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by Berni Dymet



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The Road to Contentment

*If contentment is something you're looking
for, then this booklet is for you.*

christianityworks



the road to
contentment

by berni dymet

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CHAPTER 1

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Contentment. Who doesn't want that? The problem is that we all have *things* going on in our lives that seem to rob us of contentment. Okay, so perhaps God does want you and me to be content. But some days, that just feels like mission impossible.

We're going to head off on a journey with the Apostle Paul in this booklet; a journey that's a bit of a mission impossible. Paul was a man who, in the first century, had persecuted Christians. That was, until he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. That meeting totally changed his life, to the point where he went out and started sharing the

Good News of Jesus with the rest of the world
– *a complete turnaround.*

We're going to pick up some of the story as Paul recounts it to his friends in Corinth. Now, Corinth was a racy place, a busy city at the intersection of a couple of major trade routes from east to west. It was a city full of immorality and so even though there was a large, thriving church in Corinth, they were into a lot of things that reflected the culture in which they lived, things that were far from godly.

So the Apostle Paul wrote them a letter (we call it First Corinthians) and these days it's one of the books in the New Testament of the Bible. It's a pretty harsh document; a tough going over for the Corinthians.

But we're going to pick up the story in the second letter that Paul wrote to them, Second Corinthians, because in it he shares much of the story of his journey thus far. And I have to tell you, it was a serious case of mission impossible, or so it seemed from a human perspective. Especially when it comes to experiencing contentment, which is what we're talking about



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in this booklet, *The Road to Contentment*.

So, let's join the Apostle Paul. He writes:

Look, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we don't lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's Word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled to those who are perishing, in their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we don't proclaim ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But listen, we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it might be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and doesn't come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not

crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying the death of Jesus in our bodies, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So, death is at work in us, but life in you.

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture – 'I believed, and so I spoke' – we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we don't lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look at not what we can see, but



He's doing all the right things. Paul is out there on the road, telling people about Jesus and yet he's facing the onslaught, this barrage of persecution to the point where he's in fear for his very life.

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what we can't see; for what we can see is temporary, but what we can't see is eternal.

(2 Corinthians 4:1-18)

So, do you get the picture here? Paul and his ministry team weren't having a particularly easy time of it, were they? That's an understatement!! They were doing it really tough.

When was the last time that you were feeling afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down? Paul is out there proclaiming the truth. He has forsaken the shameful things, the sins of his past; he's not proclaiming himself, he's not building an empire for himself, he's not building a reputation for himself. No. He's proclaiming Christ!

He's doing all the right things. Paul is out there on the road, telling people about Jesus and yet he's facing this onslaught, this barrage of persecution to the point where he's in fear for his very life.

So when all this happens, is he complaining about it the way that perhaps you and I might? Is he trying to wish it away? Is he trying to

avoid it? Is he dreaming of a better, easier life?

None of those things. Instead, he downplays it all, calling it *a momentary affliction*. See, discontentment is when we want our circumstances to change, so that things will be better for us so that then, we can be content. This is what we think to ourselves.

But Paul is completely content. Completely! He wouldn't change a thing. He's out there getting about God's business of winning souls, completely focussed on Jesus; completely focussed on what Jesus has called him to do. Completely! That's the secret. Jesus is his contentment. The promise of what is to come is his contentment.

His body is being tried and tested on the outside, but on the inside he's growing richer, more powerful in his faith, more content with what the Lord's called him to do.

My friend, that's the secret! That's the answer!

Paul is living his life ... listen to this ... **in glad submission**. I'll say it again ... **in glad submission** to Jesus. The moment we gladly



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give ourselves over to the Lord, then we stop wishing that we could change this or change that, because those things cease to be important.

I can tell you from personal experience that in moments of selfishness and weakness, which we all have, contentment evaporates.

But when I spend time with Jesus, when I get back to who He is and what He's done and what He's calling me to do, can I tell you, the rest of what's going on, the things that I have to tolerate sometimes and suffer ... they cease to matter.

Contentment returns.

CHAPTER 2 THE POWER OF REPENTANCE

One of the other things that robs us of contentment, is our sin in general.

So ... what are the nasty little sins that you're hanging onto in your life? You know; you've given everything else over to God, except ... except just this one thing.

It may be something like gossiping and complaining, something that's evident to all. Or, it may be something that you do in secret, sexual immorality, that nobody except God and you can ever see.

Whatever it is, there is no such thing as a small, insignificant sin.

If that one thing you're holding back from God were the only sin in all of human history, Jesus would still have come to die for you, because the penalty for that one little insignificant sin is eternal separation from God. No sin is small to God. And as things turn out, no sin is too small for Satan either, because it gives him a foothold into your life. In fact, he doesn't even need a foothold, just a toehold will do. Ephesians 4:27 tells us that we shouldn't make room for the devil. And there's a reason for that.

When I was in the military studying strategy and tactics for war, one of the things they taught us was that if you were invading a piece of land from the sea, the first thing that you had to do was establish a beachhead. A small piece of land that you'd secure by putting your forces on the ground, so that you could safely land the rest of your forces and equipment, as well as establish your logistical pipeline.

Without that secure beachhead it was impossible to land the rest of your force and complete your objective.



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Now, putting the shoe on the other foot, if you were the defending force on the land, trying to stop an enemy invading you from the sea, you would do everything you possibly could to deny them a secure beachhead, because you knew that without it, they'd fail.

That one thing, that one sin, that we're holding back from God is like a secure beachhead for Satan. Because only the power of God can secure it for you. The problem is, you've kept God out of that part in your life, so you are giving Satan free reign to plunder the rest of your life from that one beachhead.

Let me ask you, when that happens can you really blame God for a lack of contentment in your life? Well, of course not.

Contentment is a gift from God. It's really important to Him, He really wants you and me to be content. But sin is going to rob us of that contentment, each and every time. That's why repentance is such a powerful thing – because whilst you're under the power of sin, you simply cannot be content.

Let's continue with the Apostle Paul in 2nd Corinthians, as he shares the power – God's power – of repentance with us:

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

For even when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way – disputes without and fears within. But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still the more. For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I don't regret it (though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly). Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief



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produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in this matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God. In this we find comfort.

In addition to our own consolation, we rejoiced still the more at the joy of Titus, because his mind had been set fully at rest by all of you. For if I have been somewhat boastful about you to him, I was not disgraced; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proven true as well. And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you. (2 Corinthians 7:1-16)

Now, here Paul is talking about making the Corinthians (to whom he's writing here) sad and sorry with his previous (first) letter – that book in the New Testament that we now call 1st Corinthians – which was sternly written, admonishing them for all kinds of sin; for sexual immorality, for idol worship, for disunity, all sorts of things. If you or I received a letter like 1st Corinthians, we'd be quite hurt and annoyed I'd expect.

All the while Paul and his friends are suffering greatly for the sake of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. So, Paul sends his friend Titus to Corinth, to see how the Corinthians are getting on after his first, rather harsh letter. Titus comes back to report that the letter's had the most amazing impact, because they have ... *repented! They've turned away from their sins. They've let God in to reign and to rule as Lord.*

It was a very stern letter that led the Corinthians to grieve, to be discontented, if you will. They recognised their evil ways and realised they had to change. That godly discontent led

them on a path to repentance. And that's exactly what's meant to happen.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Sometimes the reason we're not contented, is that sin is robbing us of our contentment. But when we come to our senses and change our minds – and that's what the word 'repentance' actually means – then that grief leads to salvation without regrets. That's the place where contentment begins.

That's the power of repentance.

Sin brings discontentment ... and conversely ... repentance brings contentment.

It's a simple case of cause and effect.

CHAPTER 3

GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT

So far, we've been discovering how to get our lives on the road to contentment. We've seen God's plan is very much that we should be content. In fact, He places a high premium, a high value indeed on contentment. It is, if you will, a normal part of living our lives for Him, no matter what happens to be going on around us. He says to us through the Apostle Paul:

There is indeed great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with those.

(1 Timothy 6:6-7)

Absolutely there is great value in godliness and contentment! Contentment is that sense that we're not dancing to the tune of our desires anymore. We look around at what we have and perhaps even more importantly, what we don't have, and we don't feel that restlessness, that nagging desire to have more, to be more, to have more thought of us.

And God particularly wants us to experience that contentment in the face of the conflicts and the trials that we are going through.

Let's take another look at the Apostle Paul. As his life hung in the balance on death row in that Roman dungeon, he was, nevertheless, able to rejoice and to write these words to his friends in Philippi:

Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, I know what it is to have plenty. And in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. For I can do all things

through Him who strengthens me.

(Philippians 4:11-13)

We're about to discover another way of finding contentment. One of the things that often robs us of contentment is the desire for more money and the things that money can buy.

I used to be very much trapped in this desire for more wealth before I became a Christian. The more of it that I gained, the less satisfied and content I became. That's a terrible paradox, but it's true. It happens time and time again, which is exactly what God tells us:

The lover of money will not be satisfied with money; nor the lover of wealth, with gain. This also is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

And so we're going to go to God's radical plan for breaking free from this addiction to wealth, which constantly makes us discontented with whatever we have.

And that radical plan involves radical giving.

Let's pick up again what Apostle Paul has to say in writing to his friends in Corinth. He was a man on a mission to raise support for the



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Christians in Jerusalem who were going hungry because of a great famine. So he's encouraging the Corinthians, who were quite wealthy, to give in the same way that the Macedonians had given.

But the Macedonians, as it turned out, weren't wealthy at all. Here is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints – and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. Now as you excel in everything – in your faith, in speech,

in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you – so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

I'm not saying this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich. And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something – now to finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has – not according to what one doesn't have. I don't mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.

(2 Corinthians 8:1-13)



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Now the power of what God's saying here to us through Paul is this: generosity breeds contentment. Look at the Macedonians – they had so little and yet they were so eager to give as much as they possibly could. They begged Paul to be able to give to those who had even less than them, their brothers and sisters in Christ living in Jerusalem who were starving.

Now, you might say to me: *Berni, hang on a minute, you're putting the cart before the horse here. They're giving didn't breed contentment; it was the other way around. They were already content; and so their generosity was a product of that contentment.*

True. That's the way it reads. But here Paul is using their example to test the genuineness of the faith and the love of the Corinthians who were, by comparison, very wealthy indeed. This was a lesson for the Corinthians, to teach them to be generous, because Paul knew that if they could get through this, if they could give generously and sacrificially, the insidious control that wealth had over their hearts would be broken.

This act of generosity, he goes on to say, is like mimicking Jesus. Become more like the One who gave up everything, so that we might have everything forever.

As surely as night follows day, when we start to give sacrificially to God's work, little by little, the lure of wealth loses its power over us and we start to experience the contentment that God always had planned for our lives.

That's exactly how it happened for me. I didn't become a Christian until age 36, by which time I owned a very profitable business and I was earning a lot of money. And I remember Christians talking about this thing – *tithing*. The idea apparently was to give a tenth of your income to God's work. (*Can you believe it?* I'd ask myself!)

Now, at that point when I became a Christian, I was really well off. And yet week after week I'd go to church, I'd be blessed by the teaching and the fellowship, I'd be growing in my faith, but when the offering plate came around, I'd put in some loose change.

Tithing? Ten percent?! *You have to be kidding me.*

You'd think for someone who was very well off that it wouldn't be a problem.

But here's the thing, when you're earning a lot of money, ten percent turns out to be an awful lot of money to give away. Yet God is gracious and the Holy Spirit worked away at me until eventually, I grimaced and took the plunge. I began to tithe my income. It was hard at first I don't mind telling you. That was almost twenty years ago, and looking back on it now, I can see how God used that in my life to set me free from the desire to always buy the next thing ... and the next thing ... and the next thing.

I have so little desire for *things* these days, which is completely the opposite of what I used to be like. I always wanted to accumulate '*stuff*', even though it never satisfied me. And I can honestly tell you that the principle that Paul is talking about here in 2 Corinthians chapter 8 is absolutely true, it works.

If you want to be content, if you want to break the power of that desire for wealth in your life – a desire that simply breeds discontent in your heart – then start giving sacrificially to God’s work. And pretty soon, sacrifice will turn into generosity and generosity will overflow into a rich abundance of contentment in your life.

This is always the way it works. Always.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berni Dymet is a contemporary Christian communicator with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus right into the middle of life. He comes from the perspective that this Christianity thing - it isn't just a faith that lives in our heads or even our hearts, but that it actually works right here in the middle of our lives.

Christianity actually works when we dare to accept Jesus Christ into our lives!! Not just as Saviour, but also as Lord.

Millions of people around the globe tune into Berni's radio programs each week. The Lord has given him a special gift for sharing the Gospel in a truly practical way. In a way that really connects into the hearts and lives of real people in real places, transforming their lives. That's what the ministry of Christianityworks is all about. Leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

But Berni's passion, his enthusiasm and his insights into the day to day realities of life are simply tools in God's hands. The real change agent is God Himself.

And to Him - and Him alone - be all the glory.

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Berni Dymet

The Road to Contentment

Contentment is something of a “Holy Grail” for many a person. *Why can't I be at peace? Why don't I have that quiet, warm sense of contentment?* Those are questions that many people are asking. And why not? After all, God places such a high value on bringing contentment into our lives.

The question is, *Where do you get it? How do you get it?*

Join Berni Dymet in this booklet as he opens God's Word to discover how you can get on the road to contentment.

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