

I. Introduction

- A. I heard a speaker give an excellent talk on today's topic. Here's how that speaker began.
- B. [Very long pause. Waiting in silence. Then.]
- C. You will never be content until you have mastered the art of waiting—complaint free waiting. Today I want to talk about complaint free waiting.
- D. This message is part five in a series called *The Secrets of a Highly Contented Life*. For followers of Jesus, true contentment is not like other concepts of contentment.
 - 1. For us, contentment does not mean insensibilities to the ills of life, as it does for a Buddhist.
 - 2. It does not mean passive resignation to the difficulties of life, as it does to a fatalist.
 - 3. Contentment does not mean the satisfaction of all desires as it does to the hedonist.
- E. For the Christian, contentment is different. It is the muscular faith in a grace-induced awareness that every moment our lives are upheld, sustained and richly blessed by a caring Heavenly Father whose provision is lavish and whose timing is perfect.
- F. To believe in such a God is to be content, no matter how difficult life is and no matter how long our periods of waiting.
- G. Contentment is one of the last signs of a sanctified life of a mature child of God.
- H. Our backdrop to contentment is the story of a man named Joseph.

II. Previously in Joseph's Story

- A. As a young teenager, Joseph had dreams of greatness. In his dreams, he saw his father, mother and brothers bow down to him. His brothers were so fond of the idea of bowing down to little Joseph that they knocked him on the head and sold him into slavery in Egypt.
- B. As a slave, Joseph was faithful. Even so, his master's wife kept hitting on him. Joseph refused. One day, she charged him with sexual assault and Joseph was thrown in prison.
- C. When we last saw Joseph, the chief guard of the prison put Joseph in charge of everything. That's where we pick up the story in Genesis 40.

III. Complaint-Free Waiting

- A. *"It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while."* Genesis 40:1-4, NKJV
 - 1. Joseph gains two prison-mates: Pharaoh's chief butler and the chief baker.
 - 2. The story is very precise. It was told in Hebrew. The closer our translation sticks to the Hebrew, the more we'll get out of it. Here's how it goes in Hebrew:
 - a) *Now the captain appointed Joseph to be with them, and he served them (verse 4a).*
 - 3. Here's what we're supposed to notice. Joseph is a prisoner, but he's a working prisoner. He runs the prison. The captain appointed Joseph to simply be with these guys, to stick with them. They are not like other prisoners. They're royal servants and, hopefully, they won't get messed up in prison.
 - 4. So he issues order: Joseph, stay with these guys. That's his duty.
 - 5. But Joseph goes beyond the call of duty. He isn't just with them, he serves them. Joseph does for his fellow sufferers exactly what God has done for him. He is with them and he is serving them.
 - 6. Instead of complaining, instead of fretting, moping, whining, criticizing, finding fault, bellyaching, sniveling, carping, making a stink and pouting, Joseph finds his secret joy in serving other people.
 - 7. This is a pattern in Joseph's life. He did the same thing for Potiphar back in Genesis 39:4.
 - 8. The first secret of Complaint-free waiting is this: *While you wait for God's promotion, don't forget to serve others willingly.*
 - 9. This is so important, because our natural inclination is to turn inward and take care of ourselves and there is a time for that. I'm all for it, especially if you're facing medical issues, if your loss is fresh or if you are overwhelmed with the storms of your life.
 - 10. Take care of yourself. That's important.
 - 11. But that is not a permanent priority for a mature follower of Jesus.
 - 12. You might be waiting for a marriage, an operation, a job offer, graduation, to have kids or to hear back about the resumes you sent out. Whatever you are waiting for, realize that waiting does not mean stopping cold. It means obeying the single, simple next call of God on your life.
 - 13. We are in the middle of a four month emphasis on spiritual growth. We're asking the question, *What's Next Lord? On my journey with God, what is the next step I need to take with God?*
 - 14. Part of this is a kind of willing service. Jesus said that He didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give His life to set many free. Aren't we supposed to walk in His steps?
 - 15. For the next month, we're going to ask you to do one act of caring service that is outside your normal routine and outside your comfort zone. (More on that next week.)
 - 16. God gave Joseph a dream. He was in a very long holding pattern, waiting for his dream to come true. What did he do in the mean time?
 - 17. You might be waiting for God to fulfill your dream and answer your prayer. What will you do in the

meantime? For Joseph, waiting meant loving service to others. It wasn't doing nothing. It was incarnating God's love for two other prisoners who, by the Providence of God, found themselves in the same place as Joseph. Don't forget to serve.

- B. *“Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man’s dream in one night and each man’s dream with its own interpretation. And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in the custody of his lord’s house, saying, ‘Why do you look so sad today?’ And they said to him, ‘We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it.’ So Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please.’”* Genesis 40:5-8, NKJV
1. Verse 6 states, *“And Joseph came to them in the morning and he saw them, and Behold! They were very upset.”*
 2. Here, “to be upset” means to experience an inner storm that cannot be quieted. It cannot be quelled (Theological Dictionary of the OT, v. 1, p. 248).
 3. When a person has this kind of storm in their heart, there can be no peace, no contentment. These two men have dreams that unleash a storm in their hearts.
 4. Only God can calm a storm.
 5. In walks God’s man.
 6. I love what Joseph does: He sees them and immediately notices that something’s wrong.
 7. What’s so big about that?
 8. Simply that most hurting people can’t notice other hurting people. When you hurt, when you suffer, when you grieve, when you feel loss, there is a period of time when you are selfish and self-focused. The only person you can think of is yourself.
 9. This is actually a good thing. It is God’s way of conserving energy for your healing.
 10. The problem is some of us embrace selfishness as a long term strategy for the pain of unfulfilled dreams.
 11. So, you might have a cast on a broken leg, I’m standing here with a severed leg bleeding all over the place. All you can talk about is how heavy your cast is and how the skin underneath is starting to itch.
 12. Now, if I were Joseph, I’d go right into dream mode. “Okay you guys, let me tell you about my dreams.” But Joseph doesn’t do that.
 13. Joseph noticed the butler and the baker. He left his own little self-absorbed orbit and asked them what’s wrong. The captain made Joseph their *companion*. But Joseph made himself their *servant*. This is one of the marks of a highly contented life.
 14. Joseph asks, “Is it not to God that interpretations belong?”
 15. Check this out: Joseph had dreams of greatness. In his dreams, Joseph’s escalator only went up, up above his brothers, up above his mother and father, up, all the way to the top.
 16. Is that the direction his life is heading? No. His life is heading down, down into a pit, down to Egypt, down into slavery and down into prison.
 17. If anybody had a right to complain, he did. *God, the dreams you give are unreliable. If you tell me you’re going to lift me up, I’m gonna pack my bags for whatever’s down. I don’t trust you. I don’t believe you. I have been faithful. But all the evidence of my life points to the fact that you, God, do not keep your promises. You do not fulfill the God-given dreams of your servants.*
 18. Instead, Joseph ascribes to God the interpretation of every dream. Translation: Guys, there is an invisible God who holds the future in His hands and I believe in Him. You can, too.
 19. Secret two of Complaint Free Waiting: *While you wait for God’s promotion, keep pointing others to God and His grace.* So you haven’t reached your dream life, dream job, dream physique, dream marriage or status. So what? God still wants to use you, even if you feel like you’re in His waiting room. He will still send people into your path who need Jesus. What are you going to say, “I can’t help you. I haven’t arrived yet?” No.
 20. Everything done in the name of Jesus, all the church work, mission work, publishing, millions of books and internet sites, and praying—why do we do all this stuff?
 21. It’s simple. Because the whole world needs to hear about Jesus.
 22. In his own way, Joseph was telling his friends in prison about Jesus. Not only was he telling them, he was living the life that reveals Jesus before them.
- C. *“Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, ‘Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. Then Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.’ And Joseph said to him, ‘This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. “Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.”* Genesis 40:9-13, NKJV
1. The butler’s dream is good news. You’re gonna get your job back. Notice verse 13: Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to our office. We’ll come back to this and it will be funny.
 2. If you really want to see the heart of a contented man, look at the next two verses.
- D. *““But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness [hesed] to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me*

out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.” Genesis 40:14, 15, NKJV

1. What does Joseph do? He pursues grace. The Hebrew word “*hesed*” means the covenanted loyalty and undeserved goodness from one person to another.
 2. Joseph realizes in three days the butler will stand before the king. Joseph also knows he’s innocent. His whole ordeal has been one evil after another. He’s done nothing to deserve it. So, he makes an appeal, “Remember me and get me out of this house! Get me out of this prison!”
 3. What does that mean?
 4. You can be content with God and not be content with your present circumstances. In fact, I don’t know if we should ever be content with our present circumstances.
 5. One way you can be content without achieving your dreams is to simply give up on your dreams. Accept your lot in life, accept prison, accept poverty, accept an overly burdened life, accept mediocrity. Give up your dreams, settle. Accept something less than God’s calling on your life.
 6. Another lesson on waiting: *While you wait for God’s promotion, never give up on your dreams.*
 7. Joseph didn’t settle. He wanted out of prison. He scrambled; he martialled resources. He didn’t give up on his dream. I like that.
 8. Joseph had a dream of rulership and it didn’t involve prison. He sought grace. But from who? From the butler. Hmmm. Is that a good thing? I think so. I’m all for the bold pursuit of grace anywhere you can get it. Just don’t ever pin your hopes on people alone. We’ll have to see if the butler has the capacity to deliver the grace that will get Joseph out of prison.
 9. Then the baker’s dream.
- E. *“When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, ‘I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.’ So Joseph answered and said, ‘This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.” Genesis 40:16-19, NKJV*
1. Notice verse 19. It starts way verse 13 did: “Within three days Pharaoh will lift” Then it adds “off your head from you.” Oops. The baker will be beheaded and hung up on a pole for the birds to pick the flesh off his dead carcass.
 2. Ummm. I’m a preacher. In a sense, so was Joseph. This tells me I’m not supposed to pull any punches. Preach good news when there’s good news to preach and bad news when there’s bad news to preach.
 3. It’s the same for all of us. There’s a temptation to want to be liked, and an even worse temptation to want people to like God. Big Buddy, Jesus.
 4. It’s good to like God, but honestly, I don’t think He cares. Most of the time, He is not likable. This is not a defect in God, it is a defect in us and in what we think matters most.
 5. This brings us to a huge secret of contentment, but, I don’t want to state it yet. Let’s finish the chapter first.
 6. Pay attention, because there will be a test.
- F. *“Now it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.” Genesis 40:20-23, NKJV*
1. Question 1: When Joseph appealed to the butler for grace (*hesed*), did he appeal to a worthy source? Nope. The butler forgot him. Not a good source of grace.
 2. Question 2 (a tough one): Whose timing would you rather live by, yours or God’s? Don’t answer.
 3. Think back to the last time you had to wait for something. Did anybody go shopping on Black Friday? How were the lines? You had to wait. It hurts.
 4. Have you ever noticed what happens to time when you’re waiting?
 5. It stands still. It stretches out.
 6. When I started this message, I stood quietly for 75 seconds. It probably felt much longer. You were waiting for me to speak and I didn’t.
 7. We are talking about waiting, about complaint free waiting. We are saying it is one of the secrets of a highly contented life.
 8. Here is the last secret of waiting for today: *While you wait, never forget that you do not experience the passing of time the same way God does.*
 9. To you, time is a succession of events. First this, then that, then the next thing. Moment by moment slips by like a stream and then it’s over. One life-span. Seventy, ninety, a hundred years. Who knows? One life-span and it’s all over.
 10. To you, time is precious, irretrievable. Every moment that goes by without you in your ultimate dream life is a moment wasted, never to be recovered.
 11. God is different. He inhabits eternity. To Him, time is not a succession of events, all of time is one

indivisible, singular moment.

12. When you are faithful to God and still feel your time wasting away, when you dread the countdown to your final days or when you feel doors closing and opportunities slipping by.
13. When you live in the prison house of unmet dreams and unsatisfied expectations, then remember this:
 - a) For God, time is eternal.
 - b) For God, time is reversible.
 - c) For God, time is extendable.
 - d) For God, time is recoverable.
 - e) For God, time is not a complication in the achievement of your dreams.
14. If you have placed your life in God's hands, the passing of time is never an emergency. You have plenty of it, lots and lots of it. You've got an infinity of it. You are an eternal spirit if, and only if, you have Jesus.

IV. Conclusion

- A. We drove to Lassen on Friday, about a 45 minute trip, to cut down a Christmas tree. Our son, JD, who's four, kept asking, "How long before we're there?"
- B. After the fifth time, I told him to stop asking. Actually, I threatened him (lovingly) to stop asking.
- C. When it comes to waiting, we are all children.
- D. Only the mature can wait for God's time without complaining, without caving in to pressure, without turning away from God in bitterness and anger.
- E. The butler forgot Joseph. God didn't. God says,
 1. "Yet [God's people] say, 'The LORD has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us.' Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!" Isaiah 49:14, 15, NLT
- F. Why can't He forget you?
 1. "Behold, I have engraved you on the palm of my hand." Isaiah 49:16
- G. What do you see when you look at the hands of Jesus? The holes from the nails on the Cross He endured because He loves you.
- H. While you wait, do you think He's forgotten you? If the Cross teaches anything, it teaches that God never forgets. God never hurries and God is never late.
 - I. Wait patiently on the Lord. You will not be content unless you master the art of complaint free waiting.
- J. Oh. The speaker who gave the speech on waiting was the invited chapel speaker at Cedarville College in 1984. She spoke on waiting and she waited for a very long time to drive the point home.
- K. I married her.
- L. At age 39.
- M. And she was worth the wait.
- N. So is the life of your dreams.