

TEACHING YOUR KIDS TO BE CONTENT

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Have you ever asked yourself the question, 'Am I content'? I hadn't really until the other day, and the more I thought about it, the more questions it raised in my mind. What does contentment mean? What does it look like in action? Can we be content while still striving to meet our goals in life? Is contentment a choice? How can we teach our kids to be content?

Contentment means 'to be happy and satisfied with one's situation', or to 'accept and be at peace with the way things are'. So simple, yet often very difficult to achieve, especially during hard economic times!

What does a contented person look like? They are peaceful and calm. They do not complain. They see the best in, and make the most of negative situations. They have a positive outlook on life. They buy what they need rather than strive to have the latest and greatest of everything. Their security is based on being satisfied with whom they are as individuals, where they are going in life and what eternity holds for them. Their children become a reflection of their positive example.

Does being content mean that we can't be competitive or strive to meet goals? No! Being happy with who we are comes from identifying and reaching our own potential. When we are doing what we were designed by God to do, we should be very content. Competing to hone up our skills is very satisfying as long as the root of achievement comes from bettering our own abilities rather than purely beating someone else.

Contentment is a choice. It is having the 'attitude of gratitude'. You choose to be happy, frustrated or angry. In looking at your friends you will be drawn to the ones who are content and will find yourself wishing you could be like them. The old hymn, "It is well with my soul", has been buzzing through my mind today and I looked up the story behind it. Horatio Spafford, a wealthy Chicago Lawyer, lost a son to Scarlet Fever, then lost all his investment properties in the great Chicago fire. Distressed, he decided to take his wife and four daughters to England for a break but, at the last minute, was unable to travel with them. The boat went down sparing only his wife. He caught the next vessel to be with her and as they passed the mark where his children had perished he wrote the words to the famous hymn. What a truly amazing example of being at peace! He deliberately chose not to go to the depths of despair, but to declare through the words of these lyrics, that his soul was at peace.

You can teach your children to be content with what they do have, rather than them becoming dissatisfied and being constantly enticed with all the advertising that highlights what they don't have. Your family can focus on blessing others rather than gathering more and more stuff at home. Simplify your own lifestyle by giving away or selling what you don't really need. Encourage your children to do the same. There is a tremendous thrill in giving. When your kids see and feel the blessing in giving others a better quality of life, it is a lesson they will want to continue. You can help your children find and mature their own potential, not only to better themselves, but also to make a difference for others. You can encourage your children to be content and guide them to a personal relationship with God.

Contentment is an important family value to pursue. It promotes happiness and peace. It discourages fear, insecurity, constant striving and frustration. It's worth spending the time and effort to experience the peace that comes with contentment.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.