“CONTENTMENT”

HANG TIME

Feb. 1, 2005

William Ernest Henley inscribed that famous line, “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.”

From boyhood we’re raised to be gutsy gunslingers. Chances are, our dad was a hard-charging, Alpha male. Our childhood heroes were larger-than-life paragons of derring-do. Superman, Batman, Hopalong Cassidy, Jack Armstrong the All American Boy, Tom Mix, Gene Autry, “Sgt. Preston of the Yukon,” “Terry and the Pirates.”

We knew it was our job to locate our bootstraps and yank those suckers up, to be self-reliant, to be …. in control.

Then, as upwardly mobiles, we were enthralled by the human potential movement. “You can have it all,” was the pitch. “Create your own future.” “Think and grow rich.” “What the mind can conceive, you can achieve.”

BIG QUESTION: When life seems out of control, describe your feelings, doubts and beliefs, and how you move through it to find inner peace and contentment?

How do you know when something’s gotten out of control? Do you have an early warning system?

**Do you lose control in the same area(s) again and again?**

**How do you regain a sense of control?**

**What CAN you control? And is that a positive?**

**It’s important to distinguish between Desires and Goals. You can DESIRE things for other people, but you can’t have GOALS for them, since you can’t achieve someone else’s GOAL for them.**

**What’s the difference between being a responsible, buttoned-down type – and being a certified control freak?**

**What are some negative (and positive) means of control?**

 (DISCUSSION)

Ella was a missionary to the pygmies of Africa for fifty-years. During that time she lived with absolutely no modern conveniences and in sweltering heat, often above 120 degrees. Upon retiring in the States, she was asked how she coped under those conditions. Here is her disarming recipe for contentment:

1. Never allow yourself to complain about anything, not even the weather.
2. Never picture yourself in any other circumstances or some place else.
3. Never compare your lot with another’s.
4. Never allow yourself to wish this or that had been otherwise.
5. Never dwell on tomorrow. Remember that tomorrow is God’s, not ours.

All the Gucci-shod, self-help, motivation mavens, with their slick seminars, videos and books, have neglected to tell us one thing – God wants us to put our trust in Him, not in ourselves.

On New Year’s Eve 1975, our last day of working for an employer, Liz and I adopted the following as our company platform:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Now and then when I actually hit the pause button to consider this godly wisdom from King Solomon, it’s been very “centering!”

# **“Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not.” (Matthew 6:27)?**

Psalm 27:1-3, 5 (David writes about 1,000 years before Christ)

**1 The LORD is my light and my salvation-whom shall I fear?**

**The LORD is the stronghold of my life-of whom shall I be afraid?**

**2 When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.**

**3 Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.**

**5 For in the day of trouble (God) will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.**

# Patrick Morley, in *The Man In The Mirror*, writes: “The Christian is not exempt from hard times. … Everyone suffers. The difference between the man who trusts in God and the man who trusts in himself is not in the *circumstances*, but in his *response*. … The man who trusts God has a positive attitude. He knows hard times will come, but he does not fear them; he doesn’t worry when life’s inevitable trials strike. … one dreads the future, while the other believes God will take care of Him. …

**“The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we *want* and start seeking the God who *is*.** … God reveals Himself to any man who sincerely desires to abandon his rebellion and know Him as He is.”

**The essence of deciding to follow Christ, of being “born again,” is giving the control of your life to Jesus, making Him not only your Savior but also your Lord.**

P.S. Here’s a tantalizing bonus “read:” Isaiah 45:1-3, 18-19, 22. About 700 B.C. God’s prophet to the Jews, forecasting King Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion and their subsequent 70-year exile in Babylon. God would use an enemy, King Cyrus of Persia, to free them to return to Jerusalem in their homeland. Isaiah writes:

**The LORD has chosen Cyrus to be king. He has appointed him to conquer nations; he sends him to strip kings of their power; the LORD will open the gates of cities for him. To Cyrus the LORD says, "I myself will prepare your way, leveling mountains and hills. I will break down bronze gates and smash their iron bars. I will give you treasures from dark, secret places; then you will know that I am the LORD and that the God of Israel has called you by name. I appoint you to help my servant Israel, the people that I have chosen. I have given you great honor, although you do not know me.**

**"I am the LORD; there is no other god. I will give you the strength you need, although you do not know me. I do this so that everyone from one end of the world to the other may know that I am the LORD and that there is no other god. I create both light and darkness; I bring both blessing and disaster. I, the LORD, do all these things. I will send victory from the sky like rain; the earth will open to receive it and will blossom with freedom and justice. I, the LORD, will make this happen."**

**Does a clay pot dare argue with its maker, a pot that is like all the others? Does the clay ask the potter what he is doing? Does the pot complain that its maker has no skill?**

**The LORD, holy God of Israel, the one who shapes the future, says: "You have no right to question me about my children or to tell me what I ought to do! I am the one who made the earth and created human beings to live there. By my power I stretched out the heavens; I control sun, moon, and stars.**

**“I myself have stirred Cyrus to action to fulfill my purpose and put things right. I will straighten out every road that he travels. He will rebuild my city, Jerusalem, and set my captive people free. No one has hired him or bribed him to do this." The LORD Almighty has spoken.**

**The LORD created the heavens--- he is the one who is God! He formed and made the earth--- he made it firm and lasting. He did not make it a desolate waste, but a place for people to live. It is he who says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other god.**

**I have not spoken in secret or kept my purpose hidden. I did not require the people of Israel to look for me in a desolate waste. I am the LORD, and I speak the truth; I make known what is right. Turn to me now and be saved, people all over the world! I am the only God there is.”**

To stay focused and contented, try spending some moments here:

Jeremiah 29: 10-13

Psalm 16:1-11

Colossians 3:1-4

Philippians 4:6-9, 11-13, 19

Revelation 21:1-8

Genesis 50:15-20

1 Peter 5:5b-11

John 14:1-6

Hebrews 2:14-18

1 Corinthians 10:13

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Hebrews 1:1-3

Isaiah 46:3-11

Nehemiah 9:6-37

PRESCRIPTION FOR CONTENTMENT

Life principles of Ella, a missionary to the pygmies of Africa where she lived for fifty-years with absolutely no modern conveniences and in sweltering heat, often above 120 degrees:

1. Never allow yourself to complain about anything, not even the weather.
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His Deal
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