

Mine!

by Mary Kane

Seeing as how I am a December baby, winter has always been my favorite time of year. I love thick sweaters, hot soup, snuggly blankets and good books. Overnight, the landscape can be transformed into a winter wonderland! Plus, there is always the added hope of hearing every teacher's favorite two-word phrase, "Snow day!" The best part of winter, however, is Christmas!

Several years ago, one Christmas, when our boys were just little guys, Erik received a Dress-Me-Ernie toy from his grandparents. His cousin, Elise, who is a couple of months older than Erik, was given the exact same toy. For a couple of minutes each toddler played happily, yet separately, with identical Ernie toys. Peace on earth reigned within my parents' basement until Erik and Elise caught sight of each other and the duplicate Ernie's. Soon cries of "Mine, mine," filled the air as two toddlers battled for the other's identical toy. After we separated the dueling tots and restored to each child a Dress-Me-Ernie, we laughed over how they fought for something they already possessed. They lost sight of the gift they had been given to fight for someone else's gift; Erik and Elise could no longer enjoy their own blessing because their eyes were fixed on the blessing of another.

How like our own walks with the Lord. We see the gifts that God has given to another and are certain that we are missing out on a greater gifting. Left unchecked, we begin to covet the gifts of another, and bitterness and envy take root. Let us remember to keep our eyes on our Jesus and be content with the gifts that He has given us.

Please read Hebrews 13:1-6 for context. For today's study we will focus on verses 5-6. Please take a moment to pray for your hearts to be opened to the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Please write down the main ideas for each of the following verses:

Verse 1:

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

Verse 4:

Now, let's see what the Lord has for us to learn from verse 5.

Write the first phrase of verse 5 in the space provided.

What does the word *conduct* mean?

If you are like me, you probably wrote down something like "conduct means the way a person acts or responds to situations." But the Greek concept of *conduct* means more than just outward actions. The original Greek word is *tropos* which means a turning, character, deportment, way and means. Because *tropos* also means conversation, our demeanor is also judged by the words we say. Most interestingly, *tropos* also means a manner of life or a mode of thinking. What we feel, say and our train of thought are under our control. We can choose how we will feel and what we will think about. Our thoughts and emotions will affect our actions. Our course of conduct originates in the mind. The word *conduct* is also used to describe how planets travel in predictable patterns through the skies. Our thoughts can also run in predictable patterns, which in turn cause us to react in the predictable patterns over and over. As the old saying goes, "Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny." We must jealously guard what we allow to take up residence in our minds.

Glance back at verse 5 which you wrote on the previous page.

What is our conduct to be “without”?

We are to conduct ourselves without *covetousness*. The original word for *covetousness* used in the text is *philarguros*. When I first saw the Greek transliteration for *covetousness*, I thought the word looked like the name of some dreaded disease. After I saw the definition of *philarguros*, I realized it is, indeed, the name of a dreaded disease—love-of-money-itis, the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

How is the love of money the “root of all evil”?

According to the second phrase of verse 5, how are we to guard ourselves against “the root of all evil”?

In order to guard ourselves against covetousness, we are to be content with the things we have. How are we to be content with what we have when it seems that everyone else around has things that are flatter (our TV can't hang on the wall), smarter (my car doesn't tell me where to go, my kids do) and newer (my phone doesn't text or hook me up to the internet)? How are we supposed to be content? God's Word gives us the answer! Let's study on!

First of all, the Greek word for *content* in this passage is the word *arkeo* which is a verb not a noun. *Arkeo* is something we *do*, not something we *feel*. Part of being content then is not actively seeking after things that are not reasonable for us to have.

Whom should we be actively seeking?

Another part of being content is *trust*. We will be content when we are trusting that God has given us what we need to thrive (not just survive) and effectively minister for His kingdom. *Arkeo* also means to be suffice, to possess unfailing strength, and to satisfy. What God has given me is enough for the present time, will meet my needs, bring satisfaction, and it will enable me to fulfill God's purposes for my life.

Do you ever have the "if I only had a million dollars I could really launch an effective ministry" dream? If you don't have the million dollars then it is not the ministry God has for your life. He has given you what you need for you to minister effectively according to His plan for your life. If God wants you to have the million dollars—He'll provide it! Get busy serving now with what He has already provided. *Arkeo* also means to ward off, to defend, to raise a barrier. We need to ward off those dangerous feelings of envy the moment they rear their dangerous heads! Therefore, we can draw from this passage that being content protects us from potential harm and sin.

List some ways that contentment can provide protection.

In general, contentment with what God has given us will enable us to keep our eyes upon Jesus and therefore focus on the work He has anointed us to do—such as raise our own families, serve effectively in our local churches and use our particular gifts to serve the body of Christ.

Go back and read verse 5 again.

What is the biggest reason we have to be content?

Ahh... blessed Savior! You are our everything, our all in all. You are all we need! We may be tempted at times to feel unloved or less loved by God or feel that He has left us because we do not have all the material possessions of our friends or neighbors. But, God has promised that He will never leave us or forsake us. We can survive any situation that comes to us because He is always with us. If we are suffering, He is in our hearts feeling the hurt right along with us. If we are discontented

with our lives, we are in effect saying that He is not enough for us; that we need something that He cannot provide.

How contented are you with your life and circumstances right now?

If you are having a hard time being contented with the circumstances of your life, tell God about that. Ask Him to change your heart to trust Him and rest in Him, even if things are tough or hurtful right now.

A few months ago, my youngest son was injured in an accident. The circumstances surrounding the accident were very painful for all of us. It was extremely hard to see my son injured so badly, be taken away in an ambulance, miss his soccer season, deal with damaged friendships, and after many weeks of no healing, endure surgery. Was I happy with the circumstances? No. Did I come to a place where I trusted God to use this hard trial in my son's life? Yes. I believe that this string of trials has marked the point in Scott's life in which he made his faith his own. Am I content? Yes, and truthfully, it has been a process to reach this point. In this case, contentment has protected me from a very harmful case of bitterness.

How about you? Can you take a step to trust God and be content through the tough circumstances you are currently facing? Take a little time to talk to Him about it now.

Please write verse 6 in the space provided.

We can be content, we can rest, we can be at peace because no matter what we are facing, the Great I AM has come to our aid, so we do not need to fear. Man can do nothing to us unless God has appointed it for our good. He will never leave us or forsake us.

In closing, please turn to Philippians 4:11 and write the verse in the space provided.

He is all we need!

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