

You are in your kitchen. You have been over at a friend's house in the Villages. They have Granite countertops and a backsplash that several of your friends have said they would die for. You look at your kitchen. You have formica countertops, and no backsplash. All of a sudden your kitchen is ugly. Then you look out into your yard. You have the cheapest landscaping. Your driveway is white concrete, and you have one token magnolia tree in your front yard. But look at your neighbor. Your neighbor has pavers, 2 Queen Palms in their front and back yard, they have an indoor pool, and they are living on a Championship golf course. You start to think, this house really is lacking. Really not any good. Maybe, I should start buying PowerBall tickets.

I have to admit that I have had thoughts about not being content with the home I live in, when I look around at what others have. I don't live in the Villages as many of you do. Since I have moved here the real estate values of homes in the Villages has increased. My home has increased in value but not as significantly as some of yours. Plus, every now and then, I think of just selling my house and trying to move into the Villages. Think of all the fun activities my wife could involve herself in. And I would be able to play free golf on the par 3 courses with many of our members on Fridays. How much happier I would be and content if I just lived in the Villages.

Doesn't it seem at times in life, if we just have something more, whether it be a European vacation, a new car, an upgrade on the house, more money from stock investments, another Pickleball victory, we would be more content in our life. But those things, just don't do it. So Today, Learn The Secret of Contentment!

Our story about contentment is one that is so short, many of you have probably not even heard about it before. A man named Naaman was general of the Arameans, the enemies of Israel. He was a very successful and powerful man, and the right hand man of his king. He had one big problem though. He had leprosy. Leprosy was a big deal. Its symptoms included numbness in the limbs, flesh turning white as snow, and eventually even blindness or paralysis. It was highly contagious and it was incurable.

As Naaman suffered from this skin disease, a little girl was bold enough to speak. This little girl was a slave girl captured from the land of Israel. Yet trusting in God, this little girl was bold enough to tell the general of Aram: "Why don't you go see the prophet Elisha. By the power of God, he could heal you." An incredibly bold testimony from a little girl!

Naaman traveled to see Elisha. He brought 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 sets of clothing. If Elisha could do this miracle, he was going to make sure he had enough to pay for it! After Elisha sent him word to go and wash seven times in the Jordan River, he finally obliged and did it. Sure enough, the impossible happened! We pick up today with verse 14: **"So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy."** Naaman was cleansed of his disease! He was cured of the incurable! He was healed!

Naaman's heart was changed, and that changed heart overflowed in thanks: **"Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."** He wanted to give *something* to show his thanks. But Elisha would not accept it. He didn't want others to think that this miracle and the power of God could be purchased. So Naaman, formerly a ruthless enemy with a terrible disease, returned home physically healed and spiritually healed by the Lord.

But Elisha had a servant named Gehazi who couldn't believe what he saw. Naaman was carrying 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 sets of clothing! How could Elisha take nothing? Not even a few pounds of gold? Gehazi's wheels were turning. Maybe there was something that could be done. Maybe Naaman could still give his gift of thanks and unknowingly help out Gehazi. After all, Gehazi's mortgage on his tent was coming due. He was behind on his camel payments and camel insurance. He had unleavened bread to put on the table.

So Gehazi concocted the scheme and ran to Naaman and said, Two young men from the company of the prophets have just stopped by for a visit. Could you please give them a gift of a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.

Naaman gladly obliged. What a joy to give back to God and support the ministry by helping out these prophets. He even gave Gehazi double what he asked for. Gehazi ran and stashed it in his house and returned to Elisha. But it wasn't a clean get away. **“Where have you been, Gehazi?” Elisha asked. ‘Your servant didn’t go anywhere,’ Gehazi answered.”** Busted! Elisha knew exactly what happened. So he told him, **“Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.’ Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.”** Gehazi was not content with what he had been blessed with. He wanted more..

Contentment is something that most of us yearn for. Contentment is a fleeting dream for most people in materialistic America. I believe that two sinful attitudes keep us from being content. The first is the desire to have more and better stuff all the time. A few years ago I bought a 27 inch Sanyo TV for the mancave room. It is a very nice TV. But last year when my brother-in-law was visiting, he was razzing me that he had to move his chair closer to the TV so he could see the football game. He told me I needed to tell my wife I needed a 70 inch mansize TV. I started to think I really needed a bigger TV. My eyes aren't sharp like they used to be. Now don't get me wrong, there's nothing sinful about having a huge TV. What is dangerous is the attitude that the world tricks us into believing—that we always need more and better things. It plays into the greed that's in each of our hearts. Those sorts of desires and priorities even affect the way we serve God. When we buy into the world's attitude of needing more and better stuff all the time we aren't content and we end up hamstringing our service and giving leftovers to the Lord. There's another sinful attitude that robs us of contentment. It's an attitude that seems to be gaining momentum in our country. It's the idea of buying things when we feel stress. I read somewhere that there's even something called “shopping therapy.” People use purchasing things as a sort of therapy. Not only isn't that a good way to deal with stress, it also robs us of contentment. It plays right into the idea of never having enough. Those are sinful attitudes in each of our hearts.

Sometimes we may think no one will see our greed and lack of contentment. That's what Gehazi thought. “No one will ever know if I steal a little money to help myself out.” Yet there was a big problem with that logic. God knew. God knew that Gehazi wasn't content with the blessings God gave to him. God knew that Gehazi deeply desired what general Naaman had (the Bible calls that coveting). God knew that Gehazi stole. God knew that Gehazi lied to try and cover it up.

No matter what we do, we can't hide our greed from God. He knows what you think when you angrily lust after the riches of others. He knows what you think when you pout over your lack of blessings. He sees when you cheat on your taxes. He sees

those dumb things you buy that you really don't need. He sees your offerings on a Sunday, what you give back to him, and knows its not your firstfruits.

Let the tale of Gehazi's heart be a warning to all of us. But let the tale of Naaman's heart be an encouragement and an example to us all. Naaman had experienced the power and grace of God. He was a changed man. He was a man who wanted to share what he had with others. He wanted to give a generous gift for the Lord's work. The only reason, that Elisha said No, is that he didn't want others to think they could buy their way into heaven.

In addition, Naaman was so thankful that he renounced the sinful idolatry of his country and vowed to worship and sacrifice to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The formerly hardened man even had a sensitive conscience now. He still had a civic duty to be a secret service agent for this king when his king went to church and worshiped the false god Rimmon. He had to ask Elisha if it was acceptable to do his duty and help the king because he felt bad even about entering the temple of a false god. Then finally, even though Gehazi was lying to him, he generously gave over and above in what he thought was a gracious gift of thanks. That is a changed man with a changed heart. He saw the marvelous power and grace of God.

With a heart like that of Naaman, behold the marvelous power of Jesus. See how he powerfully came and conquered sin and death. See how he crushed Satan at the cross. See how he carried the sin and guilt of the world. See how he triumphantly rose from the dead in victory.

Then, with a heart like that of Naaman, behold the marvelous grace of God. As he had pity and mercy on a heathen sinner like Naaman, so God takes pity and has mercy on us. In love he sent his Son even for us, the worst and greediest of all sinners. While we greedily hoard our money and possessions, God generously gave even his own Son to forgive us and save us. Just as Naaman rose from the waters of the Jordan cleansed of all his leprosy, so in even greater power God washes us clean with the blood of his Son and cleanses us of all our sin.

So what do you need to know to be content? What do you need to focus in on and think about? First, Recognize you are dependent on God, not on yourself for blessings. Second, know that God owns everything, and that you are just renting it from him for a time. Third, know in Scripture it says, "My God will supply all my needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus my Lord." God will not always give you what you want, but he will give you what you need. Fourth, Know that all your stuff will go back in the box oneday. You brought nothing into this world and you will be taking nothing out. Fourth, be thankful to God for what you do have as you look around, and not for what you don't have. Fifth, experience the joy of giving a generous percentage of your income for kingdom work, so others in the world may enjoy true lasting contentment.

Contentment isn't built on some big secret. It's built on the Word of God and life experiences that God gives us. Contentment is less a matter of knowledge and more a gift of God. Do you want to be more content? Ask God to work contentment in your heart. Refocus your priorities to match God's priorities. Keep in mind what's truly important and what's not so important. Remember what the Word of God says about contentment, and be content!