

Discovering God's Character through our Struggles: Contentment

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I hope you are like me and I hope that you really do love your church and I hope that you love to spend time with your church family. I am encouraged by where this church is going. We had a meeting last week with the building committee and really have plans to present something by the end of August to you guys about what we're thinking and where we're going. We're just finalizing a few things with that and... Well, we're really excited about where God is taking us in this church. And so they are very exciting times. But as you know, with exciting times comes difficult times because they're not always permanent. There are ups and downs. There'll be days and there'll be seasons where sometimes every step and every word or Even every thought can present challenges that will seek to overwhelm us and to overcome us. That's kind of how my week went this week, and so that's the antithesis for the sermon this morning, because there was a great high on Sunday with the baptisms, with the picnic, and with everything that was going on, and then I got a phone call Monday morning that just seemed to sink it all to the bottom of the ocean. And nothing bad, nothing life-shattering, everyone's healthy, everyone's good, nothing like that, just bad news. Sometimes we just get bad news. And I got mad, of course, as any good man would do when he gets bad news. I don't know, maybe I should correct that statement. But I got upset with God as well in the midst of all this. And I spent a couple days wallowing and grumbling and complaining and not very happy, as my wife could attest to. And... I reluctantly agreed to meet with some friends of mine who are pastors. And I was like, you know what, I'm just going to go. Maybe I can get some encouragement. And sat and met with these three gentlemen. And I did get encouraged, but not in the way that I thought that I would. Because I get there and I sit down and I talk with these guys. And just like in my life, there's a lot going on in their life. And I was late to the meeting. I was a few minutes late, so it meant that the ticket was mine. But I was also late to the conversation, and they had already started talking. And I'm sitting next to these gentlemen, and they begin to... just sharing bits about their life, about their family, about their churches, some really good things going on. But then, as it always is, there's some struggles that they begin to share. And one guy is facing some very serious health issues, looks like cancer maybe. We got the report Friday might be cancer. This other gentleman has some minor things happening in his church. Nothing too terrible, but just things that are enough to be struggles. And the third gentleman is coming out of a very long legal battle of over 18 months, and they didn't get the ruling that they were hoping to get. And it's been a very difficult season for his family and him. And I sit there with my news, and I'm like, oh, man. It wasn't near as... difficult as I had made it as I showed up but as I was driving home I began to think about my life about my friends about my own personal family about my church family and I realized that we're all struggling with something in some kind of way within our lives I think it's just the natural flow of life And I came across a sermon series. I love to listen to this one pastor. His name is Colin Smith. And I haven't actually listened to this sermon series, so I'm not stealing any of his stuff. I just heard about it and looked it up, but I didn't listen to it. And I began to put that thought that he had for his sermon and develop it into a series that I want to preach to us over the next eight or nine weeks or so to bring us to the place in the fall where we're going to cover the book of James. I've had a few people ask where we're going. We are making our way to the book of James. And it's a work in progress right now. I've titled our study in James, just so you know what's coming, Forged by Faith, A Study of James. But I was looking into ways to walk into the book of James and I was developing another series that I had planned to start today to look at the character of God. And in my mind, as I was putting this together, James is a very interesting book. It starts off with count it all joy when you enter various trials. And so it's going to kick off with a bang. But my hope and my goal was to maybe outline some characteristics of God because those characteristics that God shows us are like an anvil. And the trials that we go through is like a hammer. And guess who's the piece of metal? You are. And what I love about anvils is you can shape something into any shape you want, if it's hot enough and if the

hammer blows are hard enough. And so if you're wondering what the book of James is going to be like, there you go. But I couldn't pass up this idea that we're all struggling with something. And so I came up with this idea of taking Colin Smith, his outline of struggles that we have, and marrying them to this study of the character of God that I was planning to do. And I hope you enjoy what I am coming up with through this series. But it's going to go through the Ten Commandments, and we're going to do it backwards. And that's how Colin Smith sets up his outline of struggles, and he... He basically sets up the series of our struggles can be traced back to one of the Ten Commandments in some way, some shape, some form. And so my goal over the next couple of weeks is to discover God's character through our struggles in life. And that's the series we're going to do this morning. We're going to be in the book of Philippians in chapter four. So if you want to turn there, you can find our scripture there this morning. And I know for myself, not just this week as I've started studying this, but as I have been going through a few things over the last couple months, as I shared last week, that God has been working in my heart several things that He needs to get in me. He's been dealing with me a lot about contentment, which is where I want to start today, and which is part of the Tenth Commandment. But we're going to start in Philippians. Chapter four, verse 11, Paul is speaking. He says, now, not that I speak in regard of need, for I have learned in whatever state I am in to be content. For I know how to be abased, I know how to abound. I will get there. Everywhere and in all things I have learned to both be full and to be hungry, to both abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Let's pray this morning. Lord, we just thank you for the opportunity to hear your word today, Lord. Lord, I thank you for the opportunity to share my heart today. through this message this morning. Father, and I pray that you would let your words come out, Father, as you have been working in my heart several angles and several issues that need to be put in and several things that need to be taken out, Father. Lord, I pray that you would anoint this sermon, Father, anoint the words that I speak, that they might be your words and not mine, and anoint our ears to hear what you would have us to hear and to apply them to our hearts so that you can make us more like your Son. We ask this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. And I think, as I start this morning, I just thought I would ask this question knowing the answer, but just so that we can all get a sense of what's going on and not feel like it's just me, myself, and I all by myself. And you don't have to share anything, but I thought I would just ask by maybe a raising of your hand, how many of you just so happen to be going through a struggle or have just recently come out of a struggle or are going to be in a struggle tomorrow? Chances are you fit one of those three things. And so it's not anything that we face alone. It's something that all of us deal with. It's a season that we go through. It's times that we go through. And what's interesting about the struggle is it doesn't have to be a very specific thing. It can be sin. It can just be life being difficult. How many people just struggle with life sometimes? I do. It can be work. I mean, it didn't work great. Just you have the job of your dreams. Sometimes it can be health, struggling with health like my friend. Sometimes it can be faith. We're in seasons where we're like, you know what, God, I just don't know that I can trust you right now. Maybe it's money. Maybe it's just indecision. There's choices that you have to make, but you don't feel you have the information to make the decision you have to make. The struggle can really be anything that brings us to a place of Discontentment, struggling, not understanding a place where nothing is right and it just seems everything is wrong. And I believe that whether you're in a time when the struggle is easy or it's maybe the toughest struggle of your life, life has this one consistency. Struggles always come. There are mountaintop experiences. There are deep valleys. There are moments when everything is good and there are moments when everything is difficult. And it makes the life that we live. So just to give you an idea of where we're going, Pastor Colin Smith's outline in the Ten Commandments says that we struggle with these ten things in life. And I didn't have it up there. You're going to hear it over the next couple of weeks. But we struggle with contentment. We struggle with truth. We struggle with integrity. We struggle with purity. We struggle with peace. We struggle with authority. We struggle with time management. We struggle with religion. We struggle with worship. And ultimately, we struggle with God. And while Scripture will point out areas that we struggle in, what's so beautiful about

God is He has these characteristics that counteracts that struggle in our life. There is something that God offers or reveals about Himself that gives us the hope to overcome whatever struggle we happen to be in. And we're going to learn about those things in the coming weeks, but today, The characteristic of God that confronts the struggle we have with coveting is that God is our provider. And so every struggle is an invitation to discover something about God's character that you and I need to learn about him so that we can make it through. So we're going to start in Exodus chapter 20 with the 10 commandments, starting with the 10th commandment. In verse 17, and it says, you shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's. So the point that he's making here is that you and I struggle with coveting. One of the things that I've noticed as I've gotten older, that as you look back through all of history, human history, or even your own life, since the time of creation, humanity struggles with the same thing. It's just repackaged and it's just in a different way and it is a different shape and it's a different form. We all have the same issues in life. And our lives are a microcosm of this. Coveting is a great example. Because we start out coveting everything. Have you ever watched a baby? Anything that you have, they automatically believe they own it. And they should have it. And you have to give it to them because they're cute and they're little and they're babies. No matter... Up until... They're four or five or six and they can actually handle being told no and understand it. Babies and toddlers do not understand ownership. Everything in the world is theirs. And what you have is more important than all the stuff that they have. Aren't you glad we grow out of that? Man. If only that were true, huh? Our lives are centered around getting more, isn't it? And you can fill in the blank with whatever it is. We want more money. We want more cars. We want more in our bank accounts. We want better health. We want more vacations. We want more comfort. We want more peace. We want, we want, we want. Several months ago, I was listening to this comedian and he did this bit that stuck with me. I don't remember the punchline at all. I don't remember where he was going, but there was this part of it that just stuck with me and I've repeated it to myself several times. But he made the comment that the real excitement in life is wanting something, the desiring or the anticipation. Because once we have it, it immediately loses value. And once it's in our possession, we might enjoy it for a couple days. But then we're like, well, I have that now. What else is there? And we begin to search for the next thing. Because the true joy in life is the anticipation of what's coming. The anticipation of what we don't have yet. Because the things we have are like, eh, I have that. What's next? See, we're always looking for the next thing. So here's a good definition I found for the word covet, to covet something. And I'm going to have to explain it a little bit, but the word covet, according to the Hebrew definition, is to desire something with the same level of desire that you would have in the heat of lust. Now, we can all think of times in our life where we struggled with this intense desire for something that wasn't good. And it, according to the Hebrew word, equates it to the Hebrew of lusting after either a woman or a guy, a relationship. So there is passion there. It's not just, wow, they look good. There's this stirring inside. There's this urge to act upon this desire, this illicit desire. deceptive, wanting to take action to acquire something that's not yours. That's the whole concept of coveting. Now, coveting covers a lot more than just lust and in that area. You can covet a lot of things. And you can covet a lot of things that aren't good for you. But you know, you could also covet good things. The idea is that coveting comes with this illicit, deceptive action with it. There's no truth to it, and there's sin that is motivating the desire. So now, I want to contrast that just real quickly. It is not just the statement, wow, I would really like that car. Or, you know, it's not the idea of seeing something and wanting something. That's not coveting. It's okay to want things. I put it this way in my thoughts. I was like, if you live in a car, it's okay to want an apartment. That's not coveting. If you live in an apartment and you wish you had a yard and a dog, it's okay to desire a house. That's not bad. But the way that we go about finding them or receiving them is totally different. Because if I was to take those desires to God and pray about them and say, Father, you see the condition I'm in. I would like to have this. That's totally different than seeing, man, Tom's got a really nice car. I think I'm going to steal it from Tom. I'm going to covet what he has. I'm going to make Tom feel bad for

this. Maybe he'll give it to me. I'm like, you've got this nice car. Mine's broke down, Tom. Can I have your car? There's proper ways to go about it. If you've ever heard the story of Jabez in the book of 1 Chronicles 4, he prayed that God would bless him, that God would enlarge his territory, for God's hand to be with him, and that God would keep him from doing evil. Jabez wasn't coveting. He was praying and he was asking God for the things that he desired in his life. And that's the way that we should do it. Coveting becomes sin when that desire moves you to action against your neighbor in your own strength, and a lot of times to do things that you wouldn't normally do. Now, I'm going to give you a very extreme example out of Scripture, but hopefully you've never taken it this far. But in 1 Kings 21, Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard. He didn't get it. Jezebel hears about it, deceives, hires some wicked men, kills Naboth, and then gives it to her husband. She didn't go about it the right way. That's a very extreme action of coveting, but it's the same essential way that we go about doing it. See, coveting happens when we take a sinful action of inwardly longing for something that is not ours to have, which leads us to discontentment, to envy, or if you are so led and tempted to even doing wrong. So within the context of our passage, this can include your neighbor's house. This can include your neighbor's spouse. We don't do servants nowadays, but it could be your neighbor's kids. It could be their animals or any of the possessions your neighbor has. Now, I want to bring you back to the story of the Good Samaritan when Jesus asked, who is your neighbor? Your neighbor is anyone that you see. Your neighbor is just not the person living next to you. Your neighbor is anybody that you are around. So God tells us that we are not to covet. And he begins to reveal himself to us to allow us to not covet by saying that he will be our provider. kind of the same idea we were talking about. It's coming to God with request because God is going to provide for us. Matthew chapter 6 gives us a great example of this. Jesus is talking towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He says, "...therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or what shall we wear? These are things that we can covet after. These are things that we can desire. These are things that we can go after." See, there's a proper way to go about getting needs met in our life. God says we don't have to covet what someone else has because He is willing to provide us what we need in our life. Now, He doesn't give us what we want. I can look at that passage of Scripture and see that God is willing to give me food, water, and shelter. I would love for those to be provided as I sat on the beach in the Bahamas. Hasn't happened yet. See, God promises to provide what you need for today. In the Lord's Prayer, He promises to give us our daily bread. We don't want daily bread, do we? We want bread stored up and in the bank account and have a lot of surplus, just in case the need gets really big tomorrow. We want bread for the week, for the month, for the year. And this is evidenced by the children of Israel when they were coming out of Egypt, God began to give manna, and he gave them explicit instruction to gather only what you needed for today. Not everybody listened to that. They didn't trust God. They gathered a lot of it, several days worth, and it rotted. There's this fascinating mistrust of God when it comes to him providing for us what we need in our life. And I find it fascinating because we can look back, all of us can look back in our life, and we can see how things have worked out, how God has really been working in our life and moving us and not saying that we did everything right, not saying that everything was perfect, but he did bring you to the place where you are today through all of those circumstances. He brought you to this place This place in your life where you can, if you were to take stock, you can see that God is good. And even though I have not always done everything right, He has been good to me despite some of the things that I have done and said in my life. See, for every one of us, it could be worse than it is right now. It could be worse than it is right now. Because when we look back, it's easy to see a God whose nature is to provide. God knows you. He knows you so well that he has the hair on your head counted. He sees you. He understands where you are in life. He understands decisions that you're making. He understands every facet of who you are. And not only that. He cares, despite knowing all that information. Scripture says that you are the apple of His eye, the joy of His life. And in His wisdom, He has promised to be our provision in life, to give us what we need in the daily administration of His goods. But you know what's interesting? We can firmly believe that God has provided for us in the past. And we, several of us, can say that God has

provided miraculously for me in the past. Like, I could testify of amazing miracles that God has done in my life in the past. But yet, I can stand here and look at my situation today, or even where I believe it's going to go this week, and I can muster this attitude and this belief that the trouble that I'm getting ready to be in, or the trouble that I have, or the trouble that might come tomorrow, it just might be too much for God. I don't know if God is really true to His Word. I mean, I know He was then, But it's just hard to say God's going to be there tomorrow for me. That's not right. And whenever we get to that moment of saying, I just don't know if God's going to be there. Discontentment settles. Coveting becomes our way of life. Because I need to get what I don't have because I'm just not sure God's going to do and keep His promises in my life. So I need to gather more in. I need what you have so that I can feel safe. Hmm. Hmm. So when this begins to happen in your life, what do you do? How do you counteract this? Because as Brother Peter said in Faith Journey, sin is always there. It's waiting for an opportunity to jump up and to tempt you and to lead you astray. The desire to covet what someone else has, it's always ready to spring. So how do we overcome this? This desire to covet what other people have. Philippians chapter 4, Paul teaches us. It says, Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am in to be content. I know how to be abased, I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned, that's in there twice now, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. See, we overcome covetousness by learning to be content with the provision that God has made for us. That's a very important word there, learning to be content. So you can't just flip a switch and be content. It's not something that just like, oh, you know what? I'm okay. I'm happy. I'm content right now. You might be happy in the moment, but it's not contentment. So the world defines contentment as a steady and realistic sense of satisfaction with the present moment. See, they define contentment moment by moment. Like I'm content right now. You might be content right now because you're sitting in church and there's nothing else happening. Your phone isn't beeping at you. You know, nobody's talking to you. Nobody's trying to get your attention. It's easy to be content in this moment. You just have to listen to me. My wife thinks that's very contenting. The biblical definition is a little bit different. The biblical definition of contentment is described as an inward trust in God's sovereignty and goodness that produces joy, peace, and thanksgiving regardless of the outward circumstances. The world defines contentment based upon the external being quiet. I can have contentment because there's nothing going on around me. disposition. In other words, the world can be going to pot and falling apart. And I could be like, dang, this stinks, but I'm okay. This gentleman that I was talking about at the meeting, was displaying contentment in his life. He had this very ominous health news that he really felt he was going to get. He wasn't a fatalistic, but he just like, I kind of have a feeling this is where it's going. But there wasn't fear. There wasn't dread. There was, I'm in the Lord's hands. I'm trusting God in this situation. There was contentment. When we can be going through the storm outside and everything is going wrong, but inward we can be like, you know what? Man, this is rough. This is not fun. This isn't good. There's a lot of things bad that are happening, but you know what? My trust isn't in what I see. It isn't what I feel. It's what I know about God. because His Scripture has taught me, and He has been true. Every time I've sought Him in the past, He has provided what I've needed in the moment. I am not going to abandon that now. What's interesting about this—I need to finish my definition, sorry — Biblical contentment is described as an inward trust in God's sovereignty and goodness that produces joy, peace, and thanksgiving, regardless of outward circumstances, rooted in the belief that God has done right by me. It's rooted in the belief that in my life, God has done right by me. I don't have a complaint against God saying, well, God, you know, you really screwed it up that time. There's no instance in my life when I can come to God and say, man, God, you really almost kind of made it. God has done right by me in my life in every situation that I have put myself in. He has rescued me from some places he shouldn't have. He didn't have to. I should have bore the full weight of all the consequences of my choice. But he's done right by me in that he has been faithful to his word. And you can bring this all the way back to your salvation experience. God did not have to send Jesus to pay for your sin. He could have allowed you to take the bill. You're the one who sinned. It's your choices. God didn't have to

intervene in that moment. But God willingly said, you know what? You can't do this. I'm going to step in and do this for you. And he has, in every situation and circumstance in my life, done right by me. And as long as I believe that, that's where contentment can come. If I don't believe that... I'm worried and I'm stressed and I'm anxious and I'm scared because I just don't know if God's going to be there. That's why it's a learned response. This is not a natural response for us. It's something that we have to walk through, live through, look back on our life, examine, see where God has been faithful, see where God has done right by me and say, you know what? I'm going to trust by what I have seen of God that he is not going to fail me today. That's not always easy, but that's the process of learning. But here's the problem we have with Our views today. See, we serve an all-powerful God. We like to put a lot of human definitions on God. And because we serve an all-powerful God, our minds think that because He is all-powerful and good, we should never experience loss or lack. If God is good and He owns the cattle on a thousand hills and I'm His son, He should provide for me what I want. Because an all-powerful God, a good God, does not have loss or lack. So I think because God does not, I should not. Huh. But notice what Paul says. I have learned to be content in whatever state I find myself in. And then he goes on to list the states that he has found himself in. He has been abased. You know what abased means? Abased is... Let me find my definition. Where am I at? Sorry. Abased is to be empty, to be hungry, to be suffering need. Now, there's a lot of people who have this... super spiritual attitude say well because i'm a child of god i should never have emptiness i should never have hunger and i should never suffer need there are churches that preach that there are churches that preach if you're experiencing any of that stuff you must be in sin because that's not the god i serve well i i served the god paul served And Paul said that I have learned to be hungry. I've learned to suffer need. I've learned to be empty. And there is this contentment in him. Not because his outward circumstances were perfect, because his outward circumstances sucked most of the time. You can go read about it when he says he was shipwrecked like six or seven times. He was beaten within an inch of his life several times. He was in prison. And the list just goes on and on and on. He was stoned several times. The brother had it rough. And that's why he can say, I've walked through all of this stuff. I have suffered pains and hurts and difficulty. But God has never failed me. Not once has God left me and abandoned me in the midst of my trials. It might have felt like it in the moment, but you know what? Feelings are kind of fickle. They come and go. God's truth will always stand that test. See, it's in these times that we must remember that God provides for us and is aware of us and knows us and sees us and is right there with us in the midst of whatever emptiness and struggle and hunger that you're in. See, we must purposely build our faith and trust in him, knowing that he has never left us, has never forsaken us. See, it is during these times that we must hold fast to what Scripture says. It's during these times we must hold fast to the truth that we have evidenced and witnessed that God has been in our lives. Because that becomes a strength to help us get through whatever needs we're suffering at the moment. But guess what, guys? That's not all of it. Thank goodness, Paul says, there are times when I have abounded. Abounded. Seasons where there is plenty, where there is fullness, where the life is just clicking and everything is right. There's love, there's promise, there's hope. The sun is shining and the flowers are blooming and the vegetables are ripe. There are times of abounding. Paul says, I have learned to be content even in that. Not putting my trust in those things, but keeping my trust grounded in God, even in the times of goodness. Because there's trouble. We can run into trouble on both sides of this. Whether we're in the season of suffering need and being empty, or whether we're in the season of having everything just going right, it's clicking, it's hitting, it's all good. We can have trouble in both of those seasons. of a forgetting God, of abandoning God, of saying, God, in my hardships, God, you're not here. You're obviously a liar. You're not meeting my needs. I'm struggling. This is hard. But guess what? In good seasons, all of a sudden we're like, dadgum, I made some right choices in life. I'm freaking smart as a whip today. Look at all this goodness from my living right, my doing good. And we get this haughtiness about us thinking that, well, it's because I'm such a great person and I've learned so much about God that I don't have any trials and obstacles right now. Proverbs speaks to this paradox in chapter 30, verses 8 and 9. It says, There's this idea of walking in contentment.

Not that it's always going to be a time of abounding, but in that same thought, it's not always going to be a time of want and need. There are going to be times... When it's going to be good and we just have to trust God. See, all of this is possible to learn. Paul says, I can do all of this. I can learn how to abound, how to be content when I am suffering need. I can learn how to be content when I have all of these needs met because I'm such a great person and I studied and I learned a lesson and I endured all the hardships. Nope. Nope. Verse 13 says, it is Christ who strengthens me to do these things. It's not of your own willpower. When we're in times of suffering and need, it's very easy to fall into grumbling, complaining. I did it without even thinking about it this week for two days. Just, oh, I was so mad. Kicked the can. Didn't kick the dog, but thought about it. It's so easy to fall into that. But it's also very easy to fall into, man, I'm just such a good person this week. All these blessings are because of me. It's very easy to fall into that too. We can learn to be content because it is Christ who strengthens us to do these things. In closing this morning, I want to talk just a little bit more about learning to be content. And I want to give you the secret to learning to be content. And it has nothing to do, I would just remind you with contentment, it has nothing to do with external pressures. Contentment has everything to do with what is happening in your heart. Outward can be going to hell. Inward, I can have contentment because God is providing for me today. Paul tells us just a little bit earlier in chapter 4 Philippians he gives us how the recipe to learn how to be content he says be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God and let the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus We learn to be content by bringing every need and want and desire and request before God with thanksgiving. Really, the secret can be boiled down to one word. It's being thankful for what you have in the moment. Being thankful that God has kept breath in your lungs, even though it may not be the best. Billy had a good friend who was in a collision the other day, and it wasn't... He turned out okay, but he spent some time in the hospital. Thankfully, he had a seatbelt on. Even in those moments, there's the ability to be thankful, like, thank you that there was a seatbelt. Thank you that you saved his life. Not good circumstances, but the ability to be thankful for what God has done in those circumstances. But Paul says we can bring everything to God in prayer, all of our requests, all of our wants, all of our needs, all of our desires, and submit them to God and let God be the judge on what he provides for us. See, when we do this, this guards our hearts and our minds from coveting and lusting for what is not ours. Because if my trust is in God to be my provider, I trust that he will provide what I need when I need it in the moment that I need it. That's the God I trust. Will it always be perfect? No. But can I look back over the results of what God has done? He's always been there for me. He's always provided for me. Never once have I been left, well, I haven't missed many meals, as you can tell. God has always been faithful to me. I've had a house, I've had water, and I've had food. He's provided for me. See, you and I will battle covetousness in every season of life because the enemy is very good at parading what grabs our attention in front of us at any given moment, seeking to tempt us to be discontent with what God has given us. See, if God is our provider, He is the one who is providing for us. He is giving us food and shelter and breath and health and life. And according to James, every good gift comes from Him. See, He knows you. He knows what you need. He created you. And what I find fascinating about this, and I wasn't going to tell you this, but I'll share the story. Because He's created you, God knows exactly what you need, but there are times in life when He knows exactly what you don't need. There are things in life we want that would not be beneficial to us. There's a lot of people who pray to win the lottery. I think God understands that if you were to win that lottery, it would utterly destroy your life. And this is just my personal testimony. I'm going to share it. I chose at an early, as a young man, as a teenager, I chose not to drink alcohol. I felt like God said, Will, you don't need this in your life. I was like, okay, I'm good with that. My dad was a pastor. My parents didn't drink. I was like, I don't need to. Seems expensive anyway. I don't really want to do it. Never did it. It was years later, I found out that that my grandfather's father and his grandfather, so my great-grandfather and my great-great-grandfather, were drunks and both died because of alcohol early in their life. My family has a history of alcoholism. I had no clue. My grandfather didn't drink and my

dad didn't drink. They had seen what a destructive power that it was, and they turned their family away from it, and God in His wisdom saw fit to say, well, that's not something you need in your life. It will destroy you. See, God has created us, and He knows exactly what you need to be a success in His kingdom. He also knows exactly what you don't need. And he's probably not going to provide that which will destroy your life, your testimony, your faith in him. God's ultimate goal is to get you into heaven, to be with his son. And if not giving you something helps you reach that end, that's a blessing in this life. I'm so thankful that I never had a sip of alcohol, knowing what I know now about my family's history. We have to understand that when we trust God and His provision, sometimes that provision is, no, that's not good for you. Sorry, that was a long tangent. Why don't you stand with me this morning? This morning, if you find that you're struggling to be content with your life, I would encourage you to take stock of where you are today. First, you are alive. You have purpose. God has brought you to this place in time, here at Helena Valley Faith Center, to hear this sermon, hopefully to allow you to think back, to show you, to remind you of something, of how he has provided for you. Maybe even in times when you didn't deserve it. And I don't know the circumstances of your life. I don't know what all's happened in your life. But I do know and I can see that some have had a very rough road. Some have gone through some extremely difficult seasons. And maybe you're like, I can't really have contentment in my situation if you only knew what was going on in my life. See, learning to be content begins when we learn to be thankful in every season of life. And I can understand how we might shake our head and say, I don't see how I can be thankful in this. And maybe you don't see it yet. I don't know. Maybe that's a point that you can begin to pray about and say, God, how can I be thankful in this situation? But I can tell you this. If you have nothing else to be thankful of, you can be thankful that you have breath, that you have the ability to gather together at church, that you have your family around you, you have your friends around you. Whatever it is, find it and begin to be thankful for it. That's the first step in learning to be content in this life, in this moment. And I will say this, contentment isn't easy. It's not always easy. There's always going to be something shinier and brighter and bigger and better out there. Always. But you and I must make the choice to learn to be content. And that begins with trusting God as your provider. See, God never fails. He will never fail you. As we've shared already, God knows you. He knows where you are. He knows what you need for today. He knows what you need for tomorrow. He knows what you need for the day after that. And for every day that he has marked on his calendar that you will draw breath on this planet, he has exactly set aside what you need in that time. Rather than spending your life chasing what you think will make you happy, learn to be content with what God has given you. That's the first character that I wanted to talk about. Characteristic trait about God is his provision for us. Because as we continue to go through this series of looking at our struggles, contentment becomes the basis for a lot of the other struggles we have in life. If we're not content in our marriage, we begin to lust and commit adulteries. If we're not content with our bank accounts, we begin to steal. We begin to lie. We begin to bear false witness. If we're not content with the authority, we don't like power. Contentment becomes the foundation for most, if not all, of the struggles we have in life. So we have to learn to be content in Jesus.