

Contentment, Peace, and Rest

When I began to think and pray about what to write for this devotion, three words continually came to my mind: contentment, peace, and rest. At first, I thought which one should I choose? Finally, after much prayer and “wrestling” with God, I decided I wasn’t supposed to choose just one, but I needed to study what God had to say about each of them.

Let’s first look at contentment. The word itself according to the Oxford Dictionary means, “a state of happiness and satisfaction.” It is derived from a Latin word meaning held together or whole and was used to describe things like cups or barrels. Eventually, the word would be used to describe a person’s feeling of completeness. This is a lot to unpack!

Sometimes before we can move forward we have to look back. The opposite of contentment may be seen as dissatisfaction, desiring more, or wanting something you don’t or can’t have. This feeling traces all the way back to Genesis in the Garden of Eden. We all, especially as women, know about the fall of man by way of Adam and Eve. God created a garden of contentment with beautiful trees, delicious fruit, flowing rivers, and precious metals. Adam and Eve weren’t satisfied with all that God had given them, instead they wanted what God said they couldn’t have. One could leap to the conclusion that they didn’t trust God when He told them if they ate of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would die. We could even conclude they didn’t trust God to provide for them or they desired to have the same power God has, to be his equal. As the old saying goes, hindsight can be 20/20. Lucky for us God had a plan that cures all dissatisfaction.

Next, peace. What is peace? It’s a word that gets tossed around almost as much as the word love. It even has its own hand gesture that everyone including little ones recognize. Peace is used to describe periods of time when nations are not at war or in conflict with each other. It is also used to describe the absence of an inner struggle. But what does God’s word say about peace? A quick google search reveals the word peace is used in the Bible over 400 times. One of my favorite “go to” verses is John 14:27 (NLT) - “I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” You know the Bible refers to Jesus as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). God did not provide just the feeling of peace, He provided his son and the Holy Spirit in order for us to fully experience the peace that only he can give.

Finally, the word rest. When I think about rest, I think sleep and then I giggle, because let’s face it none of us get enough sleep. Whether your stage of life is full of late night studying, late night feedings or diaper changes, late nights waiting on teenagers to get home, or just late night thoughts pondering the world we live in and planning our next projects we are going to tackle, there is always something pulling us away from getting enough rest. But Jesus says, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28 (NLT) I’m tempted to shorten this verse to Come to me, all, I will give you rest, but God recognizes our periods of weariness and he sees the burdens of our hearts. He knows us to our inner core and He offers rest, and one can think in that rest He offers peace and contentment.

Now I understand why God would not let me choose just one of the words he laid on my heart. You see, true contentment comes from Him, the Prince of Peace and the giver of rest. Whatever it is you find yourself struggling with today, hand it over to God so you can experience the gift he offers to us.

If you do not know Jesus, he offers a gift greater than contentment. He offers eternal life, a life not separated from God. He overcame death in order for us to live. He paid the price for our sins in order for us to have salvation. Even though Christmas is still a few weeks away, you can unwrap the greatest gift you will ever receive today!

PRAYER: Today Lord I am grateful to know when I am broken you will pick up the pieces and hold me together. I ask that you make me whole and complete in you. Help me to look to you and not the world around me for peace and remind me when my circumstances aren't what I want them to be, you have given me an invitation to come to you with my heavy heart and you will give me rest. Thank you for rescuing me from my sin and thank you for your never-ending love.

-Holli Martin