

# THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

Supplement #4

## Home Life

Learning the Grace of Contentment in Our Homes

*From a message by John Burkholder  
New England Valley Mennonite Church  
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*Let your conversation be without covetousness;  
and be content with such things as ye have:  
for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.  
Hebrews 13:5*

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I want to greet you in the name of our crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, and we believe soon coming Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Certainly have been inspired already thus far as we fellowshiped together around the Word.

It is a privilege to be back to the place we called home for two years, 1991 to 1993, a lot of changes took place, I believe the Lord is blessing the work here, may He continue to do that, may each one of us remained faithful unto death.

A very, very poor man was walking down a dusty road on a hot summer afternoon, his clothes were tattered, and his shoes patched with straps of leather, in his hand he carries a small bag tied with a string at the top but even it was empty. Presently the tattered man heard the sound of horses and wheels round the bend of the road, expired a fine carriage with prancing horses coming up the road toward him, the poor man stepped quickly to the side of the road to let the carriage pass but instead of passing the driver pulled the horses to a stop. A fancily carved door slid back in a well-dressed smiling gentleman stepped out.

The poor man drew back not knowing whether to be afraid or not, it was not often that a rich man stopped on the road to talk to him.

"Good afternoon!" said the rich man, "It is a warm day to be walking is it not?"

The poor man was reassured by the rich man's kind voice and smile, he was more than reassured, he was hopeful. Who could tell maybe this rich man would be kind enough to give him a coin with which to buy food.

"I would not mind the heat so much," said the poor man, "If only I would not be so hungry, I haven't eaten since yesterday morning. If I had a sandwich or two I would be content."

The rich man put his finger to his forehead and looked thoughtful for a moment.

"So you are hungry my good friend and you would be quite content with a sandwich or two. That is remarkable indeed. Yes I would say it is very remarkable."

The rich man thought a while longer and finally he said:

"I think this is so remarkable that it deserves to be rewarded. I'm going to give you all the coins and gold pieces you can carry in your bag, come to the other side of the carriage."

It seemed to the poor man that he was dreaming as he followed the rich man to the other side of the shining carriage. Here the rich man opened a small door revealing a square well built wooden box, he lifted the cover, the poor man gasped, he had never in his life seen so much money, the box was full of glistening coins and gold pieces.

With trembling fingers that poor man fumbled at the strings of his bag.

"Just a minute," the rich man said, "There is one condition you must agree to, you can have all the money you can carry in that bag but whatever you let fall to the ground becomes mine again. As soon as it touches the earth it is mine. Do you agree to that?"

"Yes, yes," the poor man said eagerly. He could still hardly believe his good fortune.

"You can start filling your bag now." The rich man stepped back and stood watching with folded hands.

The poor man's eyes shone, he held the bag with one hand and reached into the box with the other he brought out a large gold piece, he placed it carefully into his bag.

"There," he said to himself with great satisfaction, "That is plenty to buy me not only a few sandwiches but several four course meals."

Quickly he grabbed a few more coins and dropped them into his bag. Now he had enough to buy himself a complete suit of clothing plus shoes and a hat. Next time he reached into the box he brought out a whole handful of coins and he took several more handfuls. Why he would soon have enough to buy a comfortable home. The poor man's face beamed with delight at the thought that he at last could afford to buy. Another handful, whoops, a large silver coin slipped from his grip, dropped to the earth, he bent to pick it up but the rich man stopped him:

"No," he said sternly, "Once it has touched the ground it is my property again."

The poor man jerked back his hand and mumbled that he was sorry, he had almost forgotten about the rule that the rich man had mentioned but oh well it didn't matter there were plenty of other pieces in the box, many more than he could possibly cram into his bag.

He took out several more handfuls of coins, his bag was starting to feel heavy but it was only a quarter full, the man had lost track of exactly how much money he had put into his bag but it is easily enough to buy himself a good home.

"Maybe I should stop now," he said, "the bag will be plenty heavy to carry."

But then he thought how nice it would be to have a fine carriage and prancing horses. Wouldn't have to walk then. I'll take enough for a carriage and horses yet he decided and then I'll stop. After all the man said I could

take all my bag could carry, the poor man through to more coins into the bag and soon he had enough for what he guessed it would cost to buy a carriage plus several fine horses to pull it.

He was just about to stop when he remembered he needed a barn to put his horses and carriage in. So he lifted some more coins into his bag, his bag was pretty heavy now, it was bulging with weight, he lifted it up and examined it, it was not a new bag but it seemed to be fairly strong.

He had forgotten about hiring a servant to care for his horses, he should have a servant of course, he must have a servant. How silly that he had nearly forgotten that anyone who was anyone would have a servant, so the poor man reached into the box and took out another handful of coins and dropped them into his bag.

He wasn't sure how much a servant would want in wages but he had better take too much than risk having too little and while he was at it why didn't he take enough money so he could afford a servant in the house too.

That would be something, having someone to run errands and do his cooking and serve meals, make his bed and sweep his floors and wash his laundry. Why he couldn't imagine why he hadn't thought of it sooner, with a big house like he planned to have it certainly needed a servant to do the work and now that he came to think about it may be even more than one servant, his bag might be heavy to carry but later when he needed money he would be sorry that he hadn't taken more when he had such a good opportunity.

The poor man helped himself to a few more generous handfuls, his bag was so heavy now that he decided he had better stop; he had all he could carry. He started to close his bag but then he thought he would take one more handful of coins, who could tell it might come in very handy someday. He reached in, gathered as much as his fingers could hold, dropped the coins into the bulging bag and suddenly there was a ripping tearing sound as the bag to all beneath the treasure of so much weight, with a rattling and a jingling all the coins tumbled from the torn bag and scattered to the ground at the poor man's feet.

Frantically the man grabbed at the coins but the rich man stepped up quickly and stopped him.

"No, no," said the man, "All these coins have touched the ground, they are mine."

"But, but," stammered the poor man.

"I'm sorry," said the rich man firmly, "But that was the agreement."

There was nothing for the poor man to do but continue his tramping down the dusty road, a few minutes before he had been rich but now he was as poor as ever. His clothes were still tattered, his shoes were still scraps of leather, he was still hungry and tired, the road was still dusty and the sun still hot.

Worst of all not only was his bag was empty but it was gone beyond repair.

How he wished he would have been content with a sandwich!

Our clothes maybe a little less tattered, where are all well dressed this morning, our clothes maybe a little less tattered and we might have a few more earthly goods then this poor man with his empty bag but I fear we are all related to him, I fear we are.

Perhaps in God's eyes we are not that much different, if we just had a little more then we could be content.

Perhaps you are saying in sitting back with a relaxed sigh: "Well that doesn't describe me, I'm content."

Well, maybe you are, but don't be too quick to say that or next your honesty will be in question also.

The title is "Learning the Grace of Contentment in Our Homes"

Examine this word of contentment a bit, some synonyms, sometimes it helps to learn what a word means by examining some synonyms; satisfied, happy, well pleased, glad, cheerful, not particular, comfortable, serene, adequately, untroubled, unworried, at rest.

That is a partial list.

Do these words describe you and your family? I am not only thinking of financially but I am thinking of spiritually and in your relationship with other people and your church – are you contented?

The word learning in our title suggests that this grace or attitude of contentment is not native to us, we are not born naturally content, we are born naturally discontent. The baby doesn't have to be too long too old until he is crying with clenched fists, they have needs, and of course some of them are natural, we understand that, but as someone has said: "We are born in this life with clenched fists but we leave with open hands." We leave it all here.

Years ago they used shrouds, they are not so much used any more, but they don't have pockets because there is no need for them we cannot take anything with us when we die.

But like all other graces learning the grace of contentment it must be learnt, we are not born with them, it is very evident that the grace of contentment is sadly lacking in our world today, lotteries, sweepstakes, drawings, door prizes, gambling, I'm putting them all in the same category they may not be all equally evil. We believe the lottery and the way poor people play the lottery and so forth the whole system is evil but maybe door prizes they maybe look innocent but isn't it the same spirit behind it? Gambling? The list could go on.

The American dream is built on acquiring more if you stop and think about it, that is what it is built on –acquiring more. It is not built on content.

The scriptures are very clear that there is going to be a real lack of contentment in the last days.

[Second Timothy 3:1-2:](#)

"This know also, that in the last days (we believe we are in them) perilous times shall come. <sup>2</sup>For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy."

I perceive a real need for a message like this especially since the Bible warns us that discontentment is going to be a real problem in the last days and not only for wicked men, even for God's children it is going to be a real problem. However it is more than our American culture and the fact that we are in the last days that causes us this problem of discontentment, our carnal nature is restless and discontented, you will never satisfy it, never, you can only satisfy the new nature. Perhaps we have too much of the old nature in us yet sometimes.

We by nature aspire to be someone we are not and acquire things we do not have and I'm thankful to God that we do not need to stop there or dwell there if we have the new nature we can find this grace of contentment thanks be to God.

Someone has said it this way: Everyone lives in one of two tents – content or discontent."

In which tent do you live? It depends on who is on the throne of your life – God or Satan.

Our title specifies in our homes and that simply tells me that this grace of contentment is usually learnt when we are children. Very few people learn this grace after they are full grown but it is not impossible. We might have grown up in the worst of circumstances but when we become a new creature in Christ Jesus then it is possible to live in the tent of content rather than in the tent of discontent. The Bible does not leave us clueless as to how we can capture this grace of contentment, remember we are not born with it we have to capture it if I may use that expression; we have to attain to it.

Perhaps verses, well maybe you could help me on that, what are some verses that come to your mind that the Bible says about contentment?

Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Think of any other ones?

I have learnt that in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content.

I believe the same man penned the same words the other two gave, the Apostle Paul. But you know the Apostle Paul had it so nice, didn't have any needs did he?

Well we can go and see what he went through but he had learnt that in whatsoever state, where the shipwreck or hungry or beaten or lying outside the city, how many of us could stand up and testify to that? He had learned contentment, he wasn't always content but when he fell down and said: "Lord what would thou have me to do?" the Apostle Paul was on the road to contentment.

These verses that were mentioned, and thank you for your participation there, they admonish us to be content but they don't necessarily how to obtain it.

How did the Apostle Paul attain it? That is one that we could spend some time on but we won't.

I thought of some Bible characters that we could profitably look at to help us learn contentment, I am not going to turn to them, I'm going to mention a few, I thought of Abraham in Genesis 13. He told Lot, they had a problem that had become quite large and the servants were striving there was not enough of grass for all the herds.

".... separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." [Genesis 13:9](#).

Abraham had learned contentment.

Jacob and Esau, that was an interesting one in [Genesis 32 and 33](#). Jacob sent, if I have it right 580 animals on ahead to meet Esau, remember Jacob was scared, Esau had threatened to kill him, Jacob was away for many years and was coming back and he had caught wind that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 armed men. Jacob sent 580 camels and cows and oxen and sheep and rams, 580, imagine a herd of almost 600 animals and he sent them in droves, about five different companies to meet Esau.

Esau made an amazing statement when he met Jacob he said what is with all these cattle here? That is the gifts for you Jacob said, Esau said: "I have enough."

That was a remarkable statement from a secular person. The New Testament calls Esau a profane man, ([Hebrews 12:16](#)) Jacob persuaded Esau to take them but then he also made a statement he said: I have enough.

And their usage of that word enough comes from a different Hebrew word, at least I'm told I am not a Hebrew scholar by any stretch of the imagination but I am told that those to "enough's" come from two different Hebrew words.

Esau said I have enough; I have possessions in quantity or abundance, that was his enough.

When Jacob said I have enough he meant from the Hebrew, I have enough to make life whole and complete.

I think that is interesting and significant, remember he had just met God the night before and he was now a changed man, in fact he limped to prove it, he had wrestled all night with an Angel it says. He was not always a content man in fact up until the night before I don't know he was too content, but his contentment was derived from an experience alone with God that night.

Is there a lesson right there for us? I think there is.

We could look at the Shunammite woman in second Kings four. She made an outstanding statement, she had made a little room in the wall for Elisha and he was impressed and sometimes prophets and preachers don't get treated that well, but she made a little room and said you come here and turn in thither when you have opportunity. He did that and he wanted to reward her and he called her, his servant called her, and he said: What shall I do? Do you want to be spoken to the King or the captain of the host for this great deed?

She said: "I dwell among mine own people."

Totally content. It is not for naught that the Bible calls this woman a great woman, I don't think she was great in stature necessarily but God had not blessed her with a family. Think about that, God had not blessed her with a family, apparently they had never adopted any children, there is nothing wrong with that, but she had learned contentment with her lot in life and she said: I dwell among mine own people. I don't need anything. [2 Kings 4:8-13](#).

How about if someone would come to you and say, Ask me what you will, what do you want?

I could think of a few things I might need.

Just a few Bible characters that came to my mind.

I would like to take the rest of my thoughts from a man's writings in the Old Testament who had obviously learned contentment.

How did he obtain it?

Turn with me to Psalm 34.

We are going to read this Psalm, follow me closely as I read.

[Psalm 34:1-22](#):

"I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. <sup>2</sup>My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. <sup>3</sup>O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. <sup>4</sup>I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. <sup>5</sup>They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. <sup>6</sup>This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. <sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD encampeth

round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. <sup>8</sup>O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. <sup>9</sup>O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. <sup>10</sup>The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. <sup>11</sup>Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? <sup>13</sup>Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. <sup>14</sup>Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. <sup>15</sup>The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. <sup>16</sup>The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. <sup>17</sup>The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. <sup>18</sup>The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. <sup>19</sup>Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. <sup>20</sup>He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. <sup>21</sup>Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. <sup>22</sup>The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."

Number one: Contentment is learned by cultivating a right attitude toward God.

Verse nine. <sup>9</sup>O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

If I were to ask you what is the greatest lack in the earth today in man's experiences? You could give a number of answers to that and it would probably be right, but isn't the fear of the Lord one of the things that is lacking the most in our world today, the fear of the Lord, and maybe even in our experience and our families fear of the Lord. But he says in verse nine there is no want to them that fear the Lord properly.

That is contentment brothers and sisters, no want.

Contentment is learned by cultivating a right attitude toward God, it is the crux of the matter in finding contentment, it is the crux of the matter. Because David had a proper fear of God he could bless the Lord at all

times and praise Him continually in verse one. He could make his boast in the Lord and others could hear about it – verse two.

He could magnify and exalt the Lord's name and he was inviting others to join him in verse three.

He could claim total deliverance and salvation in verses four and six.

He could claim God's protection in verse seven. How?

Well, verse 11: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. That is how.

Well we could say David was probably sitting in his house, he was King of Israel and everything was going fine. Not so!

Was David in ideal circumstances? Is that why he could be so exuberant? Not according to the words under the title in my Bible, (Psalm 34:1 A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. KJV) if I have it right David was at this time that he penned these words he was on the run from Saul being hunted like a partridge and he had gone into the Tabernacle, he was hungry, and he asked for some food and they gave him some from the table of show bread and I believe Ahimelech was the priest, David was by himself and Ahimelech did not realise I guess he was running from Saul and he helped him and gave him Goliath's sword, Goliath's sword of all things, they had it there, David had killed Goliath earlier and he took that and ran again but Ahimelech was called into question by Saul, someone told Saul that he had helped David, and Saul found out about it and he said: "You will die" and 85 other priests died just because Ahimelech gave David bread and the sword and David had just come through that, and he fled there and went to Abimelech (called also Achish the King of Gath) and David changed his behaviour before Abimelech hoping that he could stay there but they chased him out and he ran from Abimelech here (Read 1 Samuel 21 and 22) and that apparently was the setting here of this Psalm.

But David had learnt to have a right attitude toward God a proper fear of God and likely learned contentment by frequently spending time alone with God.

And I think there is a lesson right there for us. If I have a problem of whining and complaining, I don't care in what area of life whether it is my lot financially or whatever, let's check my times that I spend alone with

God, that there is probably a problem there. Check my time I spend alone with God.

Parents, we do want to obtain this grace of contentment ourselves and teach it to our children but we need to start right here, our children will never learn contentment if we are discontent. We need to have a right attitude toward God and a proper fear of God. It is very basic but it is number one.

Number two: Contentment is learned by having a right attitude about ourselves.

Notice verse six: <sup>6</sup>This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. And verse 18: <sup>18</sup>The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

I think David was talking of himself there along with others but first of all himself. David had learnt to have a right attitude about himself, he was a poor man he called himself and he had a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

Now when he calls himself a poor man we are not speaking off, it reminds me of a brother back home, Daniel Boll, talks about the "poor me" syndrome, that is not what David was expressing here, I have it worse than everyone else or we have it worse in our family.

And parents can train their children to think along those lines and the children develop inferiority complexes and expect everyone else to realise how bad they have it and expect to be treated accordingly but often behind that reasoning is this thinking: "I'm worth a little bit more than others give me credit for."

The Bible calls it plain and simple pride.

Turn with me to Luke, here is an interesting thing I just came across just recently, [Luke 3:14](#), we are talking about having a proper attitude about ourselves. You understand the setting here, John the Baptist, people were coming to him, verse eight, his message was bring forth fruits for their repentance and there were people coming and asking, verse 10, What shall we do then? And he answered them and said: Well, if you have two coats give the one to someone else. And then came the publican, verse 12, What shall we do? And then these soldiers in verse 14 came along:

"And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, (that is an interesting one, apparently they had to give up their jobs after this if they wanted to do violence to no man but anyway) neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." ([Luke 3: 8-14](#))

I think that is very interesting – be content with your wages. Apparently these soldiers struggled with feelings that they were worth a little more than what they were getting and of course I'm not just talking about financially, you know I'm talking about life in general, do we struggle with that? I think we all do perhaps that sometimes we are worth a little bit more than what others are giving us credit for. But according to John the Baptist in this context one fruit or a sign of a repentant spirit is contentment. Isn't that interesting? That is one fruit of repentance – contentment, to be content with your wages.

Well speaking of Jacob again, maybe I will turn back to [Genesis 32:10](#), I referred to it but I'm just going to read that verse Genesis 32:10 he said it this way, actually it was the night before he met Esau and he was praying to God and wrestling, later on wrestling with the Angel he said:

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." I am not worthy.

When we recognise that God is not indebted to us in any way and furthermore we are unworthy of the least or of any of His blessings we are well on the way to learning this grace of contentment.

So yes contentment is learnt by having a right attitude toward ourselves, we are poor men.

In the third place: Contentment is learnt by showing a proper attitude toward others.

We talked about having a proper attitude toward God, we talked about having a proper attitude toward ourselves and now we are talking about having a right attitude toward others.

Contentment is learnt by showing a proper attitude toward others.

It is closely related to how I think about myself how I think about others, in fact they are Siamese twins, they cannot be separated.

I am impressed with how the Psalmist, I'm going back to [Psalm 34](#) again, but I am impressed with how he moves away from praising God himself, let's see how does he start out here, Verse one, I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

But he doesn't stay there very long in the personal and he moves on to include others and I think that is significant – contentment is learnt by showing a proper attitude toward others.

Here in verse three, let us exalts His name together.

And verse seven, and them that fear Him.

And verse eight, you taste and see too that the Lord is good.

He recommended it to others, come, I will teach you, verse 11.

And verse 15, upon the righteous.

David realised that he is not the only fish in the pond there are other people here that are equally talented and equally blessed and I am just a poor man, I am not worthy.

Verse 22 he uses the plural again, it is refreshing, quite refreshing to see the attitude that he had toward others.

Here he was on the run, perhaps alone, but thinking positively about others.

Too often the opposite is true when we are under stress or under special test and we compare ourselves to others and discontentment is born and we become discouraged and resentful toward others.

Turn to Matthew, keep your finger there in Psalms we will be coming back there, turn to Matthew 20 another interesting thought here, these people had a little problem, Jesus gave the story, [Matthew 20:1-14](#).

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. <sup>2</sup>And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. (Apparently that was the going wage at least they decided to take him up on his offer for a penny a day) Verse three, <sup>3</sup>And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, <sup>4</sup>And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. (He did not make that agreement necessarily with them for a

penny a day, He said whatever is right) And they went their way. <sup>5</sup>Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. <sup>6</sup>And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? <sup>7</sup>They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. <sup>8</sup>So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. <sup>9</sup>And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. <sup>10</sup>But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; (remember the agreement was a penny a day) and they likewise received every man a penny. <sup>11</sup>And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, <sup>12</sup>Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. <sup>13</sup>But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? <sup>14</sup>Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

If these individuals had not found out what the others were paid they would have gone home completely happy and content I suppose for the penny in their pocket, they had obviously agreed to that wage.

But you know discontentment can become an issue when we start comparing our lot in life with others, that is often the case, and the Bible says they comparing themselves among themselves are not wise, it is not wise to do that. ([2 Corinthians 10:12](#)).

And children, we are thinking about in the home especially I won't forget about that, children by nature will do exactly that, parents need to be aware of that and deal with it but first of all we parents must be thinking right toward others.

You know the home it is a beautiful place, a beautiful place to raise children how to relate to others in preparation for future life but if we feed this idea that others have it better than we do, they got the same money but we worked longer, you know it's not fair and we just had more sickness and financial reverses than others, and other families get invited to Sunday dinner more often than we did.

That's just the way it is.

And the schoolteachers have it in for our children, that's pretty obvious. And the Ministry couldn't be happier unless they are picking on my children or our family and on and on, it is the "poor me" syndrome and the poor us!

But when we parents harbour those kind of attitudes I need not tell you where our children will come in, you don't need to be a rocket scientist to figure that out, discontented and usually very critical toward others.

It is so important to have our attitudes towards others right so that this grace of contentment can be learnt.

Number four: Contentment is learned by recognising God is the giver of all things both materially and spiritually.

We have been sideswiping this one but now we will face it head on. But when contentment is mentioned in the Scriptures it is generally associated with the natural or the material life, be content with your wages and be content with food and raiment, perhaps a lot of us haven't learned that yet to be content with food and raiment.

The Psalmist does acknowledge them material here briefly in Psalm 34 and especially maybe in verse 10, the young lions do lack and suffer hunger.

But for the most part he is on a higher plane than the material or the physical. In verse eight he is not speaking of the physical, O come and see and taste here is some good food. Now that is just one example, Taste and see that the Lord is good, taste of the spiritual things, the good things in life and the best things that God's Word has to offer.

But let's just think of the material and natural for a few minutes.

How do we view the things that we do possess, whether much or little?

Perhaps you are saying we don't possess much! Well that doesn't matter.

In [Genesis 33:11](#) when Jacob made that statement Esau he said this way "God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." And he goes on.

God has dealt graciously with me and because I have enough.

It is God who blesses us and in His dealing he is always gracious whether we have little or much, always! But it is our tendency to think that perhaps God could have blessed in greater measures than what He has. How many of you have ever heard someone saying: God just blessed me too much! Blessed me too much!

I don't think I've met too many people that have said that. I just don't know what to do God has a blessed me so much, I don't know how to function?

But when we harbour that thought that God could have just blessed us a little more than what He has, if we harbour that thoughts than actually what we are saying is that God is withholding something from us that would be for our good and discontentment begins its deadly work.

You know that is an old trick of Satan, he suggested it to Eve. Hath God said? He is withholding something from you that would be good for you.

It was partially true He was withholding something but it would not have been good for them and Eve became discontent and it brought her down.

Isn't it interesting, it was a material thing, I don't know what it was it was a tree that had fruit on that looked good, I don't know what it was but it was a material thing and isn't it interesting how that fruit, that material thing became a spiritual matter so quickly and had eternal consequences.

If we see God as the giver of things that we enjoy even if they are fewer than what we see others have it will make a big difference in learning contentment, if we see God as the giver rather than ourselves as the "getter." You know this is our good management that we have what we have.

God is the giver.

Sometimes we need to help our family to understand that it is not in the abundance of things that really matters, Jesus put it very nicely in [Luke 12:15](#):

"And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

I came across a little story recently, I think it is a Leo Tolstoy story, but there is a story told of a King who was suffering from a painful ailment whose astrologer told him that the only cure was for him to find a contented man, get his shirt and where it night and day.

So messengers were sent through the King's realm to find such a man with orders to bring back his shirt. Months passed and after a thorough search of the country the messengers returned but without the shirt.

"Did you find a contented man in all my realm?" the King asked.

"Yes O King we found one. Just one in all thy realm." they replied.

"Then why did you not bring back the shirt?" the King demanded.

"Well master, the man had no shirt." was the answer.

Hopefully he covered his body another way but he had no shirt that he was contented.

So take heed a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

But there can be people with few possessions that are discontent and there are people with many possessions that are discontent. We must help our children to learn that things and more things do not necessarily bring contentment.

Well what about recognising God as the giver of spiritual blessings?

As I said in Psalm 34 David is on a higher plane then the material, keep in mind David was penniless when he wrote this Psalm, it seems he feels he was so blessed and so rich he just wanted others to experience it also.

Was he is surrounded by godly people that he could be so thankful? Not in the least, in fact he was by himself but if you read the story soon thereafter he had about 600 men and it was a motley crew, I mean it was people who couldn't get along with their masters, and you read it again it wasn't that he was surrounded by such saints that he could be so exuberant and thankful and content, he was penniless but he felt so blessed and rich. He had found true contentment.

And when we like the Psalmist are experiencing the joy of salvation the material doesn't matter so much, in fact the Bible says the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10) but let's look at it this way, at the end of life every faithful servant of God will find equal acceptance and entrance

into heaven, just like those men got paid the same it didn't matter when they started, that's the way it will be at the end of life, every faithful servant of God will find equal acceptance and entrance into heaven.

It will not matter how blessed we were materially, it will not matter that our relatives and friends and church brethren were better off financially than we were, we will be content if we are faithful and enter into heaven because we put the spiritual ahead of the material and took Christ's offer to save us, now we can be with God forever.

That is contentment.

In the fifth place: Contentment is learnt by expressing the attitude of gratitude.

And again we have been eluding and referring to this but contentment is learnt by expressing an attitude of gratitude.

Here in Psalm 34 it is just saturated and dripping with thankfulness in the face of adversity and that is what makes it so amazing, in the face of adversity saturated with thankfulness.

Without contentment there is no true thanksgiving someone has said. We like to think we are a thankful people and I hope we are but without contentment there is no true thanksgiving and God won't accept it if we are not content.

Where thanksgiving has ceased someone else said, where thanksgiving has ceased Contentment also ceases. We cannot have one without the other.

We said the earmarks of the last days or one of the earmarks is discontentment or unthankfulness, you know discontentment and unthankfulness go together.

In [second Timothy 3:2](#) I think I've read that verse at the beginning, smack there in the middle of the catalogue of gross sins is the sin of unthankfulness, that is amazing. One that we do well to think upon. Complaining will run rampant in the end days, the Scriptures are clear.

Someone said it this way: He that is content has enough, he that complains has too much.

That is usually the way it is, the people that complain the most usually have the most.

We need to daily thank the Lord for the things that we enjoy, in fact I'm here to suggest that we can even be thankful for the things that we don't have.

How do you do that? You can be thankful for the things you don't have, how is that accomplished?

Well, we can know that God has withheld them for our own good so we can be thankful about that. And if we start early in life teaching our children to be thankful and contented with what they have and how do we best do that? Well by example, I suppose that goes without saying, and we also help them to be thankful and contented by commanding or demanding thankfulness.

Some parents miss it. If you give a child something and the parent is not around, if you give a child something and they say Thank you, someone was at work, that is not natural, it is natural to say I will take another one, or not even think about it.

By nature children are not thankful and won't express it either, it doesn't take long to train children one way or the other.

One father when he goes to the bank and the teller gives a lollipop if the child does not say thank you the father gets the lollipop, it only takes one or two times to train them.

Some parents make the mistake of thinking that giving a lot of things to their children will make them content, it usually works the opposite and I would suggest go home and look at your toy boxes and put half the toys away once, that's for small children, and maybe half the bicycles and see what happens. We probably all have too many toys in our homes.

Someone said it this way: "Any child growing up without tin cans and scraps of wood and pebbles is the poor underprivileged child."

And with all the specialised toys available today our children should be very content? You know if you want to play with a tractor you get the tractor, and if you want to play with a doll you get the doll, there is nothing wrong with that but there is a toy for everything that you want to play at.

Someone, I'll give another quote, a simple wagon can be a tractor, just a simple wagon can be a tractor, it can be a car, it can be a bus, it can be a

boat, it can be a tractor trailer, it can be a buggy. Imagination is the limit – just a simple wagon.

Let's never make the mistake of thinking we could purchase our children's contentment – it might work!

We can purchase their discontentment, that is purchasable but not their contentment.

Some of the best things in life are free and cannot be brought.

Let's learn the grace of contentment right now, in our homes, first of all parents themselves and then teaching their children by example and by commanding at.

God said Abraham is going to command his children not throw hints at them and suggestions; he is going to command them. ([Genesis 18:19](#)) It is one of the areas we need to command but we need to have that ourselves first.

Let's learn the grace of contentment now in our homes so that we can be eternally content with our Lord.

Isn't that the goal for us and our families?

Heaven will contain only people who have learned contentment while living on earth.