



## **SUPER JOY - A STUDY IN PHILIPPIANS** (Week 14) - The Secret of Contentment

**Introduction - I don't know why it is, but some people just go through the wringer. A wringer is "an apparatus for squeezing out liquid, as two rollers through which an article of wet clothing may be squeezed."**

- **Let's go to Tomorrowland and look at these future appliances that will make our domestic chores so much more enjoyable.**
- **Photos of wringers**

To go through the wringer is an expression that means you're going through some circumstances in life that seem to squeeze everything out of you — hope, joy, peace — all are wrung out of you.

You're not being filled. You're being drained.

You're not living the abundant life. You're barely living life.

Going through the wringer can bring discontentment to our lives.

And then there's the reverse. The abundance that brings discontentment. But on the other side of the tracks is the discontentment while having abundance.

- Footage of “50 Places to See Before You Die”
- “100 Things To Do Before You Die”
- “100 Things to Eat Before You Die”

“We want to experience the best of what's out there before it's too late. The cumulative effect of all these images is that our own normal lives look pretty drab by comparison.

We're left with the impression that everyone else's life is more glamorous and pleasurable than our own.” (Sam Allberry)

Everybody else's marriage is better than our own. Everybody else's job is better than our own. Everybody else's vacation is better than our own.

It's become such a problem culturally that there is even an acronym for it, #FOMO — Fear of Missing Out — an anxiety so commonplace that a group of Oxford psychologists is studying it. FOMO is a sign of discontentment while having abundance.

Whether we're going through the wringer and experiencing scarcity or whether we're experiencing FOMO from abundance, we can be discontent in either.

And that's why today we're looking at — The Secret of Contentment.

## Philippians 4:10-13

**10** I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

So, the Christians in Philiphia were always concerned about Paul, but they didn't have opportunity to show their care, because of distance and communication. If you don't know what the need is, you can't fulfill the need.

You have to make your needs known, otherwise you can't be cared for by the body.

<sup>11</sup> Not that I am speaking of being in need,

**“This isn't a ploy to get your gifts. I'm just thankful for the gifts you've given.”**

for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

**This is the first secret to contentment. When you're discontent, realize that contentment is a process. If you're not content now as a Christian, realize that contentment is on its way. You have to learn it.**

**It doesn't just happen. Even the Apostle Paul learned it. How? He experienced it. So, to learn contentment you first have to experience discontentment.**

**Those of us who are older can tell those of you who are younger (if us old folks have learned it — just because you're old doesn't**

**mean you've learned the lesson), but we can tell you about situations where we were discontent. But given faith in Christ and time, we now find ourselves content in the same situations.**

**Because our relationship with Christ is just that, a relationship. We learn contentment by trusting the Lord through various seasons of life. The Lord teaches us contentment through what we experience. Because in the midst of whatever situation, we're trusting the Lord, we're looking to the Lord, we're hearing from the Lord.**

**So, the thing I would say to you if you're not a Christian today is that to find the type of contentment I'm speaking of here you first have to have a relationship with Christ. In other words, you have to be a Christian. You have to become a Christian.**

**And if you're sitting here today and you're thinking to yourself, “I think I'm a Christian...” Well, make sure you actually are a Christian as defined by the New Testament. Make sure you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Christ rose from the dead. Do you believe that actually happened? That it's not just some legend to give hope, but it's the**

truth of history. That's what I'm saying. This is true. We can find this type of contentment through Christ because this all happened — He's the risen Christ.

12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.

If a little is not enough, then a lot will not be enough. Because it's not a question of how much of whatever you have or don't have — it's a question of contentment. What is it you think you need to be content? How much more of that do you need?

It's interesting that this segment on contentment is tied to the final segment we will end on, which is money.

*“What is fascinating about the Jesus story—what makes it so irresistibly applicable to our unsatisfying pursuits of satisfaction—is the utter lack of material wealth, power, and status he amassed during his thirty-some years on the planet. In the pantheon of towering figures in history, you will be hard-pressed to find any who can match him in that regard.”* (Tom Krattenmaker's new book, *Confessions of a Secular Jesus Follower: Finding Answers in Jesus for Those Who Don't Believe*)

In any and every circumstance,

That's pretty pervasive. In a bad marriage and in a good marriage. In good health. In bad health. In a great job. In a horrible job. Between jobs. In wealth and in poverty. For better and worse. In any and every circumstance he says he's learned how to be content.

And the Lord is not a respecter of persons, so if Paul is writing them about this it is because it applies to them. And if it applies to them, it applies to us. We can learn contentment.

And I'm not talking here about settling. I'm talking about a deep peace of mind that comes from knowing and trusting God through any and every circumstance.

I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

First point is — contentment is learned.

Second point is — we can learn it.

I can be content when I am going through the wringer and I can be content when others are experiencing FOMO.

Name a situation, pick the extreme positions on the spectrum of a situation, great one way and horrible the other and Paul says that we can find contentment anywhere along that spectrum.

So the question is how do we learn it? And the answer is going to bring discontentment to many of you.

13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

What a lot of us don't like about this answer is that Paul doesn't give us any steps here. There's no formula, other than learning how to trust Christ through every and any circumstance. This is what teaches you how to be content — experiencing His trustworthiness in relationship.

That's really what this is about — transference of trust. We often go to these places (these 50 places to see before you die) looking for them to fulfill us in some way, give us some meaning, but they cannot do so. They are just created things that are there for us to enjoy. They should fill us with praise and wonder and thanks for the One who created them. The discontentment comes when people look to the creation rather than the Creator.

So, how do we get this strength that contentment brings?

Him.

It's simple and complex.

If you're not going to Him, it is safe to say that you're not going to receive anything. You have not because you ask not. You must make your needs known.

This is done through relationship. Prayer is how we speak to God. His Word is how He speaks to us.

That's simple and complex. Because it's a relationship. As learn who this God is, we learn how to trust Him. And in learning how to trust Him, we learn how to be content in any and every circumstance.

Generally, trying to make yourself content leads to discontentment.

- Having it out with God in a park in Omaha, Nebraska | The less you know about the revelation that God has given of Himself the less you will trust Him | The issue that I was having with God was my concern that if I trusted Him with the entirety of my life that I would miss out |

**22 to 32 | That's why it's so important to understand God and the gospel, because we're all in relationship with God. It's either a good relationship or a bad relationship. | once you've tasted the goodness of the Lord, searching for fulfillment in created things is like scooping up a dish full of ice-cream that ends up tasting like dust - it looks good, it looks delicious, but it just doesn't satisfy.**

- **The unsweetened coco/garden analogy**