

Flourishing in Contentment

June 21, 2026

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Proverbs 19:23; 21:17; 30:7-9

Session Outline

1. The Way to Life (Proverbs 19:23)
2. The Food We Need (Proverbs 30:7-9)
3. A Warning About Overindulgence (Proverbs 21:17)

Theological Theme

Contentment can only be found in the Lord.

Call to Action

Where do you currently find yourself discontent? Submit this before the Lord in prayer.

Flourishing in Contentment

Introduction

Cambridge Dictionary defines contentment as “happiness and satisfaction, often because you have everything you need.”¹ This concept can feel foreign in our cultural moment.

Modern industry profits from our feeling like we don’t actually have everything we need. In the 1970s, the average person was exposed to about 500 ads every day. Today, we see ten times as many (as many as 5,000 ads every day).² We are culturally conditioned to want to buy more, keep up with the metaphorical “Joneses,” and never be satisfied. In other words, we are conditioned to not be content.

But where society leads us to believe that “more” will bring us happiness and satisfaction, Scripture teaches a different truth. Contentment isn’t conditional. And the gateway to contentment isn’t tapping into our bank accounts, it’s tapping into relationship with our Creator and Redeemer.

- ❓ How content would you describe yourself to be?
- ❓ What are some specific ways contentment is a challenge in our time?

Session Summary

We can never hope to flourish in contentment until we first learn to fully and faithfully submit to the Lord’s plan. When we seek Him first, God takes care of us and cultivates a spirit of contentment in us.

Finances are an area where many find dissatisfaction, but God invites us into trust that leads to true contentment. We find contentment when we fully trust God in all areas of our lives, and that includes our finances. We will never find satisfaction in earthly things. Only Christ can satisfy.

1. The Way to Life (Proverbs 19:23)

- ❓ What does it mean to fear the Lord? What does it not mean?
- ❓ How does proper fear of the Lord lead to life?

“The fear of the Lord” is a common theme in Scripture. The fear of the Lord is the source of wisdom and the way to understanding (Proverbs 9:10). It not only brings wisdom, but Scripture declares that fearing the Lord is, itself, wise (Proverbs 15:33).

But what does it mean to “fear” the Lord? The word “fear” can carry negative connotations. We may fear things like snakes and heights and public speaking, but all of us hold more serious fears than this in our hearts as well. This isn’t the way we are to feel about God, is it?

No, this isn’t the type of fear Scripture intends. The “fear” in view here is more like healthy reverence that God deserves. Have you ever been to the Grand Canyon? Picture yourself there, on the rim, admiring the beauty. The type of awe you feel knowing you are very small and this mighty canyon, that God has been shaping for thousands of years, is much bigger and more powerful than you. This metaphor isn’t perfect. Coming up with a human metaphor to adequately describe God’s character isn’t always possible. But it gives us an idea. This is the type of feeling in view when Scripture talks about fearing the Lord. Awe, reverence, and respect that drives action.

- ❓ What leads you to this type of reverence for the Lord?

Scripture tells us how to cultivate this godly fear in Deuteronomy 10:12-23:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORD’s commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good.

This is the way that leads to life—walking in God’s ways, following His will for your life, behaving the way the Bible teaches, loving Him with our entire being (Jesus reiterated the importance of this in Matthew 22:37-40), and worshipping Him.

The key to truly living is faithfully following the Lord.

Wisdom

Wisdom is the key to life—a full life now and eternal life in the future—because it is anchored in the fear of the Lord and it includes practical advice (Proverbs 1:33; 3:2,18; 4:13, 22–23; 6:23; 8:35; 10:16–17; 11:19; 12:28; 14:27; 16:22; 19:23; 21:21; 22:4; cp. Mk 10:30; 1Tm 4:8).

The fear of the Lord is the foundation we need to find contentment. When we are fully invested in following the Lord, He develops contentment in us. The lack we feel over the things we don't have lessens and we begin to better appreciate the things that we do—namely Christ.

King David understood this when he wrote “The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need” (Psalm 23:1). When we follow the Good Shepherd, He takes care of us and we have what we need. Jesus taught this truth also, “But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you.” (Luke 12:31).

Flourishing in contentment happens not when we get the “what” we’ve been longing for, but when we understand and embrace the “who” we have received.

2. The Food We Need (Proverbs 30:7-9)

- ❓ What is surprising about what the author specifically asked for in these verses?
- ❓ What connections between plenty and want and our relationship to the Lord did the author draw?

This is an interesting segment of Proverbs and a useful one in our discussion of contentment! How often have you prayed for . . . not wealth?

Agur (who Proverbs 30:1 names as the author of these words) asked for two things from the Lord in these verses. This first was to “Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me” and the second was “Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need” (v. 8).

Scripture issues many warnings about the danger of an un-tamed tongue, and keeping lies and deceit far away is wise, both in our own speech and in what we receive from others.

Agur’s second request might be surprising, though. He prayed for “neither poverty nor wealth” (v.8), but rather an in-between reality where God would feed him with only the food he needs.

We are reminded of Jesus’s similar request in the Lord’s Prayer:

“Give us today our daily bread.”—Matthew 6:11

Relying on God to provide for us only what we need today requires utter trust in Him. It requires our full reliance on God and the provision

He has planned for us. This is what truly fearing the Lord looks like, remember? Fully obeying and trusting in God, and not in our own ability to provide or earn.

 How might wealth act as a hindrance to our trust in God?

Great wealth has a way of making us miss God’s provision. We might begin to (mistakenly) think that we have “arrived” fully on our own. We might stop realizing how desperately we need God no matter our financial position.

Just because we are wealthy doesn’t mean that we will adopt this attitude automatically. God has worked in and through many faithful believers’ wealth to accomplish great things for the gospel and His glory! We have examples of this in Scripture, too (Think of Lydia, the dealer of purple cloth from the book of Acts.). But the temptation to turn away from God can be great for some. Many times, when it comes to our finances, we need a heart check. Jesus’s warning from Luke 16 remains relevant for us:

No servant can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. —Luke 16:13

Conversely, Agur reasoned that if he was living in poverty, he might turn to sin to provide for himself, rather than turning to the Lord. He saw the ability for dangerous disobedience on both sides and asked for God’s provision in between. Agur was focused first on faithfully following God and well on the road to contentment. We are wise to follow his example.

3. A Warning About Overindulgence (Proverbs 21:17)

 Why does love for worldly pleasure ultimately fail us?

 Why are we tempted to repeatedly believe worldly pleasure will satisfy?

Isn’t it amazing how human nature, throughout the millennia, has not changed? The heart posture this verse warns against is still very much alive and well today. We considered this verse last week from the perspective of our finances, and today we’ll read it from the perspective of contentment.

The problem this verse illuminates isn’t things themselves. In fact, we know all good things come from God, and God gives us so many gifts. He made a beautiful world and countless wonderful things for our enjoyment. As the psalmist says:

*He causes grass to grow for the livestock
and provides crops for man to cultivate,
producing food from the earth,
wine that makes human hearts glad—
making his face shine with oil—
and bread that sustains human hearts.*
—Psalm 104:14-15

The problem arises when we shift our priorities. This happens when we start becoming more concerned with living a pleasurable life, doing what we want, rather than following God’s plan for our life. Proverbs warns us about this, directly, too:

There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death. —
Proverbs 16:25

 How does wealth tempt us to pursue worldly pleasure further?

Not only is this an irresponsible way to steward the wealth God has entrusted us with, it also leads us in the opposite direction of contentment. Worldly possessions never satisfy, and Scripture repeatedly tells us how futile it is to chase them:

The one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile. —Ecclesiastes 5:10

Christ is the way to contentment. Wasting our time and money on things that can never satisfy only leads to disappointment and ultimately death.

Conclusion

Our culture says life and contentment can be found in things, but Scripture tells us that the key to really living is in relationship with the One who created all things in the first place: the Lord.

We fear the Lord as Scripture teaches when we fully follow Him, deferring to His will in our lives, and worshiping and loving Him with our entire being. This is the foundation we must build to find contentment.

Great wealth has a way of making us miss God’s great provision, luring us with the false idea that not only can we build a great life and find contentment on our own, but we are well on our way! The reality is that we desperately need God. In the words of the well-known hymn:

*I need Thee, O I need Thee;
ev’ry hour I need Thee³*

To truly flourish in contentment, we must realize earthly things can never satisfy. Christ leads the way to contentment. Prioritizing the things of the world only leads to disappointment.

- ❓ Where are you struggling with contentment?
- ❓ How can we encourage one another toward seeking fulfillment in Christ over the things of the world?
- ❓ How would living as content people give us opportunity to share our hope with others?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for being the one who provides what we need and for giving us good gifts that point us back to Him. Ask for His help as you learn to trust His wisdom over your own desires. Ask Him to show you where your heart is tempted to chase pleasure, wealth, or self-reliance instead of faithfully following Christ. Ask Him to help our group find true contentment in Jesus.

Memory Verse

*The fear of the LORD leads to life;
one will sleep at night without danger. —Proverbs 19:23*

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Proverbs* by Daniel Akin and Jonathan Akin
- *Be Skillful* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Proverbs* by Raymond Ortlund



Historical Context of Proverbs

Purpose

Because these proverbs are in the Bible, they do not just entertain; they exhort, encourage, and offer hope. Solomon called readers, especially youth, to pursue wisdom rather than foolishness. He encouraged the inexperienced to become wise rather than mockers, to be teachable rather than incorrigible, to live rather than to die. He predicted that people who pursued wisdom would generally find success and happiness in this life, but he promised that they would absolutely find joy and blessing in eternity.

Author

Solomon is credited with the proverbs in chaps. 1–29 of the book of Proverbs (1:1; 10:1). There is biblical evidence that Solomon was wise and a collector of wise sayings (1Kg 3:5–14; 4:29–34; 5:7, 12; 10:2–3, 23–24; 11:41). Chapters 1–24 may have been written down during his reign, 970–931 BC. The proverbs in chaps. 25–29 were Solomon’s proverbs collected by King Hezekiah, who reigned 716–687 BC (25:1). The last two chapters are credited to Agur and Lemuel (30:1; 31:1), about whom nothing else is known. An editor was inspired to collect the proverbs of Solomon, Agur, and Lemuel into the book we now have.

Setting

The reign of Solomon represented the peak of prosperity for the nation of Israel. The period saw the greatest extent of Israel’s territory, and there was peace and international trade (1Kg 4:20–25; 10:21–29). It is likely Solomon knew about the ancient tradition of wisdom in Egypt (1Kg 3:1), but through inspiration and God’s gift he composed even better sayings (1Kg 3:12; 10:6–7, 23). Solomon addressed his teaching to his son or sons, but these inspired wise sayings are applicable to all people. The book of Proverbs, like the rest of the Bible, contains stories, teaching, and examples. People should make appropriate application of these truths to their own situations (1Co 10:11).

Special Features

What is a proverb? A secular proverb seeks to state a general (not absolute) truth, such as “a fool and his money are soon parted.” It is typically pithy, that is, it is brief but rich in meaning: “No pain, no gain.” A proverb is practical; it gives advice that is useful in the real world: “A stitch in time saves nine.” It should be applied; the reader should consider what changes he should make in his own life in light of the proverb: “Charity begins at home.” A proverb is derived from astute observations about how life usually works; the creator of a proverb shows himself very knowledgeable and perceptive, able to see what is generally true and to draw conclusions from it: “The pen is mightier than the sword.”

Extended Commentary

Proverbs 19:23

See note at 3:22. The second line reads literally “he will spend the night satisfied, without being visited by evil.”

Proverbs 21:17

Wine and oil were blessings from God (Dt 7:13; Ps 104:14–15), as was pleasure (lit “joy,” Ps 21:6), but when God’s blessings are pursued without God, they become vices.

Proverbs 30:7-9

This prayer is comparable to Jesus’s model prayer (Mt 6:9–13). Both ask God’s protection from temptation; both ask for basic needs to be met (1Tm 6:8; cp. Php 4:12); both are concerned with upholding God’s honor. The indulgent person may become a liar and a mocker (Ex 5:2); the destitute person may become a thief (Pr 6:30). The thief profanes God by implying that God can’t provide.⁴

References

1. dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/contentment
2. appliedpsychologydegree.usc.edu/blog/thinking-vs-feeling-the-psychology-of-advertising
3. hymnary.org/text/i_need_thee_every_hour_most_gracious_lor
4. *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).