

From Section 5: God's Good Portion: **Finding Contentment Together**

*Psalm 16:5-6 "LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance."*

The Clean Plate Club

Have you heard of the "Clean Plate Club"? It was a phrase used by our family (and others) to encourage our kids to eat all of the food on their dinner plate so that they could qualify for dessert. Our kids were not always happy members of our Clean Plate Club. We sometimes gave them food they didn't like, even if just tiny bits (spinach... yuck!) But it was a helpful incentive to get their dollop of "slimy greenness" past their taste buds in order to get cake and ice cream that lay ahead.

David's Clean Plate Club

David was not a perfect man, and he faced many difficulties that neither seemed like a "pleasant place" or a "delightful inheritance" at the time. And yet, we see him here, as in other of his psalms, finding his contentment in God and what He has chosen for him. And in my mind, this makes David a member of God's Clean Plate Club. He could see God's goodness to him; and, he trusted God had his good in mind, even in the trials.

David didn't like trials any more than we do. But he firmly believed that God chose a circumstance for him, he would consider it "pleasant" and "delightful," because knowing God and obeying Him was David's "cake and ice cream." "Apart from you I have no good thing.... You alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure," David says in this psalm. What a foreshadow of Jesus, the perfect Son who delighted in always doing God's will, even when it was suffering on the cross for the sins of God's people. "Not my will, but yours be done," Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

But David was not the only one whose life was woven with blessings and trials even before they were born. He's not the only one whose boundaries have fallen in pleasant places and who has a delightful inheritance. This is true for all of God's people. Like David says in Psalm 139, God also "created our inmost being." (v.1) His eyes also saw our unformed bodies; and all the days ordained for us were written in His book before one of them came to be. (vs.13,16) As Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:10: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Only before it is written does a story have no boundaries. The ideas are swimming around in the author's imagination saying, "Pick me, pick me!" The plot is yet to be decided. The options are limitless. But as soon as ink hits the paper, the story takes shape, and boundaries appear. How wonderful that God tells us that from before the beginning God wrote our stories and that means he chose our boundaries, too. I love how Paul Tripp puts these truths altogether. He says, "I do not write my own story. It has been written for me. God calls me to live within the story that He has written for me, the way He calls me to."

As one person put it, contentment in the life God gives us comes as we:

- **Acknowledge God's authorship** — Recognize that He is the one who both knows and has planned your life's story.
- **Rest in His purpose** — Trust that every event, even the difficult ones, serves His plan, for your good and His glory.
- **Live within your God-given design** — Align your choices, values, and actions with His calling.

Even though God has written our stories from cover to cover, and HE knows it all, there's much that WE don't know! Even the chapters of our lives that we can leaf back through and "read" already, there's much of its full meaning we do not know. Yet, because of God's Word, we know where the story is going and we know that the boundaries are good. And actually, they aren't just good, they are best. God always knows what is best and does what is best, for our good and His glory.

That's why, like Paul Tripp says, our business is living in the story in the way calls us to live, not writing the story... or trying to re-write the story. And praise God, He is not just author, He's the main character in it. He is always with us, living in us, giving us grace to live in the story as He wants us to.

What makes our stories even more amazing is that God hasn't just written separate stories for our husbands and for us, but He has always planned for them to be woven together "until death do us part." And as pastors and wives, He has planned for our stories to also be intertwined with equipping the church. We can be confident that as we seek the Lord together that He will give us grace to help our families flourish even as He is also calling our husbands to nourish their local church.

This is such an important concept to begin with before we turn to the practicalities of living well within the boundaries of ministry life. To know that while there will be so many decisions and sacrifices we will need to make, God has already planned out the weave of our stories together, full of good works. Together, we can seek the Lord, in prayer, through His Word, and through His people, to learn His plans for us and know with confidence that He can give us the wisdom, fruitfulness, joy and contentment to live within whatever boundaries He chooses.