

THE BIG IDEA: When we say yes to the best, we can say no to the rest.

The Take-Off

If you're new to The Gathering or back for the first time in a while, we're right on the front end of a brand new series that we kicked off last week.

We're taking 10 weeks to focus on developing some pretty significant spiritual disciplines in our lives, and we're taking a peek at some tips and strategies from the Bible that can help us.

A lot of what we talk about during the 10 series can easily be applied to our lives and even shared with friends and co-workers that don't follow Jesus, but every now and then we'll find some truth that either doesn't apply to them, or at least causes them to really push back on what we're talking about.

This morning is one of those times.

Now, if you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus or you don't really buy into the whole Bible or church thing, that doesn't mean you should stand up right now and leave.

Besides the fact of that being a bit awkward, you'd also miss some truth that applies across the board.

But you need to know that what we'll talk about this morning is - I believe - very difficult for believers to live out and downright impossible for anyone to live out without being 100% passionately sold out to following Jesus.

In fact, it's the failure of people who call themselves Christians to live out this truth that may be the reason so many have chosen not to follow Jesus.

Today we'll be talking about the power that comes from living lives of conTENTment, and we'll be talk about 3 benefits that contentment can give us as we make our way through this 10 week period.

We'll spend quite a bit of time turning to a bunch of Scriptures, so if you don't have a Bible, no worries - we'll throw the words up on the screen for you.

If you do have your Bible or your Bible app, go ahead and turn to 1 Timothy 6:6. We'll read that and then we'll dive right into the first of the 3 benefits.

1. Contentment keeps us free

I'm going to state the obvious: most of us are stressed and maxed out.

My guess is that if I could give you a test and your answer would remain anonymous, you're answer to the question

"Do you feel free?" would be no more than yes on most days.

A recent study found that the stress levels in our country are up 30% over the last 30 years, with women, youth and low-income families feeling it the most.

So all of us can relate to the desire to get away, the need to get a break from the stuff that stresses us

Most people don't feel free, and you can't be content if you feel trapped

But contentment doesn't free us. Only Jesus can do that, and so right away you can see why I believe it's not possible to truly be content until first of all we allow Jesus to set us free

And freedom is what Jesus does best!

- Galatians 5:1 - freedom is one of the reasons that Jesus came

- John 8:36 - Jesus wants you always free, not sometimes free

It's fair to ask the question, "How does Jesus set us free?"

He sets us free from sinful hearts that are turned inward.

Our hearts apart from Jesus always crave more (Proverbs 27:20)

But when we're redeemed and set free by Jesus, we find new hearts that have more of our Father's giving nature (John 3:16 - He loved and so he gave)

A simple way to remember this is: **The sinful heart wants more. The redeemed heart gives more.**

Turn over to Hebrews 13:5-6 and lets see how this ties in with contentment.

- verse 5 - the writer calls us to live with contentment

- verses 5-6 - the writer tells us why we can live with contentment

- because God is with us and God is for us

- **Knowing God is with us and for us frees us to be content no matter what is in front of us**

Jesus sets us free from hearts that want more, and contentment with Jesus keeps us free from the temptation to return.

2. Contentment helps us focus

This isn't a real surprising benefit, is it?

Anyone who has ever de-cluttered their home, their room or their car and found something in the process that they'd lost knows that when you free yourself from distractions, you're much more likely to be able to focus. Less becomes more.

A clean yard is easier to keep clean because it's so easy to spot the trash.

We can see this benefit at work in 1 Timothy 6.

- Paul is writing to his protegee, Timothy
- In verse 6 we see our word again - contentment
- The context of everything we're about to read is living free of the desire for more
- verse 5 specifically mentions financial gain, but this applies to more than just money
- In verse 8, Paul mentions specific things that he is content with (food and clothing)
- Why is Paul able to name what he is content with?
- Because he is free (remember, Jesus sets us free and contentment keeps us free) from the desire and stress of more (verses 9-10 describe those desires)

Removing distractions automatically leads to greater focus

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that - free yourself from distractions and then you can focus on Jesus

There's a great story about Jesus that we find in Luke 10:38-42

- Jesus is hanging out at the home of two sisters, Mary and Martha
- Jesus is talking and Mary is sitting at his feet
- Martha is busy cooking and preparing
- Now, for years this has been taught in a way that makes workers feel bad and worshipers feel good, but let's see if we can find another principle in this story today
- Many things distract. Less things don't.
- That's what Jesus said to Martha, isn't it? He said "you are distracted with many things, but Mary has chosen the one thing."
- Martha needed to focus on one thing instead of being distracted by many.
- This isn't a story about laziness versus hard work.
- Sitting isn't better than serving.
- Jesus is better than serving!

Contentment helps us focus on the best choice - Jesus

When we're free from the sinful desire for more and we're able to focus on the best, we find the third benefit of being content...

3. Contentment gives us flexibility

We make different choices, and the choices we make are influenced by a desire to have the flexibility of margin

We don't need to be better at time management. We need to be better at value management.

Contented people value the flexibility that margin gives them.

Contented people stop trying to have everything because they get tired of everything having them.

When we are truly free from selfish desires and are focused on Jesus being enough, then we become intentional about building margin in our lives.

We'll make choices that leads to margin.

That's the Big Idea today that I want you to remember: **When we say yes to the best, we can say no to the rest.**

Most people can't say no because their lives look like this guy (picture of the man in the cubicle)

Even if they wanted to move, they can't. There is no room - margin - in their lives to move.

Let's finish this morning up in Philippians 4:11-13

- Paul says that he has learned the secret of being content no matter what
 - Being content in any situation gives us the flexibility to say yes to any situation
- Ultimately, that is the goal of following Jesus, isn't it? To be able to always say yes to him.
Living lives marked by contentment gives us the margin - the flexibility - to do just that.

The Landing

Let me give you a couple of practical guidelines that can help you as you work out how to apply contentment daily:

- Choose less so you can do more.
- Pick one or two areas where you can work on creating margin.

EX: Choose to wear only 10 outfits during the 10 series, or give away 10 outfits that you no longer wear

- Say no to the replaceable so you can say yes to the irreplaceable

EX: The tv show will run again but bedtime with your children happens once a day

I know this to be true: we won't make it through 10 weeks of intentionally developing 4 spiritual disciplines if we aren't practicing contentment.

But as we learn to embrace contentment, we will be free from what distracts us from Jesus, we will be focused on only Jesus, and we will be flexible enough to say yes to Jesus.

Let's pray.