
TRUST IN THE LORD

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.*

PROVERBS 3:5–6

In your life, what is contentment's greatest enemy? For many of us, it's our tendency to worry. It comes naturally to us, and because our Creator God knows that, He tells us to not worry. Here in Proverbs 3, He states it more positively as He sets forth a solution—one that is simple but not easy.

"Trust in the Lord" is both God's call to not worry and the better option He gives us to move forward. He invites us to trust Him with the pressures of today and our fears about tomorrow. And He asks us to trust in Him with all our heart.

We can, for instance, trust with all our mind that the chair we are sitting in will hold up under our weight. We show our wholehearted trust in that chair's ability to hold us when we actually sit in it. We can believe with all our mind that God will direct our path, but we believe with all our heart when we actually seek His will, listen in prayer for His words of direction, and choose to focus our thoughts on Him. Reminding ourselves of who God is—almighty, wise, merciful, loving, gracious, faithful, and compassionate—will fuel our trust in Him.

Are you willing to let this Lord lead you moment by moment “in all your ways”? God wants us to trust Him completely, and we demonstrate our trust when we let Him guide our life. We find contentment as we walk along the path He has for us.

Lord, please grow my trust in You by helping me recognize Your guiding voice and giving me courage to walk the path You have for me, a path where I will know contentment in You.

3

WHOSE CONTENTMENT?

*Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.*

PSALM 37:3

Doing good to others—doesn't that suggest we'd be increasing *their* contentment rather than our own? I propose that in this case, contentment is not a matter of either/or but of both/and.

After all, as the apostle Paul quoted Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). "Doing good" implies giving, but not only gifts that are tangible. We can give a shoulder to lean on and an ear to listen. We can pray for people, even if they aren't aware of it. We can take a meal, leave a bag of groceries on the porch, or watch the kids on a Saturday. We can drive people to appointments, vacuum their house, or mow their lawn. We can cover a rental payment or help with some bills.

And we can do good generously and frequently when we "trust in the Lord." As we seek to obey Him and to be His light, He will lead us to people we can bless with our help and provision. Remembering His past faithfulness and knowing that our unchanging God will always be faithful, we can help people. When we do good, we make our Lord's love more real to those we love in His name.

Whatever good we offer, when we do good to others, our true Christian self shows up. We will find deep satisfaction in serving people God puts in our path and showing them the selfless love that points people to Jesus. God blesses us so that we can be a blessing to those around us. Being used by God truly brings genuine contentment.

Good and gracious God, thank
You for the contentment I know
when You use me to bless others
in ways that make Your goodness
and grace more real to them.

GOD'S PLEASURE IN OUR PURPOSE

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

JOHN 15:5

Created to swim, a fish swept onto dry sand can't be what God made it to be. Created to fly, a bird locked in a cage can't experience the soaring-above-the-earth freedom God made it to know. Created to abide in Jesus, the Vine, you and I can't bear the fruit God made us to bear when we are living apart from Him.

But what does a life of abiding in Jesus even look like? Simply put, it is a life yielded completely to God. We live focused on Him, filled with His Holy Spirit, willing to go wherever He leads and to do whatever He calls us to do. Living aligned with our Creator God enables us to know purpose, meaning, and joy.

Knowing our purpose on this planet—being salt and light, loving with Jesus' love, sharing the gospel—and living out that purpose brings profound satisfaction and peace. One might even say contentment. Jesus clarified: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (v. 4).

So if we want to bear fruit—if we want to live out our purpose on this planet and find meaning in life—we need to abide in Jesus, relying on Him to

guide our steps and being filled with His love so that we may share it with others.

Maybe you've heard what 1924 Olympian Eric Liddell once said: "God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." Feeling God's pleasure is surely an aspect of knowing contentment.

Lord God, please help me to know not only Your pleasure but also heaven-sent contentment as, abiding in You, I bear kingdom fruit where You have planted me.

5

STEPPING TOWARD
CONTENTMENT

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! . . . Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4, 6-7

Rejoice in the Lord” is a call to rejoice in all that Jesus is and in all that He has done. For starters, we can rejoice in the fact that our Lord Jesus is loving, gracious, patient, compassionate, forgiving, faithful, and good. We can rejoice in the amazing grace of His dying on the cross for our sins, redeeming us from separation from God, offering us hope for today and for eternity, and blessing us with His Spirit. Despite all that Jesus is and all that He has done and continues to do for us, we still need the reminder to “rejoice in [Him].”

And Paul, the author of Philippians, went on to offer tips for living with a mindfulness of our many reasons to rejoice. We are, for instance, to pray with thanksgiving. Having placed our concerns at Jesus’ feet, we will then know His peace. Paul also called us to take charge of our thought life. Are we filling our minds with ideas that fuel joy or worry, calm or stress, hope or hopelessness? Paul wisely counseled us to keep our minds focused on “whatever things are true . . . noble . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report . . . [and] praiseworthy” (v. 8).

Choosing to think on the things of God and

committing our problems to the Lord, we can rest in His care. Acknowledging His faithfulness and love will fuel joy and hope—and a good amount of contentment—whatever life’s circumstances.

Please teach me to live, Almighty God, with a more consistent focus on You, surrendering my problems to You, resting in Your faithful care, and knowing contentment in the joy and hope You provide.

THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER

I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the LORD.

JEREMIAH 29:11-14

Prophets of the Old Testament stood before God's people with messages from Him, and today's passage is one example. Jeremiah was speaking to the nation of Israel, and the God he spoke of is the same today as He was then. Our unchanging God is also unchanging in His gift-giving. Just as He blessed Israel with His grace and mercy, He will bless us with His grace and mercy today.

So consider Jeremiah's prophetic words of hope. Speaking for God, Jeremiah told Israel that He wants to give them "a future and a hope." Jeremiah reassured Israel that God will listen when His people call on Him and pray to Him. Ultimately, God gave His people a future and hope—a heavenly future and eternal hope—through His crucified and resurrected Son. Jesus bridged the gap between holy God and sinful us, so we can not only call on God but call Him "Abba, Father" when we do. Clearly, God's Old Testament promise stands: we find Him when we seek Him with all our heart.

Our unchanging Lord—who is the same yesterday, today, and forever—offers you hope for the

future, His promise to listen when you pray, and His pledge that when you seek Him, you will find Him. Rest in those truths and know contentment.

Thank You for the peace, hope, and, yes, contentment that I experience when I remember that You, my gracious, merciful, faithful, and attentive Father God, are the same yesterday, today, and forever.

7

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

JOHN 10:11–15

Not many of us in the twenty-first century appreciate all that a shepherd does for his sheep. His or her role as protector and provider is multifaceted and demanding. Leading the flock to clean water and fresh pasture, protecting the sheep from predators as well as ear mites, searching for lost sheep, standing upright the sheep that stumble—the shepherd is on duty 24/7 overseeing the very needy charges.

Jesus is our Good Shepherd who watches over us, His vulnerable, frequently straying sheep. Going beyond a first-century shepherd whose life could be endangered by wolves and lions who saw sheep as their next meal, our Good Shepherd came to earth to give His life to save us. He died an excruciating death on the cross as the perfect and therefore final sacrifice for our sins, so that we might know God's forgiveness and eternal life with Him.

Why would we ever think we could find a better life outside the care of our Good Shepherd?

Thank You, Jesus, for being my Good Shepherd—for helping me stand when I fall, overseeing my care 24/7, and coming after me when, foolishly looking for contentment apart from You, I stray.

IF GOD IS FOR US

*If God is for us, who can be against us? . . .
Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or
famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . I am
persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels
nor principalities nor powers, nor things present
nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any
other created thing, shall be able to separate us from
the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

ROMANS 8:31, 35, 38–39

Did you really hear—with your heart as well as your head—the words you just read? Or are these remarkable statements so familiar that you nod along rather than sit in awe of the profound truth they set forth?

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” This question points to the unshakable security and hope we can find in the love God offers us, a love made manifest in Jesus’ death on the cross. What a testimony, that God is indeed for us. The trouble and pain we all experience may call into question whether God is on our side, but a glance at the cross reassures us that He is.

If we need any more convincing, in verses 38 through 39 Paul listed the forces we may believe could separate us from God’s love, and he declared that could never be the case. Once we accept Jesus’ death on the cross for our sin—once we embrace that act as the rock-solid testimony of God’s love for us—absolutely nothing can break that bond of divine, life-saving love. We are secure in the arms of Jesus, today and forevermore. Could anything in all creation make us any more content?