

I. Introduction

- A. Never before in world history has a society been so rich yet so discontented as ours.
- B. Raise your hand if your contented! No, don't. I'm just kidding. Five hundred years ago a pastor named Jeremiah Burroughs wrote a book called, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*. Even five hundred years ago contentment was in short supply.
- C. Burroughs wrote,
 - 1. "Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."
- D. I like what another pastor from four hundred years ago said:
 - 1. "We, that are worthy of the heaviest judgment, surely should be thankful for the smallest mercy." (Thomas Manton)
- E. Today is installment number four in our series called *The Secrets of a Highly Contented Life*. We are looking at a man named Joseph as our case study in contentment.

II. Previously, in the story of Joseph

- A. When we last saw Joseph, his sweet, caring, gentle, big brothers knocked him on the head and threw him into a pit. Then, they sat down for lunch while Joseph cried out for rescue.
- B. Later that day, they sold him to slave traders headed toward Egypt. A captain in the Egyptian army, by the name of Potiphar, bought him. So Joseph, who had great dreams of royalty, had a highly dysfunctional family and is only a teenager, finds himself as a slave in an Egyptian household, hundreds of miles from home. The only person who might think of rescuing him, his father, believes he is dead.
- C. You wonder, how can a guy be content under these circumstances? If anybody ever had a right to complain, it was Joseph. He should feel totally sorry for himself. His family let him down. His brothers betrayed him. If I were Joseph, I would back into my corner and lick my wounds like a stressed-out shmoodle.
- D. Is that what Joseph does?

III. The Fourth Secret

- A. No. Instead, Joseph puts on a clinic on contentment. Let me give you secret number four of a *Highly Contented Life* (I'll review the first three)
 - 1. A Pilgrim Heart
 - 2. A Personal Sense of Destiny
 - 3. Spiritual Consistency
 - a) and for today...
 - 4. Unwavering Loyalty
- B. Unwavering faithfulness, allegiance and dependability is a required piece in the puzzle of your life's contentment.
- C. Let's look at the loyalty in Joseph's life. This chapter has four paragraphs. We'll start in paragraph number 2.

IV. Joseph in Potiphar's House

- A. "And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.' But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside." Genesis 39:7-12, NKJV
 - 1. Joseph is a really strong, handsome young man and very desirable (a lot like me). His boss's wife, Mrs. Potiphar, keeps hitting on him.
 - 2. What's a young guy to do?
 - 3. He asks, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
 - 4. This is loyalty, right?
 - 5. If you were here last time, we talked about Judah, Tamar, Onan, all kinds of disloyalty, treachery and out of bounds sexuality. Genesis 38 is one of the all time low points in the Bible.
 - 6. But here, in Genesis 39, we see the exact opposite.
 - 7. Joseph is loyal to his boss, Potiphar. Potiphar entrusted everything to Joseph. This included the house, grounds, other servants, Potiphar's businesses, checkbook, social security number and all the passwords for his online accounts! Joseph said that Potiphar had not kept back even one thing from Joseph's authority, except what?
 - 8. Mrs. Potiphar.
 - 9. Now, every day she grabs him and begs him to have sex with her.
 - 10. What are the odds?
 - 11. Amazingly Joseph shows an intense loyalty to God. "How can I sin against God?" he asks. Loyalty to God made him loyal to his master and to himself and his own dignity.
 - 12. You, young adults and students and high school students, your sexual life is a matter of loyalty to God. When your loyalty to Him is bigger than your loyalty to your peer group, your girlfriend or boyfriend, that's when you'll begin to really find the happiness God designed for you.
 - 13. But, it's not just your sexual life.
 - 14. How many of us have our own Mrs. Potiphar tugging our sleeves and saying, "Hop into bed with me".
 - 15. Money, materialism, sex, greed, power, drugs, alcoholism, it's all the same.
 - 16. Your world competing for your allegiance and loyalty. Joseph says no.
 - 17. He says more than no, he runs away.
 - 18. You would think God would reward him, right? Let's see.
- B. "And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, 'See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside.' So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, 'The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.' So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him,

saying, 'Your servant did to me after this manner,' that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison." Genesis 39:13-20, NKJV

1. Mrs. Potiphar sure is a sweetheart. I'll bet she baked cookies for all the kids on holidays!
2. Joseph is a picture of loyalty.
3. Mrs. Potiphar is a picture of disloyalty.
 - a) She blamed her husband for bringing Joseph into the house to begin with.
 - b) She accused Joseph of sexual assault (attempted).
 - c) She used the coat she grabbed as evidence against him.
 - d) She stood by as Joseph gets thrown into prison.
4. Disloyal to God, her husband, Joseph and the truth. She's a peach.
5. Don't miss the contrasts.
 - a) Joseph was a slave. Mrs. Potiphar was a high ranking official.
 - b) Joseph was poor. Mrs. P was loaded.
 - c) Joseph was in a foreign land. Mrs. P was in her homeland.
 - d) Joseph had no power, no rights. Mrs. P had all power, all rights.
 - e) Joseph was all alone. Mrs. P was surrounded by a husband, a marriage, friends, family and servants.
 - f) Joseph had no properties. Mrs. P had a lavish estate.
 - g) Joseph had nothing. Mrs. P had everything.
6. So, who was content? Who had a satisfied life, a full heart?
7. Because contentment does not depend on the quality of your stuff, it depends on the quality of your heart. If your heart is right with God, you have the makings of contentment.
8. Let me point out something in verse 8. Joseph "refused" to sleep with Mrs. P. This word [with its disjunctive accent (shalshelet)] indicates stubborn refusal and sustained refusal. You can't be loyal to your principles once or twice; you have to stick with it. Unwavering loyalty.

V. Back to Unwavering Loyalty

- A. Before we get back into the story, let me pause here and challenge your thinking. I've kind of played a trick on you.
- B. I said that the fourth secret of a highly contented life is unwavering loyalty.
- C. But have I said whose unwavering loyalty I'm talking about?
- D. Nope. I did this on purpose and I did this to make a point, because so far, the only person who had shown any loyalty was Joseph.
- E. If you have ever read or heard this story before, I'll bet you a Chicago Bears Superbowl victory that the message you learned was a message about the loyalty of Joseph.
- F. I want to show you this chapter is not about the unwavering loyalty of Joseph. If you believe it is, you missed the point altogether.
- G. This passage, this story which was crafted by a master storyteller named Moses, is about the unwavering loyalty of someone else. When you really understand this loyalty, you can truly be content.
- H. So, let's back up to the first paragraph.

VI. Whose Unwavering Loyalty?

- A. "Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field. Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance." Genesis 39:1-6, NKJV
 1. Let me ask you a question, "What good deed does Joseph do in this paragraph?"
 2. Look at it carefully.
 3. Joseph does NO good deed whatsoever in this paragraph. He is not faithful, loyal, or good. He is not anything except the recipient of Somebody Else's loyalty.
 4. Whose?
 - a) The Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man (verse 2).
 - b) His master saw that the Lord was with him (verse 3).
 - c) The Lord made all he did to prosper (verse 3).
 - d) The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake (5).
 - e) The blessing of the Lord was on all that he had (verse 5).
 - f) Joseph was handsome in form (his body) and in appearance (his face) (verse 6). Who gets credit for that?
 5. Whose unwavering loyalty does Moses emphasize? Whose loyalty is under the spotlight?
 6. If that is the case, why is it, time and time again, WE CHRISTIANS choose to highlight the faithfulness of Joseph? That is NOT what the Bible emphasizes! It is the loyalty of God, the unwavering loyalty of God.
 - a) Paragraph 1: the Unwavering Loyalty of God.
 - b) Paragraph 2: the Unwavering Loyalty of Joseph.
 - c) Paragraph 3: the Total Disloyalty of Mrs. Potiphar.
 7. Now, let's look at the last paragraph which has Joseph in prison.
- B. "Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper." Genesis 39:20-23, NKJV
 1. Where's the emphasis here? Who's the loyal one?
 2. God.
 - a) The Lord was with Joseph (verse 21).

- b) The Lord showed him mercy (verse 21).
 - c) The Lord was with him (verse 23).
 - d) Whatever Joseph did, the Lord made it prosper (verse 23).
3. The Lord made it prosper. Moses does not direct us to look at any quality in Joseph; he directs us to a quality in God. The quality of the Unwavering Loyalty of God.
 4. As the Bible tells it, today's story begins and ends with the unwavering loyalty of God. Yes, Joseph is loyal, but that is NOT what Moses emphasizes.
 5. God is loyal to you. That's the laser beam focus.
 - a) Four times, "the Lord was with Joseph" (verses 2, 3, 21, 23).
 - b) Three times the Lord made Joseph "a man of success" (which means the life of his dreams and calling, verses 2, 3, 23).
 - c) Verse 4 says that Joseph found favor in his master's sight. This word ([c]hen in Hebrew) means compassionate grace. The focus is not on the character of Joseph, but on the grace that God keeps arranging all around Joseph. It is God causing all this success and favor to come Joseph's way. Joseph, through his spirit, is in a position to magnify God's grace, appreciate it, see it, enjoy it and glorify God for it.
 - d) It happens again in prison, in verse 21. God gives him loyal grace (hesed) and compassionate grace (hen) again.
 6. God is more loyal to you than you will ever be to Him. That's the good news of Genesis 39. That's why God brought you here today.

VII. Lessons from Joseph For Today

- A. Just because you're on the downhill slide, doesn't mean God has forsaken you.
 1. Joseph's mother died, his brothers hated him. They stripped him naked and sold him to slave traders. He lost his father's love. He is a hostage in a foreign land and was made a slave.
 2. But, the Lord was with Joseph and that made all the difference.
 3. When everything goes wrong you must have the maturity to see one thing; God, in His goodness, still goes before you and, while He goes before you, He still has your back.
 4. What keeps Joseph from cracking up?
 5. Faith.
 - a) Faith that his God-given dreams of royalty would one day come through.
 - b) Faith that just because it's hard for you doesn't make it hard for God.
 - c) Faith that hardships of life do not negate the blessings of God.
 6. The bottom line is that no matter how much people have used him and betrayed him, God is still with Joseph.
- B. The more you are convinced of the love of God, the more you can reciprocate with your love for God.
 1. "We love Him because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19, NKJV.
 2. Paragraph 1: the Loyalty of God.
 3. Paragraph 2: the Loyalty of Joseph.
 4. Keep it in that order, okay? God wasn't loyal because Joseph was loyal. Joseph was loyal because God was loyal.
 5. God doesn't love you because you love Him. He loved you when you were still ignoring Him, and worse—He loved you when you were defying Him.
 6. In the great Divine Initiative, God sent His Son to be your personal Savior. He was sent to shed blood and pay for your guilt and failures and sins.
 7. He has loved you with an everlasting love. He has drawn you with bands of love.
 - a) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10, NKJV
 8. Over and over again, we must emphasize the love of God. The loyalty of God. He never lets you down, never has and He never will.
 9. People ask all the time, "Bill, you're a preacher. Tell us how to behave."
 10. I answer, "Not until I'm convinced you really understand the love of God, because that comes first. If you try to love Him back and you doubt His love, you'll get trapped in a gigantic hamster wheel of performance. You won't believe the love of God because you'll be too busy trying to earn it."
 11. God comes to you and says, "I never loved you because of who and what you are; but only because of who and what I am. Even with your failures, I still love you."
 12. All because of Jesus. All because of His Cross.
 13. The little anxiety in your spirit that makes you feel like you have to prove yourself worthy, that anxiety is the kiss of death to contentment.
 14. You will never be content while you doubt the unwavering loyalty of God.
- C. The turning points in your life, good or bad, become the keys to unlock the next stage in God's plan for you.
 1. There's a little phrase that begins verse 7, "and it came to pass after these things"
 2. What happens next? Mrs. Potiphar starts seducing Joseph.
 3. This phrase only occurs six times in the Bible (always in Geneses, 15:1, 22:1, 22:20, 40:1, 48:1).
 4. It always introduces a turning point in a life. You've been coasting for a while. Life is fine, it's not terrible, it's not great, it's just good.
 5. Then comes the turning point. Something big happens, good or bad. You inherit a million dollars. You fall ill. Your dad falls ill. The doctor finds a spot on the x-ray. Your cars breakdown. You find the person of your dreams and they find someone else who's the person of their dreams. You land the dream job. Your business falls apart. You declare bankruptcy. You get turned down for the dream job. You fail out of school.
 6. Something big happens.
 7. Then what?
 8. A test comes. God is about to set you a notch higher, bringing you into the next arena, the next battle and the next accomplishment of His grace.

9. This is a test or, really, an opportunity. It is an open door to somehow advance you to a higher level of blessing, a greater sphere of ministry, a broader way to influence people for Jesus. God is giving you a battlefield promotion and He's stationing you at a tougher part of the conflict.
 10. God is doing something big—are you ready for it?
 11. The test of Mrs. Potiphar is always meant to measure your loyalty to God and to strengthen your sense of God's loyalty to you.
 12. God is not against you having a peaceful life. He's against you having a boring life. He's against your spiritual complacency and self-satisfaction.
 13. So He shakes the tree of your life to see what fruit will fall out.
 14. None of us can ever find true contentment without an ever increasing reliance on Him.
- D. It's only when you are content with today's grace that you will ever feel truly rich and truly free.
1. Today's grace.
 2. I like this definition of contentment. Contentment means believing God has provided everything I need for today's happiness.
 3. Unwavering Loyalty. Many of you accuse God of wavering loyalty or of outright disloyalty.
 4. Understand, what you have today is enough for you to be happy today.
 5. Your lack of happiness today cannot be used to indict God for letting you down. It's you who's let Him down!
 6. Joseph was a slave, but he was a slave showered with grace and he believed it. He was free.
 - a) Were his brothers free? They sold him into slavery and went back to their cushy day jobs, but they are prisoners to a guilty conscience.
 - b) Was Jacob, Joseph's father free? He lived in the finest lodgings money could buy, but was a prisoner to grief and a broken heart.
 - c) Was Captain Potiphar free? He was wealthy, important and powerful, but he is a slave to an unfaithful wife.
 - d) Was Mrs. Potiphar free? She was a prisoner to her own neediness and unfaithfulness.
 7. Was Joseph—the slave, the prisoner, the alien, the foreigner, the inmate free? Yes, because he had grown up enough to be satisfied with God's kindness. He could be satisfied and NOT sleep with another man's wife. He could be satisfied and NOT shortcut God's grace. He could be satisfied and NOT rebel against the twists and turns of life. The grace of God was enough.
 8. Therefore he was not only free, he was rich. The richest person in the whole story was the guy who'd lost everything. His hands may have been empty, but his heart was full.
 9. It can be that way for you, too.