

**PLENTY TOO MUCH SERIES WEEK 5**  
**PLENTY TOO MUCH JOY AND CONTENTMENT**  
**6/21/2020**

**I. Introduction:** Today we are continuing our series called PTM based on my book.

Happy Father's Day guys! If you are listening to this message here at church or online, you're a hero in my eyes. Thank you for leading your family spiritually during this time.

In this series, we are learning of how God wants to use a different way of thinking and believing to live in the full abundant measure of God's favor and grace. We know from God's Word that His plan is for us to live a life of abundant grace and favor in every area of our life through Christ Jesus, not only so we can be blessed but so we can make our biggest difference. We've said for this to happen we have to have a different mindset than the world. We need to go from a scarcity mindset driven by fear to an abundance or PTM mindset built on faith. We need to be faith thinkers and faith walkers even in fearful times.

Today, we want to talk about joy and contentment. Living a PTM mindset is living a life of overflowing joy and contentment. This is so important. I love what Jesus prayed in John 17:13 for all of us. *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that thy may have the full measure of my joy within them."* Another way of saying this is: "They would have my plenty too much joy overflowing continuously in their life, that nothing would stop their joy no matter what happens to them even in the middle of a pandemic, economic downturn, and nationwide protests. Nothing would be able to stop their joy."

I put up two tents because I want to help us remember that we have a choice of where we are going to live our life. I want to show us from the Word that it is a choice whether we are going to live in the tent of contentment or discontentment. I really believe that one of these two things will be the prevailing spirit and attitude of our lives that will make a huge difference. Isaiah describes it as either wearing a garment of heaviness or having a spirit of praise. Jesus gives us His Spirit to turn our mourning into dancing, beauty for ashes and a spirit of praise for a garment of heaviness.

**II. What is contentment and why does it matter so much?**

A. Contentment is not denial or resignation. It isn't that we give up and settle for a miserable life because there is nothing we can do anyhow. It doesn't mean we become a spiritual Eeyore, walking around looking like we've been baptized in pickle juice, waiting for the rapture. "How are you?" "Ok, under the circumstances." No, contentment is not resigning to the circumstances; it is RISING UP in the circumstances by having the joy of the Lord overflowing in

your life, changing the atmosphere like Paul and Silas, and even breaking the chains of negative circumstances. Richard Wurmbrand, in the communist prison wrote, “Alone in a cell; cold, hungry, and in rags, I danced for joy every night. Sometimes I was so filled with joy that I felt I would burst if I didn’t give expression to it.”

B. Why is this so important?

1. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Nehemiah 8:10... *“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”*

Joy is not the reward the Lord gives us when we get through a hard time; it is the strength His grace gives us in the middle of the hard time so we get through it. We want divine joy when we finish the race and win the victor’s prize, we need the joy in the moments of pain that make us want to give up.

What is of a bigger concern of the Lord than the hardship we are enduring (economic loss, tension, uncertainty) is whether we lose our joy. If we lose our contentment, we won’t just lose a battle here and there; we will lose the war.

This happened to the children of Israel. They had some hard things happen in the wilderness, enemies attacked, droughts, food shortages, some pretty major detours. But in the end God got them through those things just like we will get through this pandemic. Businesses will open again, a vaccine or whatever will come and masks will be no more. The big thing for Israel is that they fell into a spirit of complaint. They began to murmur. It wasn’t ultimately droughts that defeated them but their attitudes and the unbelief that came with the hard things. The result was that their discontentment became their grave, where they stopped their relationship with God, gave up on their destiny and never entered the promise land.

Satan isn’t trying to steal your toilet paper; he’s trying to steal your joy so he can steal your DESTINY. God doesn’t want anything to die in the wilderness and joy is the greatest VACCINE to the virus of complaint and discontentment. Without joy you will splatter in this time, with joy you will bounce back.

2. Contentment is the key to advancement. When we choose contentment, we are not just choosing a better attitude but we are agreeing to go to the higher purpose God has for us. We are agreeing to go through this not my way but His way, to endure and overcome so that He gets what He wants.

God never says no to anything in our life without saying yes to something else. If God is saying no to something we want right now, it is because He wants us to let go of what we were thinking was the best for our life so we can discover what *is* the best. Some people become so discouraged when a certain door doesn't open; they curse the door, even curse God. But if we would let the closed door direct us toward God, we would find an open door better than the one we imagined.

When I finished seminary as a young man, I returned to El Paso with hopes of a great ministry. I was excited. I felt anointed like I knew all of the answers, God's man of faith and power. But others weren't seeing it. I had the answers but no one was asking the question. I needed a job and the only one I could find was stacking wood at a wood manufacturing factory. I had to stack wood into train cars and feed dowels into machines 10 hours a day. I remember I stood in front of a clock and I can tell you I never knew that a minute could take so long.

I complained and moaned. One day the Lord really challenged me. He asked me, "Whose hands are those?" I said, "Yours, Lord." "Whose feet, whose breath, whose time?" Of course, I said, "Yours, Lord." He showed me that I had missed His plan and had become focused on my ways. I remember Him asking me if He wanted His feet to stand there and do this for the next 20 years, wasn't that His right. I repented. God showed me that He wanted me to learn contentment in that place. I wasn't to live in the land of someday. I was to believe that God had given me everything I needed for my present joy and to make my biggest difference in that moment, in exactly the place I was. He showed me that if I would praise Him and change my focus, He would fill me and use me in a special way. That very thing happened. Within a few months I was given a position as a pastor in a church. But more important, God taught me the key to a plenty too much lifestyle.

Psalms 37:4 says, "*Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*"

Find contentment in the Lord. He will promote you and move you to places you are destined to be. You will be ready to be in those places with effectiveness because learning to be content with little, you can be trusted with much.

An interesting side story: many years later that business owner gave \$20,000 to start the first Charlie's Lunch Christmas. HFTW eventually used warehouse space to start a Borderland Kids food ministry and we

were able bring the gospel message to the employees. A pastor that worked there became a key partner to take HFTW ministry to Mexico, where we met and connected with Pastor Vicky, our present Anapra hidden hero partner.

### III. How do you choose and experience PTM joy and contentment even in hard circumstances?

A. It involves changing from a scarcity to a PTM mindset. Paul would beautifully describe this way of thinking in Philippians 4. He is writing from a Roman prison cell, but the whole theme of Philippians is plenty too much joy. He's thanking a church in Philippi and writes this note to them because they had sent an offering to help with his physical needs in jail. He says in vs. 11-13,

*"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

The secret, of course, is that our joy and contentment doesn't come from our circumstances; it comes from the Lord who fills us with joy from the inside out, not the outside in.

Can I show you that He's speaking of a mindset? He is proclaiming the truth I shared earlier. It is the belief **that God has provided everything I need for my present happiness and success** regardless of my conditions. There is enough in Jesus for me to be filled *now* with complete joy and sufficiency because Christ is my source. There is a beautiful underscoring of the underlying meaning of Philippians 4:13 found in the Amplified version. It says,

*"I can do all things (which he has called me to do) through Him who strengthens me (to fulfill his purpose)-I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace."*

The word strength means a fusion where two elements meet and one is swallowed up by the strength of the other. An example is a coffee brewer, the plain water has no flavor but it is fused with the coffee bean and becomes filled with coffee to the point you don't even know that its water with coffee. It's just coffee. That describes exactly how joy works in our life. When Christ's Spirit in us

overflows, it swallows up the drabness, disappointment, discouragement we may have in our emotions with the very joy of Heaven, from the most joyful person in the universe-the “*well spring of eternal gladness*”, our Papa God. It is joy potent enough to make us want to dance in prison.

It starts with changing your mindset from the circumstances around you to the Christ who is within you. I was in traffic and had one of those moments where my joy was being stolen by rude drivers. I remember telling myself that God has provided everything I need for my present joy and happiness in this exact moment. I began to rejoice and experience that overflowing of the Spirit’s life in the discontented space of my human emotions.

B. In the story that we have based this series, Jesus offers joy and contentment to the beneficiaries of the miracle meal. We read how the next day after the feeding of the 5000, the crowd came looking for Jesus to get another meal. They’re hoping for the never ending “buffet.”

In John 6:26 Jesus says, “*I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous sign.*”

Like many people today who come to church, they have their eyes on the blessing they want more than the *Blesser* who wants a relationship with them. They want God to be their slot machine or their escape from hard circumstances, a fixer and not the Divine Lover. They approach God with their religious language or rituals and hope to bargain for whatever they are trying to get from God.

Jesus tells them He has an offer for them that will give them a joy and fulfillment that won’t be temporary. He says, in John 6:35,

*“I am the Bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

Isaiah 12:3 ...*you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation.* When we receive Jesus’ salvation, we will have a spring inside of us that continually flows with joy and purpose.

Verse 51 He says, “*I am the living bread from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*”

In vs. 53-54 He says, “*Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise up at the last day.*”

What is He saying, and what does this have to do with joy and contentment?

1. Jesus is telling the world that we all have a hole inside of us made for God. We are not just bodies and minds; we are spirits made for a relationship with God. We are to be plugged-in on a heart level to God's Spirit so our lives can be filled with heaven's love, peace, and joy.

When we receive the gift of forgiveness of sins, our inner self comes alive and is attached to the Holy Spirit, so that fusion of life can happen in us.

When Jesus talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He is talking about what we celebrate with communion, accepting that Jesus gave his body and shed his blood on the cross. This was Jesus' perfect act of obedience. He gave Himself on our behalf to bring forgiveness for all of the wrongs we've done and to make it possible for us to have a personal relationship with God.

What is so amazing is that in every other religion our ability to have God's blessing and go to Heaven comes from *our* obedience, keeping the laws, fulfilling our duties. The problem is that we all fall short. Jesus made a way for us to receive all of God's blessings not because of our obedience but because of *His* obedience, doing the Father's will to die for us to pay for our sins.

Becoming good enough to go to Heaven isn't earning something; it's as easy as eating and drinking- just receiving. When we receive Him, His life comes into us, both eternal life and abundant life. We have the right to live forever with Him after we die and through relationship with Him have the kind of life, in a startup way, that people in Heaven have with God's peace and joy inside of us.

2. What do we need to do to have this contentment and joy through a relationship with Him?

C. I will summarize it this way.

1. Receive and accept Jesus, confess him as Lord and Savior and believe that He is the source of your joy. Ask Jesus in your heart. In John 6:28-29, the people are asking, "What do we have to do to have the bread of life and never be hungry?" Like all of us we think of performing and achieving. Jesus says, "*The work of God is this: to **believe** in the one he has sent*" (Vs. 29).

Believe in Jesus is how you receive it and walk in it. Start believing what He says: He has provided all that I need for my present happiness. He is enough for me to have joy; He is my source. In every circumstance He

is working for my good. If He is not letting things go the way I want, He has a better plan.

2. Reject the lies and substitutes. Satan will do everything He can to try to steal our joy.

a. He will try to get us to focus on things as the source of our joy, “the assumption of consumption.” It’s what the advertisement industry says message after message: “If you get this thing, if you have this kind of lifestyle, if you keep up with the Jones and have this new car...then you will be happy.”

My daughter Molly told me when she was 9-years-old that she wanted a horse. She said, “Daddy, I promise if you buy me a horse I will never want or ask for anything again.” Of course, material things won’t satisfy.

b. He will try to get us to compare with others. He will try to sow discontent in our life through envy or jealousy.

c. He will try to steal it by getting our focus on the wrong things. What we put our focus on gets bigger. If we start focusing on all that is hard, and start complaining and declaring all that’s wrong and bad and unfair in our life, those things will get bigger and become weights around our hearts.

Of course, joy comes when we begin to focus through gratitude and praise, not on what we don’t have but what we do have. Joy comes when we put what the devil wants us to focus on behind us and put in front of us all of the good things God has given us (His character and promises).

I like the saying, “What you praise you raise.” As you raise a focus of gratitude you will also raise your joy level. Of course, the enemy will try to steal your joy by putting your focus on yourself, (me, myself, and I). The more we are focused on ourselves the less joy we have. Jesus said, “Give and it shall be given to you.” The moment we focus, in any way, on how we can help and bless others, the power of negativity will be broken.

Why is “Serve Las Cruces” so powerful? It is us conducting an “uprising” of the spirit against the negative circumstances in our

lives and city, lifting up the Lord's love and concerns for other people. I promise you that it will uncork joy.

3. Finally, we will soar in contentment by feeding and feasting on the *Bread of Life*. When Jesus describes himself as *Bread*, he is speaking to them about something that was one of the main daily preoccupations of their minds, getting enough bread for the family. Bread was their sustenance. Jesus was saying that though bread satisfies the needs of your physical bodies, it doesn't feed your spirit. The joy and contentment you hunger for on the inside comes not from anything that feeds your body but from what feeds your spirit. "As you feast on me every day, joy will fill you." You do this by eating God's word.

Deuteronomy 8:3 says, "*...Man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.*"

Jeremiah 15:16

*When your words came. I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.*"

I heard a description about understanding how our lives are filled with the Spirit of God's joy and peace. A Japanese believer said, "It's like Japanese people have two stomachs. One is for rice the other is for everything else. No matter what they eat, if they don't have their rice, they don't feel filled. In fact, he said if Jesus had been ministering in Japan He would've said, "I am the rice of life." This is the way it is with spiritual nourishment.

Your spirit is the part of you that nothing on earth will ever satisfy, no amount of money, entertainment, human affection. Your spirit was made for God. If you keep your spirit filled by spending time in God's Word every day, worshiping, just enjoying His presence through whatever means that connects with you: (listening to worship music, being still in His presence, listening to messages on podcast, talking about Jesus with a friend), I can assure you that no matter what happens on the outside you will stay filled with joy.

Jesus told us *blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness they shall be filled*. God loves it when you hunger for Him because then He can fill you.

C.S Lewis wrote: "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with

drink and sex and ambition, when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Don't settle for the world. Hunger for more of God and pursue Him and your joy will be full.

As we close this message, I want to ask the question again, which tent are you living in, contentment or discontentment? Would you like to change tents?

As I prayed for you, I felt the Lord showed me that He was asking some of you to take off a spirit of heaviness, like you would a heavy old coat. Some of us over these months have become infected with discouragement, disbelief, disillusionment. Some are carrying a spirit of grief and mourning. Don't get me wrong, there is a healthy kind of grieving, but there is also a kind of grieving that is demonic. The enemy takes normal grief and makes it kind of a permanent sentence. We accept a disposition that is dark and negative and almost feel like it's our responsibility to be down and blue when all kinds of negative things are happening about us. We actually may feel guilty if we start to smile or feel joy. We get deceived into adopting the spirit of gloom that is in the world around us.

God wants you to have joy! I like to say, we choose joy not because we don't care; we choose joy so that we can care. It is joy in us that will bring hope, comfort, and peace to others. Would you confess before the Lord that you are carrying a negative attitude and are a prisoner to emotions and griefs that He doesn't want you to carry. Ask the Lord to show you if you've partnered with anything that He doesn't want. Perhaps it is discontentment. Like the children of Israel, you may be unconsciously focusing and verbalizing all of the negatives about yourself, people, or present circumstances. You didn't even realize you were sinking into that place where a wrong attitude was quickly becoming a grave to the destiny and dreams that God has for your life. He wants to set you free today.

We are going to pray and come out of the discontent-tent. Let's receive Jesus as our *Bread of Life*. Let's break our partnership with substitutes and lies of the enemy. Let's hunger for God and with a voice of praise rise above the negatives of our present circumstances and receive plenty too much life, joy, and contentment in Jesus' name!