

The One Secret Weapon That Can Help You Find True Contentment

“Please, please,” I pleaded with my father, “don’t make me go back there.”

A Tough Adjustment

But he didn’t give in. We had just arrived from Bolivia and, unable to speak or understand English, attending school was torture for me.

Back then, there were no ESL classes. There was no “dial one for Spanish.” There were no teachers who spoke Spanish. Thus, as I sat my desk in the back of the classroom, my 12-year-stomach cramped, trying to understand the teacher.

Sixth-grade girls surrounded my desk, pointed at me, whispering to each other. I did look different, wearing clothes from Bolivia rather than the plaid skirts and white blouses they all wore.

They also found my pierced ears bizarre. In 1964, pierced ears for young girls was uncommon and odd.

But to me, everything about our new life in America seemed odd. Once back from school and in our small apartment, I whined about the painful experience. I asked over and over again why we had to leave Bolivia where I had friends, where I was accepted and invited to join the games at recess.

I Continued Complaining

Eventually, we learned to speak English, made friends and embraced the American culture. And after becoming well-adjusted, you would think as an adult, my whining stopped. It

didn't. I complained when things went wrong. When my plans fell apart. When my dreams remained as dreams. And when those I loved failed me.

I was no different than the Israelites when, in the heat of the desert, they growled and shook their sweaty fists at God. With no shame, they had turned into pioneers in the whining department, as recorded in the book of Exodus:

When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and indeed, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they were extremely terrified, so the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:10-12).

Can You Blame Them?

They were probably exhausted, hungry, tired and thirsty, and discontentment was the topic of conversation around the campfire each night.

We get that way sometimes too, don't we? Deep into our own struggles, we end up terrified like the Israelites. We grumble in the hot desert of frustration. And as we trudge through the dry land of conflict, of uncertainty and nervousness, we desperately look to be rescued.

Though we look around, we can't see God, who's ready to do the rescuing. We're too busy grumbling. And no matter how we try to get away, the Egyptians called stress and anxiety come after us, threatening to ruin our day.

God's Mercy Shows Up

But they ruin nothing because no matter what time or how much we complain, God's mercy shows up like morning dew, with a fresh promise to deliver us.

"Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Ex. 14:13-14, NIV).

God, almighty and faithful, will fight our battles. He will lift up the weapons of His power. Our job is simple: Be still. And in that stillness of God's presence is when our nights know His peace. In the still of our heart is when His whisper brushes through. And in the still of the moment is when contentment walks and settles in for good.

Let's Pray

Father, thank You for the gift of contentment found only in silent, still moments in Your presence. No matter what pursues me or threatens me, I pray contentment is what I'll find in the quiet moments with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

In the midst of your hectic life, what keeps you from being still?

I welcome your comments. They mean so much to me. And if you would share this post, how happy that would make me. {eoa}

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