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### **Obeying Christ - Making Disciples**

"Go therefore and make disciples..."

Matthew 28:19

**LEVEL TWO** 

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Transformed Character/

**Motivating Christian Maturity** 

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A Discipleship Ministry Resource Provided by Faith Assembly of God

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Transformed Character

### INTRODUCTION

I believe that there is no more important study in the Word of God for the believer than the truth regarding spiritual growth and maturity. 2 PETER 3:18 says "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

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Many people believe God will accept them just as they are. However, scripture nowhere supports this idea. God expects His true followers to grow, mature and bear fruit (John 15). Christian maturity should be the priority of every believer who confesses Christ as Lord. According to Ephesians 4:13 our goal is to reach the full stature of Christlikeness. Although no believer can possibly reach total Christlikeness during this earthly life, the Bible presents it to us as the goal for every Christian.

You will see as you continue Level 2, that our goal in the discipleship process is a life of discipleship mentoring discipleship mentoring transformation. Enjoy the studies and ask the Holy Spirit who is your power for living to empower you to become more like Christ.

Pastor John Ogden

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### **Submission to Christ's Lordship**

Selflessness - A disciple is selfless

**Main Truth:** When a follower of Jesus accepts Christ as Savior and makes Him LORD, happiness, convenience and comfort become far less a priority than the cause of Christ and the building of God's kingdom.

#### Read Luke 9:18-27: read it carefully and slowly!

Everything in the Christian life becomes irrelevant if the identity of Jesus Christ is not understood and accepted. If He is not the king, we conclude therefore that there is no Kingdom...right? The same question that faced the first century Christian now faces those of you who are reading and studying this lesson. Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" You must be able to answer this question. This is critical as we continue our discipleship journey and our relationship with Christ. We need to know who we are in relation to who Christ is in our life.

The Greek word for "Lord" means – one having personal right to rule; a master or governor over servants who are bound to obey him. In the life of a disciple such a governor and ruler is Christ, whether we give Him that title or not, He is Lord... Lord of all creation (John 1:3, 3:35, Colossians 1:16-19). Peter spoke of such in Acts 2:36 when he said to the house of Israel that Jesus, whom you crucified is both Lord and Christ." This concludes that Christ has been appointed to rule over all things, including us!

With a careful eye, we alert ourselves to the life of Jesus, we see Him in action using his authority and Lordship throughout His ministry while on earth.

To the leper who was willing, Jesus said, "be clean!" (Matthew 8:3)

To the fig tree, he said "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away (Matthew 21:19).

To the winds and the waves, Jesus said, "be still!" (Matthew 8:26) to ring

Whether it was a disease, a person who was blind, raising someone from the dead, or if we look at many other examples in scripture, Jesus, though he took on the form of a servant **NEVER** relinquished His authority or His

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So, what does all this mean to the one who claims to be a disciple? What is our response and responsibility under such a Lord?

<u>First</u>, we must serve Him only...not sin and Satan! Matthew 4:10 says "You shall worship the Lord you God, and him only shall you serve."

<u>It means</u> Christ is to be served without any reservations! Colossians 3:23 says "whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord."

<u>It means</u> we serve Christ diligently! Romans 12:11 says "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

<u>Lastly</u>, it means He is to be served perpetually: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

May his grace be our portion of strength and ability to serve our Savior Christ as Lord! "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6).

Many have revisited this subject matter over the years, as we all need to be reminded about the Lordship of Christ in our lives. Until we come to a clear understanding in our hearts and our minds that Christ is our master and Lord, we cannot (no ability) follow him. Selflessness for the disciple is a kingdom quality that will lead us, as it did Peter to say, "You are the Christ."

This devotional is critical and foundational. Please make this a matter of concentrated prayer. Everything help is built on this one truth...that Christ is the Lord of our lives.

In Christ's Love

Who's in charge of your life, you or Christ? Is He your Savior or Lord, or is he both? Explain and discuss this with your mentor/mentee.



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### **Singleness of Purpose**

Focus - A disciple is focused on priorities

**Main Truth:** To the disciple of Christ, advancing God's kingdom becomes a targeted focus and priority with a sense of intense urgency.

#### Read Luke 9:57-62 read it carefully and slowly!

These 6 brief verses will change your life, if you let them.

"You can have anything you want if you want it badly enough. You can be anything you want to be, do anything you set out to accomplish if you hold to that desire with singleness of purpose." – Abraham Lincoln

Now that we have settled the subject of Lordship and selflessness, this lesson should be a breeze...NOT! Up till now many of us have studied several qualities of the kingdom. The fact that there is so much diversity in the Kingdom of God, some of those qualities are easier for some than for others I am sure and vise versa. However, it is important to note despite our differences, there is one quality that must be the same. There must be an intense focus on the priority of the things of God and the Kingdom. The intensity that is important to Jesus in this text (Luke 9) refers to the fervor demonstrated by disciples who consider kingdom goals their top priority. And may I add also that the intensity as little to do with the pace and amount of what we do compared with fulfilling our life's purpose.

When Jesus was confronted by Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:49) who had been looking for Him, and found him in the temple, his reply indicated his singleness of purpose when he said "Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?" Jesus also said later in Luke 19:10, "the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost", and just prior to His death on the cross, he said "It is finished!"(John 19:30) This unswerving clarity of focus we learn from the life and character of Christ is the same quality Jesus looks for in his disciples. Bottom line, the top priority for a disciple should be the advancement of God's kingdom.

We can learn 3 significant truths that relate to the intense dedication of all those who want to be disciples.

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**First**, we look at the man who volunteered and said "I will follow you wherever you go" (Luke 9:57). This man was a scribe, a teacher of the law and probably lived a rather comfortable and secure lifestyle which prompted Jesus to reply with "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (v.58). Think for a moment as to why Jesus gave such a response?

Would it be too much to assume that Jesus knew that if the man did follow Him, he would have to make a decision to <a href="leave">leave</a> (give up) his life's comfort and security. And the question is - Is he? What about you and your desire to follow Jesus? What would you say and what would you be willing to leave (give up)? For the record let me say this: God doesn't mind at all if <a href="ween the ween the w

**Secondly**, the man Jesus personally sought out as a potential disciple. Jesus said "follow me" and this man (v.59) replied "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Seems like a reasonable request doesn't it? But Jesus said "Let the dead bury the dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Shocked? Why was Jesus so stern and demanding? A hard but fair explanation and interpretation is this: In comparison with the extreme importance and working for God's Kingdom, even the strongest friendship and or any domestic relationship must be second in the disciple's life. In other words, no relationship should hold you back from God's plan and purpose for your life, especially when you sense Him calling out to "follow me." As important as family is, God's will is even more so. Reordering priorities with God's kingdom in mind is a must for any disciple of Jesus Christ.

Lastly, a man who used two words in his desire to follow Christ that indicated that he was not disciple material – "But first." He was another volunteer that received a strong response from Jesus, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back (sounds like Lot's wife) is fit for service in the kingdom of God." This guy had things backward; in his desire to follow, he already had conditions and was telling the Lord what he intended to do prior to becoming a follower. This is what we call "meism" Christianity. No wonder Jesus told him in a nice way he was not fit for service in His kingdom.

There is a danger in returning home for a good-buy party. Here are some possible reasons:

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Being a disciple back then of a rabbi – wow! One possible reason could be that a person is returning home for recognition and praise. Which self-asorbed proud person would not want to miss that opportunity. Jesus may have seen in this man an unhealthy dose of pride.

Another common life experience that is risky is saying good-buy to friends, family or a girlfriend/boyfriend who may have plans to talk a person out of obedience to the call of God. I have known people who went to Bible college with me back in 1990-94 who either during mid-semester break or after the first year never came back to school. Unfortunatey someone dissuaded them from continuing.

In this case Jesus using "Plowing" illustrated a focus necessary on the Kingdom only and nothing else. Picture for a minute a person with their heart and mind back while tring to focus on what God wants them to do versus a person trying to put one hand on a plow and using the other to say good-buy to his friends and family on the farmhouse porch. What would be the similar outcome? The answer, a mess!

So, what do we walk away from todays devotion with?

- 1. There is no volunteer obs in the Lord's work. Christians, that become disciples understand that they are CALLED to serve and should be held accountable to the highest standard of excellence. This is how progress is made in building God's kingdom.
- 2. We must not let the comfort of material possessions weaken our call to serve Christ.
- 3. We must not be drawn from a future purpose that God is calling us to by a former allegience whether a friendship or family.
- 4. We must give our all, nothing but the best in our service to the Lord.

Having singleness of purpose when it comes to God's kingdom is essential when becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.



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### Living out the Message of Faith

Courage - a disciple is courageous

**Main Truth:** A disciple's mission is accomplished by the power of the Word that he speaks, the demonstration of God's power and a courageous spirit.

#### Read Luke 10:1-24 read it carefully and slowly!

In a world where sin is ramped, living out the message of Christ could become very challenging at times. However, thru the spirit's power, and our faith in God, it is very possible. The church has always needed active and aggressive disciples. Jesus launched his 72 disciples into the heat of the battle against the powers of sin "like lambs among wolves." Their only weapons were, words and deeds, that's it! They were to go out and proclaim the good news of Jesus and demonstrate the power of God through their lives in miracle signs and wonders. Oh how we so need that today! We need our Christianity to be active outside the church doors and out in the world.

Is there more to Christianity than privately meeting with/attending a group of people who engage in one place on Sundays to worship, listen to the pastor preach a sermon, place your tithe in the offering plate, and have a time of prayer? For some, this is their all and all-Christian experience. Although this package appears to be well rounded and complete, the focus mistakenly becomes self-focused rather than body-focused, which in turn produces a group of passive individuals rather than active participants in a combined effort of propagating the gospel and the kingdom of God.

We must take our Christianity into the World. Take it to where we work, our place of employment, where we shop, where we meet up with people, where we do our banking, where we meet up with friends. Everywhere you go, is the world where God is sending you. Along your journey, you will find the hungry, feed them. You will meet strangers in need, help them and clothe them. You will meet people who are sick, pray for them and believe God for their healing. You will hear of those in prison, visit them and give them hope of God's forgiveness and love. Live out your faith! Live out the message of Christ and how he saved you and how he loves you and provides for you. Talk about your relationship.

In the book of James chapter 2, verse 26, it says, "faith without works is dead." And in the book of Ephesians Chapter 2:8-9, it says our works (good deeds) without faith (trusting Christ as savior) are vain.

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Over the years, I have seen two extremes. I have seen those who <u>preach the gospel</u> and those who <u>demonstrate the gospel</u> thru good works. Some depend on their good works to share the love of Christ, but lack in communicating the message of God's forgiveness and love, whereas others, who are concerned with the souls of man depend solely upon the proclamation of the good news thru preaching or witnessing but lack in meeting the material need of a person's present situation.

I must mention that both examples are scripturally based. We have a social like demonstration in Matthew 25:31-46, where we find Jesus teaching about those who will be part of his kingdom and we have Luke 7: 22, where Jesus is instructing John's disciples to affirm His Messiahship by testifying of the blind receiving sight, the lame walking, lepers where healed...and "the good news is preached to the poor."

Let's ask God for wisdom as to when and how we demonstrate the gospel. Whether it be done in word or in deed or both at the same time. Let's just do it! Be courageous with your faith, and be an active participant rather than a passive spectator. God is depending on you to make him known. You are the church, the primary instrument for establishing His kingdom.

church, the primary instrument for establishing His kingdom.

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May the richness of his presence empower you for His glory!

Pastor John ©

Take some time this week to evaluate your Christianity. Are you an active part in building God's kingdom or a spectator on the sidelines? Are you in the game or on the bench? Discuss this with your mentor/mentee.

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### **Tenacious in Prayer**

Dependency - A disciple is dependent on his God

**Main Truth:** A follower of Jesus understands their need of God. Being kingdom minded, they place their utmost confidence in their God whom they know is good, powerful, forgiving, their provider, source of guidance and spiritual strength.

### Read Luke 11: 1-13 read it carefully and slowly!

Why did Jesus pray? He was the Son of God? He always knew God's will, and was in perfect communion. Let's just say that He wanted to. It was a natural and reasonable action on Christ part. There was relationship and communication.

Any great relationship has great communication. That's what prayer is all about! Talking to your God. An action on our part that is sacred where we share our very personal lives with our God whom we trust and look to.

I remember the day I walked down into the basement of my church when I was a teenager. I heard a noise like someone was crying. As I got closer and closer to the area where the noise was coming from I noticed my pastor on his face weeping and praying before his God. It was intense...wow! What a memory. That day set pattern for my own life.

On a scale of 1-10, how is your dependency on the Lord, reflected in your prayer life. How is your fervency? Are you tenacious when it comes to prayer? Take some time and discuss these questions with your mentee/mentor.

Have you ever seen a bulldog or a pit bull get a hold of something and not let it go? That's being tenacious! Can you imagine being tenacious in prayer? The Bible says in James 5:16 "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." If we are going to pray, let's pray with results in mind, amen?

Let me give you **3 foundation truths** about the undercurrent of tenacious dependency in prayer.

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## For starters, find out God's will in the matter and pray in agreement with him.

Often times we come to God with our own wants and not what God wants for us. Sometimes we have already decided **OUR** will in a matter and we are trying to get God into agreement with us. I am sorry to say, it doesn't work that way. The scripture gives us this hope and comfort: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (I John 5:14)

Finding out what God really wants is sometimes...not so easy! However, as we read the word and engage in the practice of prayer, we will become more and more familiar with His will. It's like my relationship with my wife Joanna, the more we talk and share and hang out with each other we often know what each others needs are. The only thing to remember is this, there will be times when we pray and don't see the answer. When this sort of thing happens, we must trust the very character and goodness of our God. For example, it may be God's will for you to get married, but not to the one you are dating right now. He may have another for you. So when it doesn't workout, try him that he has the right one at the right time!

#### Secondly, desperate prayers are effective prayers.

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The scripture in James 5:16 itself provides a key to effective prayer when it uses the word "fervent." "The effective, FERVENT prayer of a righteous man avails much." Someone once said..."Our prayers must mean something to us if they are to mean anything to God."

Think of Hannah in the Old Testament. (Read 1 Samuel 1:8-20) Hannah was barren and she was **desperate** to have a child. The scripture describes her as having bitterness of soul and of weeping in anguish. Her situation had been going on for years until she was so serious about her request that she made a very difficult vow to the Lord. She vowed that if God would give her a male child she would give him back to the Lord. The child would be put in God's service for full time ministry for his entire life. The answer to Hannah's prayer ended up being Samuel, one of the greatest prophetic voices in the Old Testament and the man who anointed Israel's first kings.

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It is in desperation that God sees how serious we are about what we are asking. We find that out too. You can't usually conjure up desperation. Some prayers grow more desperate over time and these are usually the ones that meet with the success that Hannah had.

## Finally, what we don't want to hear, the effective prayer is enduring.

This is the big one! The effective prayer does not give up when there seems to be zero results but continues to pray and believe for an answer on matter how much time it takes. This was hard for me when I first started walking with Christ. I wanted change and fast! Well, the only thing that was fast was the lesson on learning to wait for God. Ouch!! But, I did learn that God's timeframe is never late or early... just on time.

The pitbull/bulldog spirit is helpful at such times in our lives...you just continue to go after it until you get it. It may take a little time but you'll get it! Jesus told a parable specifically designed to encourage people to keep on asking until the results come in. It's called "The Parable of the Persistent Widow" in Luke 18:1-8. In it he acknowledges that some things are going to take time but that God expects and encourages us to continue and that we will see results AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Sometimes God has a whole lot of stuff to do in order to get us ready for the answer to our prayer.

It is a great promise of scripture that our prayers can avail much. We can pray and get answers. There is such a thing as effective prayer. If you are like me, you want to pray in such a way as to see those results.

Our God is a loving father who wants our relationship with him to be characterized by dependency and the belief that He is more than adequate to meet our needs. I'd like to pray a blessing over your prayer life right now! That the intensity of your prayers would increase in effectiveness from this day forward. I pray that God would give you new insight into how to pray, why to pray and when to pray for maximum effectiveness. Now pray tenaciously and make a difference for the kingdom of God!

May God's peace and strength be your portion this day!



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### **Living Honestly**

Truth - A disciple is Open, Transparent and Real with others

**Main Truth:** The Kingdom of God is where truth prevails. The disciple realizes this truth and strives to have open and honest relationships within this kingdom.

#### Read Luke 12:1-12 read it carefully and slowly!

Considering the context of this passage of scripture, Jesus was speaking to his disciples about the Pharisees. They would live one life in private and another in public. Their walk did not line up with their talk. Everything Jesus said about the Pharisees surrounded one common fact: **They lived a lie!** Jesus, who said, "I am the truth...", did not want His disciples to pattern their lives after the Pharisees. They were deceivers! They would overload the people with the law of which they themselves would not live. We call this HYPOCRISY!

#### **Hypocrisy Defined**

"Hypocrite" comes from the Greek word *hupokrites* and refers to someone who is acting, pretending. It was the custom of Greek and Roman stage actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice. These actors, concealing their real faces and changing their real voices, were called *hupokrites*, or hypocrites.

Jesus likened the conduct of the Pharisees to actors—men pretending, playing a role. The Pharisees of Christ's day were a powerful leadership body who claimed to be more zealous and more righteous than the rest of Jewish society. They set themselves up as models of what was right and godly, yet in Christ's eyes their example was actually destructive.

- Robert Dick is the pastor in the United Church of God

HYPOCRISY can sometimes happen when certain actions or attitudes in our lives are hidden. One thing to always remember though, everything always eventually surfaces. The Pharisees hidden lives would eventually catch up to them. Their self interests and selfishness would act like "yeast" v.1, and would soon expose them for who they really were...power hungry imposters instead of devoted religious leaders. We must always remember, everyone's secret life will be revealed whether in this life or when we stand before God (see Romans 2:16. 1 Corinthians 4:5).

In the life of a disciple or the church, truth should be something we embrace and guard. This is only possible when we judge others less and acknowledge our great need of God, ourselves. This will keep us humble and in position for God's grace to empower us for his glory (James 4:6). Truth and transparent living should always characterize the church if it is to function as the true body of Christ.

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This is the only way we can keep growing on our journey of spiritual transformation. It may be risky, but remaining closed and secretive is hazardous to the spiritual growth and process of the believer.

The church is healthy to the extent that we speak honestly to one another. For example: I may speak the truth to someone but communicate that truth in a way that's destructive. Someone else may speak the truth to me about "the way I speak the truth to someone" but with an approach that's not condemning or destructive but with love.

What then is a great way to develop a transparent life? Well, learning to tell others the truth about ourselves is a good beginning point. When we honestly confront ourselves in the areas of pride, selfess ambition and anxiety, the superficial shell enters the process of a brokeness that pleases God. This is where one truly becomes a authentic follower of Christ.

Be real, and trust that God will use your realness to reveal His charcater through your life.

Closing quote to ponder:

"If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people."

— Virginia Woolf

Perhaps today you can discuss with your mentee/mentor an agreement between each other about being transparent and honest with each other so you can pray and build each other up in the Lord.

List below and agreement you both can disc	cuss.
May the Lord bless you with his truth. I encoura	age you today to speak the truth but also live
it too. Don't be like the Pharisee!	
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### **Contentment – Resting in God**

A disciple is content and rests in God care

**Main Truth:** A disciple learns from situation to situation that as they rest in God and his promises, they experience a peace that brings contentment.

Main Truth: A disciple's mission is accomplished by the power of the Word that Reach suited and strategies of the word that reaches and suited and strategies of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that reaches are suited as the complex of the word that the complex of the complex of the word that the word that the complex of the word that the word

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (Phil. 4.11).

Its important for us to know the circumstance that Paul was in when he penned these words. Was he in a 5 star hotel? Perhaps he was visiting a Christian household where he was being treated with exceptional treatment? NOT! The fact of the matter was this: Paul was in chains and in prison. And yet, he declared he was content!

Now, we all know that we should be content, but practicing it is another story. For Paul's contentment must have been a continuous experience because he said, "in whatsoever state I am in." How in the world was this possible for Paul? He must have had a powerful spirit baptism? He must have been in a state of consecration to God? Was he born with it? Maybe he it was just his temperament! NOT! The scripture is clear, he "learned" to be content.

As we all seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, we are promised that all our needs will be met. However, for some of us, we live on this side of God's promises because we haven't had the experience of answer to prayer. So, when we sense we have a need (that really could be a want), there is a temptation to run ahead of God and provide for ourselves. Only to experience that we still feel empty and wanting! What really brings a sense of contentment is a peace that comes as we rest in God's care. We must understand that he will provide everything we need in this life whether that need be physical, material, relational, spiritual or emotional. We are promised in Psalm 23, that Christ will be our Shepherd and we shall not be in want. It doesn't really matter was situation or circumstance e are in, we can learn to be content and give God thanks for what we do have and what he has done for each of us starting with our great Salvation.

What is "contentment"? It is the being satisfied with God's sovereign providence. Murmuring is a sign of a discontented heart and normally leads a person down "rebellion" lane. It's the same as saying to the Potter, "Why did you make me this way!" Instead of complaining, a contented person is thankful that his condition and circumstances are no worse than they are. Instead of greedily desiring something more than the supply of his present need, he rejoices that God still cares for him.

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Beware of covetousness; it is the enemy of contentment. It will rob you of your present satisfaction. Perhaps that is why Jesus said to his disciples, "take heed and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). Some say "I am being thrifty and buying things on sale." Other may say it's "I worked hard for this." The one who struggles with coveting is always looking to have more. More of this more of that! More, more and more whether they have little or much.

I would like to close this devo with a quote from A.W. PINK:

Contentment, is the product of a heart resting in God. It is the soul's enjoyment of that peace which passeth all understanding. It is the outcome of my will being brought into subjection to the Divine will. It is the blessed assurance that God doeth all things well, and is, even now, making all things work together for my ultimate good. This experience has to be "learned" by "proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). Contentment is possible only as we cultivate and maintain that attitude of accepting everything which enters our lives as coming from the Hand of Him who is too wise to err, and too loving to cause one of His children a needless tear.

Take some time now with your mentee/mentor and discuss times when you felt your contentment in life was being threatened:		
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May the Lord Jesus give you peace as you rest in Him.		
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