

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. *Enjoy discovering more about Him!*

"CONTENT IN EVERY SEASON" | PHILIPPIANS 4:8-23 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What are ways people try to find contentment?

"Contentment Begins With What We Think About and Grows Through Practicing God's Truth" Philippians 4: 8-9

What people think about impacts their heart. When people practice what the Bible says, it leads to peace and contentment.

- What mental habits rob people of joy?
- What are ways people can set their minds on God and practice His Truth?

"Contentment is Learned, Not Natural, For Christ Is the Secret of Contentment" Philippians 4: 10-13

Contentment is something learned as a spiritual discipline through all circumstances. Jesus gives people strength to endure.

- How is it possible to be content when things are hard? How can it be difficult to be content when things are good?
- What are examples of when the strength of Jesus has led to contentment for people today?

"Contentment Leads to Generosity and Ends in Worship" Philippians 4:14-23

When people learn Christ is enough, they freely give generously to others. It also causes them to rejoice and praise Jesus.

- When was a time you gave freely because you were content and trusted God?
- When was the last time you were able to praise God wholeheartedly because He was enough?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

While many try to improve their circumstances to find contentment, Jesus offers a different way. By learning to focus on Him and to rely on His strength, believers can be content in any situation and every season of life. This leads to a generous community that has authentic worship.

- What are you focusing on that steals your joy right now?
- What is God calling you to be generous toward?
- Take time to remind yourself of God's faithfulness and praise Him this week.

Content In Every Season

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those watching online 10am.
- B. Slide1-4 Larry: VBS Showcase. VBS Registration. Café. Welcome Team.
- C. Slide5 Reminder: Women's Ministry is hosting it's 1st *Fun Summer Bloom Talks*.
 - 1. This Tues Night, June 9th. *Message. Activity. Treats. Fun. Free!*
- D. Slide6 Prayer Today: 1:30pm. Agape rm.
- E. Slide7 Thought/Prayer: I'm under no illusion that you're going to remember my sermon, *even next week*. But here's why we do church: it's the bathing, washing, saturating. The marinating of our **hearts** and the soaking of our **minds in His Word**, is what helps us daily. - *Lord, wash our minds this morning w/Your Word.*

II. Slide8 Intro: Content In Every Season

- A. Paul now brings together many of the **themes** he's been developing all along:
 - 1. Joy. Peace. Thinking. Contentment. Generosity. Christ's sufficiency.
- B. The heart of the passage is **not really**: *I can do all things*. The heart is: I have learned to be **content** because *Christ is enough!*
- C. Big Idea: **Contentment** is **not** found in *circumstances*, **but** in **Christ's strength**.
 - 1. **Contentment does not** come naturally. Paul says: *I have learned...* (**so contentment is learned**).
- D. Just as **anxiety** is replaced by **prayer** (6,7), **contentment** is cultivated through *right thinking, right living, and confidence in Christ*.
- E. **Q**: What would have to happen in your life for you to finally be **content**?
(More money? Better health? Different circumstances? A better job?
A better marriage? A different season?)
 - 1. **Most people spend their lives chasing contentment**. Paul found it ...
While sitting in prison!

III. Slide9 1. CONTENTMENT BEGINS WITH WHAT WE THINK ABOUT (8)

A. **8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true (truthfulness), whatever is honorable (worthy of being honored), whatever is just (right morally), whatever is pure (morally holy), whatever is lovely (pleasing/to God), whatever is commendable (good words), if there is any excellence (moral excellence/virtuous), if there is anything worthy of praise (same), **think about these things**.

B. Paul immediately moves to **the mind**. (Love the Lord w/your *heart, soul, mind, strength*)

C. Think biblically or Have the Christian world view or See the world through the lens of Scripture. We are not born with this, we have a worldly world view.

1. The battleground *begins in the mind* - Rom. 8:5 *For those who live according to the flesh **set their minds on the things of the flesh**, but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds on the things of the Spirit**. [you know, there's a battle for *the space* in between yur ears]*

2. Tighten the chin strap of your helmet *of salvation* to protect your mind, **because** it's constantly under Attack. [John Randall, CC OC]

a) Mt.16:23 Jesus *turned and said to Peter, Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. **For** you are **not setting your mind on the things of God**, but on the things of man*. Peter's **mind** was wrong.

D. As a young man **Charles Spurgeon** was being attacked with *horrible thoughts*. He spoke to his Godly grandfather and shared with him his struggle. His grandfather said to him, *Do you like those thoughts?* He said, *I hate them. Do you like to meditate on those thoughts?* *I try to resist them*. His grandfather wisely said, *Then don't own them. They're not your thoughts. Don't give into them*.

1. As Paul said, *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*. **Renewal** = renovate, repair, restoration.

Restoring to a renewed state, **yet more than a cosmetic updating**.

a) It is a **fundamental reconstruction** of one's *mental and spiritual* orientation.

b) It's replacing old thought patterns with **entirely new ones**, **rather than** merely *touching up* existing frameworks.

c) **And remember** this is *an ongoing restoration process* (pres tense/continual action), **rather than** a single renovation project. (bathroom **vs** backyard).

- E. Our minds often become factories of: *fear. comparison. resentment. dissatisfaction.*
- F. What occupies the **mind** eventually shapes the **heart**.
1. You **cannot** consistently *think anxious thoughts* and live a **peaceful** life.
- G. What occupies your thoughts most? What mental habits rob your joy?

IV. Slide10 2. CONTENTMENT GROWS THROUGH PRACTICING GOD'S TRUTH (9)

- A. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me - **practice** these things, **and the God of peace** will be with you.
- B. Notice that Paul doesn't merely say, *know truth*. He says, *practice truth*.
- C. Slide10b René Descartes famously said: *"I think, therefore I am."* (his point was 'the act of **thinking** proved his existence'). **Paul** would take it in a different direction. *"I think, therefore I do."* or, *"I think, therefore I become."* - because our **thoughts** become our **actions**, our **actions** become our **habits**, **and** our **habits** become r **character**.
1. **And Jesus** after he washed his disciples feet - *And since I have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet.* (practice these things)
 2. Peace comes not merely from **hearing** God's Word **but from walking in it**.
 3. We are to **walk worthy of our calling** - There's always this relationship between *knowing and doing, between doctrine and duty, between living and learning*.
- D. Christ Connection: Jesus didn't merely *teach* truth. He **embodied** truth.
1. The Christian life is learning to **walk with Jesus, and imitating Him**.

V. Slide11 3. CONTENTMENT IS LEARNED, NOT NATURAL (10-12)

- A. 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. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for **I have learned**, in whatever situation I am, to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have **learned** the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

B. Paul says, **abundance/hunger. plenty/need.** I've experienced both extremes. **And** I've **learned** contentment.

1. It's important to observe: Paul **doesn't** say, *I was born content.*
He says, *I learned contentment.*

2. **So**, contentment is **not a personality trait.** It is a **spiritual discipline.**

a) Most people think, *"When circumstances change, I'll be content."* Paul says,
*"When **Christ** becomes enough, I'll be content."*

C. **Illustration:** A **thermometer** reflects the temperature. A **thermostat** sets the temperature. A **thermometer** is controlled by its environment. A **thermostat** influences its environment.

1. **Many people** live like **thermometers** ... **Paul** lived like a **thermostat.**

a) His joy **wasn't** determined by circumstances.

VI. Slide 12a 4. **CHRIST IS THE SECRET OF CONTENTMENT (13)**

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

B. This may be one of the **most quoted** and **least understood** verses in the Bible.

1. **Paul is not** talking about: *winning championships. achieving dreams. accomplishing goals.*

2. **He is talking about being content in:** *abundance, and scarcity, and comfort, and hardship.* [where do you put the emphasis? *I can - Through Him?*]

a) The secret of the **I can** life lies in those 2 words **through Christ.**
It's the secret of spiritual victory.

C. Better Interpretation: *I can endure every circumstance through Christ who strengthens me.*

1. **So** Christ's strength is **not** primarily for **accomplishing great things.** It is for **faithfully enduring all things.**

2. **Slide 12b** The secret isn't **self**-confidence. The secret is **Christ**-confidence.

VII. Slide 13 5. **CONTENT PEOPLE BECOME GENEROUS PEOPLE (14-19)**

A. **14** Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. **15** And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. **16** Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. **18** I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. **19** And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

B. Paul thanks the Philippians for their **generosity**.

1. Contentment did not make Paul passive. Contentment made him **grateful**.

2. **Likewise**, the Philippians' **generosity** flowed from hearts that **trusted God**.

a) When **Christ is enough**, we are freed from *clutching tightly* to everything else.

C. (19) **And my God will supply every need of yours** - **not** every want. **not** every preference. **but every need**.

1. God's supply may not always match our wish list, **but** it always matches His wisdom.

D. Paul **closes** where he always does: *Not with circumstances. Not with needs. Not with problems. But with God - To our God and Father be glory forever and ever* (20).

VIII.Slide14 **6. CONTENTMENT ENDS IN WORSHIP (20-23)**

A. **20** To our **God** and **Father** be glory forever and ever. Amen. (doxology)

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.

22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

B. Paul **closes** where he always does: *Not with circumstances. Not with needs. Not with problems. But with God - To our God and Father be glory forever and ever* (20).

C. Contentment ultimately produces **worship** in his *Christ-Centered Conclusion* (20,23).

- D. Notice how **Christ** fills this entire passage: **He** shapes our **thinking**. **He** empowers our **obedience**. **He** teaches our **contentment**. **He** strengthens our **weakness**. **He** supplies our **needs**. **Thus, He receives our worship**.
1. The secret of contentment is **not getting everything you want**.
The secret of contentment is **discovering that Christ is enough**.
- E. What most often steals your contentment? Are you waiting for different circumstances before you'll be happy? What occupies your thoughts most? Do you believe Christ is enough in this season? What have you learned about God's faithfulness through hardship?
- F. My summation: **Contentment is cultivated through thinking** about the right things, **then practicing** those things, **learning** in every situation, and through **giving** and **worshipping**, **that ... Christ is Enough!**
- G. **Prayer:** God, You did not give us a spirit of fear but power, love, & a **sound mind**. **Renew our minds with Your truth**; **strengthen us** in every season; **and help us** discover again that **You are enough**.
- H. **Communion** - is the perfect response to this passage: Joy. Peace. Thinking. Contentment. Generosity. Christ's sufficiency.
1. **Today we've talked about contentment**. Most of us naturally look for contentment in better circumstances, better finances, better health, or better seasons. **But** Paul learned that contentment is found in **Christ Himself**. **And that's exactly what communion reminds us of**. **Before Christ gives us anything else, He gives us Himself**.
 2. The secret of contentment is **discovering that Christ is enough**.
- I. Keywords: think, practice, content, learned.