

INTRO

Good morning! It is a joy and a privilege to open up God's Word with you today. We are continuing our **2024 Vision Series** called **UNHINDERED**, looking at what it means to be unhindered in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Today we're going to learn from Scripture how to ***Get Undistracted From Discontentment.***

How many of you know that Discontentment is hardwired into every one of us?

- **For all you parents:** By show of hands, how many of you had to teach your kids how to whine?
- **As another example,** think about all the discontentment we see online. Just take 10 seconds on your social page, a message board, or a YouTube comments section, and you'll find somebody complaining about something.

And it's not just the internet generation that struggles with discontentment. But for all of us here...

- How many of you remember the struggle of being in high school and seeing a guy who was more athletic than you?
- Or a girl who was more popular than you?
- Or that one relationship/ that one power couple who had more social status than you?

And how many of you felt that struggle intensify as you got older?

- How many of you saw a friend climb the corporate ladder higher than you?
- Or a couple whose marriage seemed happier than yours?
- Or a family who made more money, took more vacations, and enjoyed a better standard of living than you?

Here's the truth: at the end of the day... **All of us will be tempted by discontentment.**

That goes back to the earliest chapters of our history.

GENESIS

When Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden, one of the tactics that Satan used was discontentment.

Genesis 2:16 says that God gave Adam and Eve a whole buffet of fruit trees to eat from. **And Satan's primary bait was to distract their focus onto the ONE TREE they could NOT eat from.**

Genesis 3:1b-5 (CSB):

1b [The serpent] said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden?'"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. [**She should've stopped there.**] **3** But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.' "

4 “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman.

5 “In fact, God knows that when you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” [***IF ONLY you can just take the ONE THING that you can’t have, THEN you’ll be happy.***]

IF ONLY

Ever since that moment in Genesis...the words “if only” have become two of the most dangerous words in human language.

- “If only things were different...”
- “If only things had stayed the same...”
- “If only I *had this, or didn’t have that.*”
- “If only I had more of this, or less of that...”
- “If only, if only, if only...”

If we are not vigilant in the battle of “if only”, that root of discontentment can be a catalyst for all kinds of sin and brokenness in our lives.

THE FRUIT OF DISCONTENTMENT

- Discontentment with one’s **income** can lead to theft, cheating, and workaholism.
- Discontentment with one’s **influence** can lead to lying, short-cutting, and manipulation.
- Discontentment with one’s **marriage** can lead to conflict, adultery, maybe even abuse or worse.

- Discontentment with one's **overall life** can lead to resentment, addiction, depression, and a tragic downward spiral.

Discontentment is deadly.

So that's why, when we see the words of the Apostle Paul in **Philippians 4:11-13**, we ought to **take pause**...and **take hope**...

11b I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. **12** I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. **13** I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

If we want to get undistracted from discontentment this morning, we need to anchor ourselves in this reality that Paul teaches us:

Contentment is not about *WHAT* we have – it's about *WHO* we have.

Contentment is not about what we have **materially** or **emotionally**...it's about WHO we have in relationship with Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

*Lord God, we thank You that **we really can** do all things through You who gives us strength – and that includes getting undistracted from discontentment...so that we can say, along with Paul, that we **are** content in all circumstances.*

As we look at Your Word, we pray that You would speak, that You would move, and that You would do the work that only You know how to do in each one of us. Turn our eyes to You we pray... In Jesus' name, amen.

TRANSITION to MAIN SCRIPTURE

If you have a Bible today – either an analog Bible or a digital Bible – I invite you to turn to **1 Timothy 6**. That’s in the second half of your Bible in the New Testament.

And as you turn there, let’s take a look at the context.

- Who in the world is “Timothy”?
- And why does he have two books of the Bible named after him?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We first meet Timothy in Acts 16.

- He was a young Christian believer from a city called Lystra (located in present day Turkey). Paul met Timothy there on a missions trip, which is how they got connected.
- Scholars believe that Timothy was rather young when he connected Paul; likely in his late teens or early twenties.
- But even at a young age, **Acts 16:2** tells us that “The brothers and sisters at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of [Timothy].” There was something about Timothy’s character and example that stood out – so much so that the text says, “Paul wanted Timothy to go with him...” “Tim, I like you. Come follow Jesus with me.”

Eventually, Paul’s esteem of Timothy grew to the point where he was assigned to a pastoral role in the church at Ephesus (**1 Tim. 1:3**).

During their time apart, with **Timothy in Ephesus** and **Paul on the road or in prison**, they kept in touch with each other by **writing letters**; that was the only long-distance communication method that people had back then.

And two of the letters that Paul wrote to Timothy can be found in our Bible as **1 & 2 Timothy**. So this passage that we're reading today is basically Paul's side of a heart-to-heart conversation that he and Timothy were having.

PASTORAL LETTERS

Now **1 & 2 Timothy**, along with **Titus**, are often referred to as the **Pastoral Letters**. That's because both Timothy and Titus were key pastoral figures in Paul's ministry, and these letters contain instructions, wisdom, and standards of conduct that pastors and ministry leaders are expected to abide by. But don't let the title fool you, because these books are not just for "pastors" only – **these are for ANYONE who wants to live an "unhindered" life and take their relationship with Jesus to the next level.**

TRANSITION to MAIN SCRIPTURE

So with that in mind, let's go to **1 Timothy 6:3-12 (CSB)**.

3 If anyone teaches false doctrine and does not agree with the sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the teaching that promotes godliness, **4** he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words.

From these come envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, **5** and constant disagreement among people whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. **8** If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. **9** But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. **10** For the

love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

11 But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

TRANSITION to 3 DIRECTIVES

Remember what we said earlier: **Contentment is not about WHAT we have, but about WHO we have in Christ.**

Here in this passage, Paul lays out **3 Directives for Finding Contentment in Christ.**

1. To find contentment, we must focus...on the PERSON of Christ

If we don't get Christ right, we're not going to get contentment right.

Paul warns us that without a right view of Christ:

a. We will end up with **wrong morals.**

In **vv. 3-4**, Paul says that a person with a wrong view of Christ is a person who is **"conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words."** Sounds just like Facebook, doesn't it?

From that **dysfunctional foundation**, we get **dysfunctional fruit** – “envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, and constant disagreement among people whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth...”

But not only will we get **wrong morals** without a right view of Christ...

b. We will also end up with **wrong motives**.

v. 5: We “imagine that godliness is a way to material gain.”

EMOTIONAL PROSPERITY GOSPEL/MTD EXPLAINED

I’m sure most of us here have heard of the old-school prosperity gospel—the teaching which says that if you follow Jesus, you’ll always be healthy, always be wealthy, and enjoy a big bank account for the rest of your life. Thankfully more and more people are starting to see through that mess...

But now, there’s a **new** variant of the prosperity gospel making the rounds, and it’s something called **Moral Therapeutic Deism**; or an easier name for it is the **Emotional Prosperity Gospel**.

While the **old-school** prosperity gospel uses Jesus to get **financial gain**, this new **emotional** prosperity gospel uses Jesus **to get emotional and psychological gain**.

This “gospel” teaches that “following Jesus” is all about **you**.

Jesus and the Gospel becomes all about:

- **Maximizing YOUR potential.**
- **Reaching YOUR destiny.**
- **Improving YOUR outlook.**
- **Building YOUR dreams and reaching YOUR goals.**

And if you can **be true to your authentic self**...

...and if you can just **believe in yourself** and remind yourself that **you are enough**, no matter what...

...Jesus will make you **unstoppable**...life will be **exciting**...Jesus will enable you to **cast vision** and **achieve** every kind of **destiny**, **breakthrough**, and **preferred future** that you set your heart on...

...**and anything you can CONCEIVE, you can ACHIEVE!**

Many churches in North America are teaching this right now.

And here's the problem with all that...

- You **can maximize** your potential....
- You **can build** your dreams, **get** your breakthrough, **accomplish** your preferred future...

It is possible to attain ALL of those things—and STILL be OUTSIDE of SAVING RELATIONSHIP with Jesus Christ. You can do all that and still be spiritually DYSFUNCTIONAL or even spiritually DEAD.

- "**Maximizing your potential**" is not enough **to get you into heaven**.
- "**Belief in yourself**" is not enough to **overcome** your **sinful nature**.
- "**Getting a breakthrough**" or "**building your dream**" is not enough to **satisfy your soul** in the hard seasons.
- And "**you are not enough**" to **save yourself** from **spiritual death**.

Jesus Christ – and Christ alone – is the ONE sure, true, and transcendent hope that we have in this life.

EMPHASIS ON V.6: That's why Paul says in v.6 that "Godliness with contentment is great gain".

- I'm not pursuing godliness because of what I can get.
- I'm not pursuing godliness just for the sake of breakthrough, victory, and becoming a better version of myself.
- I'm pursuing godliness because of Who Jesus is – the hope, the goodness, the perfection, and the enough-ness that I find in Him.

Because here's the reality:

- There might be breakthroughs that I pray for and never receive...and that's ok, because I have Jesus.
- I may have struggles and fears that will be a constant thorn in my side until I get to heaven...and that's ok, because I have Jesus.
- My life as God directs might not turn out anything like my preferred future...and that's ok, because I have Jesus.

This is where true contentment begins—not by focusing on ourselves, our own potential/our own effort/our own dreams, or “what’s in it for me”—but CONTENTMENT BEGINS by focusing on the person of Jesus Christ.

First of all, we must focus on the person of Christ, and second of all...

2. ...we must also Focus on the PERSPECTIVE of Christ

In vv. 7-10, Paul **gives us a contrast of two perspectives** – someone looking for **contentment in Christ**, and then someone looking for **contentment in the world**.

Notice in this passage how...

- a. **The Christ-centered perspective finds REST in the LONG TERM** – vv. 7-8: **“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.”**

A Christ-centered perspective helps us to keep the big picture of eternity in mind. It’s like the words of that old hymn: “This world is not my home; I’m just a-passing through.”

Paul says, “Look, it’s not worth getting caught up in the rat race to pursue bigger and better. But as long as God is my provider, and as long as I remember that HE will supply my every need for every day, what do I have to worry about?” What a wonderful promise of God’s rest! And what a wonderful perspective to find hope in.

While the Christ-centered perspective finds **REST** in the **LONG-TERM**, by contrast...

- b. **The world-centered perspective wants RESULTS in the IMMEDIATE** – vv. 9:10: **“But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the LOVE of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”**

WARNING ABOUT THE “ROOT OF ALL EVIL”

Just as a sidenote, notice how Paul emphasizes that “the LOVE of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” This verse is often misquoted as “money ITSELF is the root of all evil”; as a result, there are some well-intentioned but ill-informed Christians who apply this verse in the wrong way.

- Some people believe that Christians should never make above a certain income, or else they’re not truly saved...
- Still others believe that Christians should take vows of poverty and that money is some kind of demonic boogeyman to be afraid of...

The truth is, at the end of the day: **Money in and of itself is not evil; what can be evil is the MOTIVATION *attached* to that money.**

Think about the example of guns.

- A gun, in and of itself, is not inherently evil (and all the gun-owners said amen!)
- **But** if you develop an **obsession** with guns, where all you think about is **hunting**, **shooting**, and **killing**...
- ...and especially if you struggle all the time with **dark thoughts**, or **consuming anger**, or **deep-seated bitterness**...
- and if you have become **totally desensitized** to the taking of **life...** **human life** or I would argue even **animal life**...
- ...then that’s where a love of guns can **really get you in trouble**.

The same principle applies to money. **Money is not evil...but an OBSESSION with or a WRONG PERSPECTIVE of money can take you to a very dark place.**

That's why Paul is so clear that those who want to be rich – those with a world-centered perspective – can be plunged “into ruin and destruction.” We see that every day, don't we?

- Have you witnessed the baggage that comes with a gambling addiction?
- Have you heard of all the shocking extremes that people will go to in order to get rich quick? Fraud? Scams? Embezzlement, etc.?
- Do you know the workaholic whose bank account is thriving, but his physical health, emotional health, and family life are all falling apart?

This warning does not just apply to money, by the way. **Whenever we want any EXPERIENCE, any OUTCOME, or any OBJECTIVE more than we want Christ...**

...if we would rather be rich in the SHALLOWNESS of the HERE-AND-NOW...instead of being rich in the SIGNIFICANCE of ETERNITY, we are choosing ruin and destruction.

- Think of all the relationships who have been destroyed because two unmarried people did not have an eternal perspective.
- Think of the drug addict who's killing their body from the inside out, because they don't have an eternal perspective.
- Think of the famous ministry or influential megachurch whose reputation came crashing down in scandal, because the key leaders in that ministry did not have an eternal perspective.
- Think of that “good Christian family” who shows up to church every Sunday, but they shut God out of the rest of their week... (no family devotional time, no family prayer time, no spiritual conversations)

with the kids), because the parents don't have an eternal perspective.

Which perspective will we embrace today?

- Will we embrace a world-centered perspective that says, "My focus is all in on the present, and I don't care what it costs me, so long as I get my way NOW?"
- **OR** will we embrace an eternal perspective...and say along with Paul, "We can't take anything to heaven...so if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these."

No matter where we find ourselves today...the here-and-now of March 3rd is just a small blip on the radar of eternity. And Jesus offers us HOPE for eternity.

To find True Contentment in Christ:

- **We must focus on the PERSON of Christ**
- **We must focus on the PERSPECTIVE of Christ**

And finally...

3. ...we must Focus on the PRIORITIES of Christ

Paul doesn't stop by just telling Timothy what to avoid; but he also tells Timothy – and us – what to prioritize (vv.11-12).

11 But you, man of God, flee from these things, and *pursue* righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you have made a good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

In other words, “Don’t find contentment by pursuing the priorities of the world; **INSTEAD**, find contentment by pursuing the priorities of Christ.”

Here’s why: the WORLD’S priorities are going to fade away someday...but CHRIST’S priorities are going to last forever.

And when we choose to pursue His priorities in our lives and our character, we’re building a legacy of eternal value; and that legacy is something that the passage of time and the attacks of the enemy can never, ever, EVER take away.

- If we get all caught up in pursuing money, fame, influence, and the worldly “riches” that Paul tells us to flee from, all of that is going to leave us empty.
- But if we choose to pursue the priorities of Christ—righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness—then the Holy Spirit will transform us, and He’ll help us find contentment through the fruit that He’s producing in us.

He’ll take us to that place where we can say,

- “I might not have a big bank account... but I am content to be secure in the righteousness of Christ.”
- “I may not be an influential person... but I am content to be refined into a godlier person.”
- “I may not have answers to all my questions... but I am content to have faith in Jesus for every unanswered question.”

- “I might not have ***an impressive social circle***... but I am **content** to be ***loved by Christ*** and to ***love my neighbor***.”
- “I may never experience my ***preferred future***... but I am **content** to rest in the **endurance** that Jesus will give me for every day.”
- “I might not have ***power*** over every ***obstacle***... but I am **content** to live in **gentleness** and **grow in grace**.”
- And because I am content in who Christ is, and what He has done for me, I am able to fight the good fight every day and take hold of the eternal life to which I was called.

Pursuing the world’s priorities won’t get you anywhere; but pursuing the priorities of Christ will CONTENT you and SUSTAIN you for eternity.

GRANDPA ENGLER’S LEGACY

When I think about “eternity” and “legacy”, I think about my Grandpa...Siegfried Engler. This Wednesday, March 6, will be seven years since Grandpa went to be with Jesus.

The material portion of Grandpa’s legacy is largely obsolete.

- The autobody business that he ran for many years is long gone.
- The farmhouse where he raised my Dad is long gone.
- The house in town that he and Grandma moved to, and where I have many childhood memories; that got sold way back in 2011.
- The cars that Grandpa owned have all been sold; and if any of them are still around somewhere, they’re well past their usability.

Grandpa's **material legacy**, for all intents and purposes, is basically obsolete; but his **spiritual legacy** is still making an impact.

- Grandpa never made the **Forbes** list...but he definitely made it onto **Heaven's list** in the **Lamb's Book of Life**.
- Grandpa never got to travel a whole lot; never even got to come to North Carolina, let alone this church...but every time you see me here, you are seeing the fruit of his legacy. You are seeing the fruit of his choice to pursue the priorities of Christ.
- For many, many years, my Grandma and Grandpa prayed every day for their children and grandchildren to walk with God. My Grandma is 89 and she still prays for all the children and grandchildren every day.
- I remember how all while I was growing up, whenever we'd go to see Grandma and Grandpa, and whenever one of our visits was about to end, Grandpa would always send us off by saying, "Go with God. Keep walking with God." And that was never just a superficial or pseudo-spiritual nicety; that was the genuine heart-cry of a man whose whole life was focused on pursuing the priorities of Christ.
- My Grandpa was content to pursue the priorities of Christ, and his contentment left a spiritual legacy for my Dad to follow. Likewise, my Dad has been content to pursue the priorities of Christ, and his contentment has left a spiritual legacy for me to follow.
- Now in 2024, God has given Jon Engler that same mandate: to find contentment by pursuing the priorities of Christ, and to leave a spiritual legacy for the next generation to follow—if not for a son and daughter of my own, then certainly for your sons and your daughters who are growing up in this church.

CONCLUSION

Contentment is not about WHAT we have—it's about WHO we have in Jesus.

As we get ready to close today, maybe the Holy Spirit has some unfinished business that He wants to take care of in your life.

- Maybe He wants you to focus on the **priorities** of Christ that we just talked about.
- Maybe He wants to shift your **perspective** from being world-centered to Christ-centered.
- Maybe He wants you to start over and go back to the basics, by establishing a relationship with the **person of Jesus Christ**.

Whatever that work is—whatever God needs to do to help you get undistracted from discontentment, or to get your relationship with Jesus in order—we're going to make time for that today. **Because like we said earlier, we won't get contentment right until we get Jesus right.**

- If you've never followed Jesus before, and you've never surrendered to His Lordship before, now's the time to get right with Jesus.
- If you used to follow Jesus at one time, but you've done your own thing, lived by your own rules, and if the world and if life has left you feeling disillusioned and empty, now's the time to get right with Jesus.
- And if there's anything else where your relationship with Jesus has a hurting place...if you know the Holy Spirit is specifically calling you to start something, to stop something, to change something, or to come clean about something...now's the time to get right with Jesus.

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