



JoyFULL: Part Five
Learning the Secret Joy of Contentment

Text: Philippians 4:10-13
Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. Describe a situation when you thought, “Once I have _____, then I will be happy!” only to have it disappoint you and still leave you wanting. It could be something a little silly such as a certain toy from your childhood or something more recent and serious like a certain job title, car, etc.
2. Read the blog post found in Study Deeper.
 - a. Describe your experience of imagining your life as billions of people around the world live it every day.
 - b. Go to the link mentioned in the article: <http://www.globalrichlist.com/>. You don't have to share the exact number, but how was this eye-opening for you?
 - c. What does this reveal the real problem is when we are wrestling with discontentment?
3. Read Philippians 4:10-13.
 - a. What does it mean that Paul “learned to be content”? What does imply might have been involved in bringing him to a place of contentment?
 - b. Contentment is something we likewise have to learn. (And keep learning. And keep learning.) What are things we can put in place to battle against the constant bombardment of messages that try to fan the flames of our discontentment? How do we fight to remain content?
 - c. What are you tempted to chase right now in this season of your life, thinking that it will bring you contentment?
 - d. We often see and hear v. 13 being pulled out of context and applied to situations that, in reality, it does not. What is the real point of v. 13?
 - e. If the secret to contentment is being “in Christ”, why then do even believers struggle with discontentment?
4. Spend time meditating on the following verses from Philippians for clues on how the gospel freed Paul from discontentment. Pray for God to speak to you through these verses and strengthen you, as he had Paul. What gospel truths were the source of Paul's contentment, regardless of circumstances? Then apply those truths to your lives by filling in the following sentence and share with the group what you God taught you.

- a. Philippians 1:6. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- b. Philippians 1:12. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- c. Philippians 1:21. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- d. Philippians 2:6-11. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- e. Philippians 3:7-11. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- f. Philippians 3:12-14. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- g. Philippians 3:20-21. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- h. Philippians 4:5-7. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because
- i. Philippians 4:19. I can be content in Christ, regardless of my circumstances, because

Challenge: What would contentment look like in various areas of your life? Relationship with God, Finances, Relationships, Work? Share with the group how they can pray for you.

Prayer: Oh Lord, You are my shepherd and I should not be in want,
but so often I struggle to be content and do want;
forgetting that you have graciously provided me with every spiritual blessing in Christ and everything I need for life and godliness.

Thank you for often not giving me what I want
because my desires would draw my heart from being satisfied in You.
Help me to be content in You with what You have given me
and to not be focused on what my flesh wants or the world tells me I should have.

Protect me from coveting possessions or people,
talent or influence, relationships or prestige.
Keep my heart from being anxious for what I don't have
and make me thankful for the numerous gifts that You have already given.

According to Your Word and steadfast love,
fill me with the joy and satisfaction of contentment in Christ.
Help me learn to be content in any situation like Paul
and to quickly reject the idolatry that dwells beneath the surface of my coveting.

I ask you to continually bring to mind your faithful provision for all of my needs,
that Christ died for the sin of coveting,

that in Christ I am free to be content and live righteously,
and that godliness with contentment is greater gain than pleasing my flesh.

And may I be humbled and changed by the ultimate example of contentment;
of Christ becoming poor in order that I could become rich,
and being content to go to the cross to fulfill the Father's will
to rescue a people for Himself who can be free from discontent and zealous for good works.

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/prayer/prayers/a-prayer-for-contentment.html>

STUDY DEEPER

Understanding What Life Looks Like for Billions of People Worldwide Can Change Yours

By Randy Alcorn |

In his book *The Great Ascent: The Struggle for Economic Development in Our Time*, economist Robert Heilbroner recommended visualizing ourselves doing the following, step by step. Though this may make you uncomfortable, it will increase your level of gratitude, thankfulness, and contentment, and hopefully increase both your compassion for the world's truly poor and desire to reach them in Christ's name. Please don't just read the words. Slow down and take time to picture what reality looks like for billions of people:

1. Take out all the furniture in your home except for one table and a couple of chairs. Use blankets and pads for beds.
2. Take away all of your clothing except for your oldest dress or suit, shirt or blouse. Leave only one pair of shoes.
3. Empty the pantry and the refrigerator except for a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt, a few potatoes, some onions, and a dish of dried beans.
4. Dismantle the bathroom, shut off the running water, and remove all the electrical wiring in your house.
5. Take away the house itself and move the family into the tool shed.
6. Place your "house" [the tool shed] in a shantytown.

7. Cancel all subscriptions to newspapers, magazines, and book clubs. This is no great loss because now none of you can read anyway.
8. Leave only one radio for the whole shantytown.
9. Move the nearest hospital or clinic ten miles away and put a midwife in charge instead of a doctor.
10. Throw away your bankbooks [or debit and credit cards], stock certificates, pension plans, and insurance policies. Leave the family a cash hoard of ten dollars.
11. Give the head of the family a few acres to cultivate on which he can raise a few hundred dollars of cash crops, of which one third will go to the landlord and one tenth to the money lenders.
12. Lop off twenty-five or more years in life expectancy.

The next time you are tempted to think, “I don’t have enough money,” don’t compare yourself to the relatively small number of people in the world who have more than you. Compare yourself to the billions who have less, most of them far less, including those who lived in the time the Bible was written. I often encourage people to go to globalrichlist.com and insert their household income to see where they figure in terms of global wealth. Most will find they land in the top 1 or 2 percent.

God has given you considerable material blessings. Have you ever asked yourself, Why has He provided so much? You don’t need to wonder. Paul tells us exactly why:

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that... (2 Corinthians 9:10–11)

So that what? Prosperity theology would finish this sentence, “so that we might live in wealth, showing the world how much God blesses those who love Him.”

But that isn’t how Paul finishes it. He says, “You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion” (v. 11).

God comes right out and tells us why He gives us more money than we need. It’s not so we can find more ways to spend it. It’s not so we can indulge ourselves and spoil our children. It’s not so we can insulate ourselves from needing God’s provision.

It's so we can give—generously.

(By the way, I am not minimizing the fact that many people in western countries do struggle financially. In some cases it's not their fault and certainly we should help them. But it is fair to say that some people don't have enough because they are spending what they have on things they want but don't actually need. In those cases, when there's no food on the shelf, often it's because of other choices that have been made. There is help available for people in changing their spending habits and getting out of debt. For example, see Crown Financial Ministries.)

<https://www.epm.org/blog/2018/Mar/5/life-looks-billions-people>