

CONTENT WITH ENOUGH

“I would ask God for exactly what he is giving if only I knew what he knows.”
— Tim Keller

What tells us when we have reached the point of “too much of a good thing?” Most of us would agree that it is a good thing to have a home, clothes to wear, food to eat, friends, and purpose in life. **How do we know when we have too much of those good things? The spiritual practice of simplicity, which we call “Content with Enough,” answers that question.**

Before joyous freedom can be our way of life, we need to ask ourselves some hard questions. Why does it matter how many “likes” or views we get on social media? Why does it matter how many awards we get, or who is in our selfies with us? Why does it matter how big our house, how new our car, or the brand of our clothes? Why does it matter how full our schedule, how busy our lives? Basically, it matters because we can let those things tell us how important we are, how valuable we are, how loved we are.



There is a better voice to hear. “You are loved simply because you are mine,” says our Heavenly Father. If anything other than his voice tells us our value and informs our identity, our lives are set on a disastrous trajectory. The things we are attached to will begin to own us. **On the other hand, uncluttered, uncomplicated rhythms of life keep us tuned into his voice, his acceptance — and freedom.**

At the heart of the spiritual practice of simplicity is how we get our sense of self. A true sense of self only comes as we linger in his presence, being known by him, knowing him, and enjoying him. Knowing that we are measurelessly loved by God removes our need to seek love and approval from other places. His love for us takes away need to prove ourselves lovable. Being loved by God means we don’t have to accumulate proof that we are worthy of being loved. **When we have simple, “contented with enough” life practices, we live without distractions; we focus on life as his beloved. And the ramifications touch every sphere of life.**

How can we model a pattern for our children so that they enjoy a lifelong sense of self based on eternal truth? How can we live in the way of Jesus, so our children do not measure their worth by stuff, schedule, or significance according to others? How can we help our children have a secure identity, lives motivated and energized by love from God and for God?

By abiding in his presence and through the transforming power of the Spirit of God, we pray that we will be able to say, “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know both 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 ... I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11-13 CSB).

Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. Let’s talk about how much is enough.”

CONTENT WITH ENOUGH

INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Hold a piece of paper over each of your ears. Can you hear me say, “I love you”? Now tie a piece of cloth around your head so it covers your ears and the paper. Can you hear me say, “I love you”? Now put on a cap that is big enough to cover your ears, the paper and the cloth. Is it harder and harder to hear me say, “I love you”? What happens when you put your hands over your ears and all those layers? “I love you!” Can you hear me?

God tells us that he loves us in so many ways. Sometimes we don’t hear God’s loving voice, because other things get in the way and we are too busy to listen.

Let’s end each day with some time reminding each other that God loves us. I’ll sing to you and then you sing to me — Jesus loves you, this I know.

ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Let’s read Philippians 4:11-13 together. What does it mean to have enough? What does it mean to have “more than enough”? What is an example of “too much of a good thing”?

Here are three envelopes labeled with those three categories. Let’s take these pieces of paper and decide which envelope they belong in. (Put one of these items on each piece of paper: toys, money, pets, shoes, socks, clothes, balls, books, activities, parties, sports, work, play time, snacks, food.)

Let’s thank God for all he has given to you. Then ask him to help you know how to simplify the things that you have in the “more than enough” or the “too much” envelopes. (Allow conversation with God time.) What is God telling you?

PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

There is an especially important secret to be learned that will give you an abundant life. Let’s see if you can find it as you read Philippians 4:11-13 (CSB): “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. ... In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content. ... I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Simplicity is not an easy habit to learn, because there are so many voices around us telling us that “more is better.” **Let’s ask God to teach us to be satisfied with enough.** (Pause.) In your journal, write “enough” at the top of one column and “too much of a good thing” in the column next to it. Now draw a little flame in the first column and then next to it draw what “too much” looks like. (Repeat this with water, ice, food, clothes, work, or other ideas from the child.)

Now, let’s sit with God for a minute and ask him to tell you what might be something that you have “too much” of, something you can simplify in order to learn the “contentment secret.”

RECOMMENDED RESOURCE

What Does Your Soul Love?: Eight Questions That Reveal God’s Work in You
by Gem and Alan Fadling