a page that's got a bunch of the quotes from the book. He writes in a style where you don't necessarily have to read the book to get a lot of the really good content. And so there are plenty of Google, uh, returns on that. Um, uh, you will find lots of good

