



CONTENTMENT

LESSON 2

CONSCIOUS CONTENTMENT

HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





Get Healthy Contentment

Lesson Two: Conscious Contentment

Look Back:

1. Recite Philippians 4:13 from memory.
2. Last week we learned that our contentment does not depend on our circumstances. Review the quote below (from last week's Life Application) and discuss the questions that follow:

"Real contentment must come from within. You and I cannot change or control the world around us, but we can change and control the world within us."

- Warren Wiersbe

- a. Are there any areas where I am trying to control the world around me (think: my spouse, my child, my possessions, my job, my friend, my circumstances) without results?
 - b. How does this make me feel?
 - c. Do I spend as much time trying to change the world within me (*my attitude, my soul, my thoughts*) as I spend trying to control the world around me? (Be honest!)
 - d. What is one step I took this week to become aware of any discontent inside me, and allow Christ to give me the strength to change it?
 - e. Last week I began to apply the secret of contentment by
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Look Forward:

Ask virtually any woman if she struggles with contentment and—if she's honest—she'll say "yes". Most of us battle with discontentment in some form. As a result, we live with less joy than we care to admit. Lack of contentment poisons our peace and leaves us feeling empty, discouraged and sometimes, even hopeless. It's not a healthy way to live. In fact, it stinks. The good news is we can overcome the sickness of discontentment with God's help.

1. In the New Testament “contentment or “content” is also translated as “satisfied”, “enough” or “sufficient”. What areas do women experience lack of satisfaction (think relational, emotional, physical, etc.)?
2. How do you think our culture contributes to our lack of contentment?

Our culture deceives us into discontentment by declaring, “It’s not enough” or “You’re not enough”, leaving us never quite satisfied. Discontentment is a powerful poison to our emotional, spiritual and relational health; so powerful we often need the reminders of more mature believers and the Word of God to help us overcome the effects of it’s toxicity.

3. Read Hebrews 13:5-6 and answer the following questions:
 - a. What two things does God tell us to do, in verse 5a?
 - b. Are these instructions commands or suggestions?
 - c. When God gives a command, it is *always* for our benefit. How would being content with what you have (think materially, relationally, spiritually, physically) be to your benefit?
 - d. These instructions are important to process if we’re going to really learn how to live content. Just so this truth gets cemented in your brain, fill in the blanks from verse 5a:
 - a. “ _____ with _____ you _____.”
 - e. Now we’re going to get practical: Think of one area you struggle with contentment (a material thing, a personal thing, an emotional thing, a relational thing). On a scale from 1 -10 how hard is it for you to be content with what you have *right now*? Why did you choose that number?
4. Why should be content with what we have, according to Hebrews 13:5b?

Some people wonder, OK, so God will never leave me. Great. But what does that have to do with helping me be content? Actually, this is a great question!

- a. **What do you think is the correlation between knowing God will never leave you, and being content?**

- b. **Does the quote: “You never know God is all you need till God is all you have”, shed light on the question above? How?**

- c. **How does it make you feel to know God will never leave you and will never forsake you?**

The word “leave” means, “to loosen, let go, or fail to uphold”. The word “forsake” means, “leave in the lurch, abandon, leave helpless”. To a generation of people with abandonment issues, this truth has the power to heal, and is the bedrock of emotional, relational and spiritual health.

5. **To solidify the truth of God’s commitment to you, fill in the statement below, inserting your name.**

God will never leave _____ (your name). God will never forsake _____ (your name).

- a. **Is this truth hard for you to remember? Is it hard for you to believe? Discuss.**

In a world full of demands and distractions it can be difficult to remember God is with us. It can be ever more difficult to believe God will never leave us or forsake us when life doesn’t go as we hoped or planned. It can *feel* like God is a million miles away. Disappointing circumstances can make us feel like God has not only left, he’s abandoned us altogether.

But He hasn’t.

Remember Paul? The guy who wrote, “I’ve learned the secret of being content in any and every circumstance”? His life was certainly no walk in the park. He could have

easily felt abandoned, hopeless and discontent. Yet in the midst of less than ideal circumstances (prison!) he lived content. How? Seriously, *how?*

Part of the secret of contentment is *choosing* to remember this *truth*: God will never leave me. God will never forsake me.

He is there, even if you *feel* like He is not.

Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. Here’s where the truth of Hebrews 13 and Philippians 4 intersect to help us find contentment: *Christ can strengthen me, because Christ is with me.*

6. **Look again at verse 5a. Fill in the blank, one more time (Trust me, I’m going somewhere with this), then answer the question that follows.**

“Be content with what you _____.”

When you struggle with contentment, do you find yourself focused more on what you *don’t have* or what you *do have*?

The first step in learning to be content—and I mean *really* being content no matter what your circumstance—is this: **You must live aware of what you have.**

Discontent people are consumed by what they don’t have; content people are conscious of what they do have.

7. **Make a list (verbally, with your group, or write it down if you are alone) of everything you DO have. Your list could include physical things, emotional things, personal things, relational things, or spiritual things. Start with the truth of God’s continual, unbreakable presence with you, *in every circumstance of your life.***

What I Have:

1. God with me, always!

Right about now you may be wondering if it's OK to want things you don't have. The answer is "yes!" But when our desire turns into a demand we've moved into the muddy waters of discontent.

Emotionally healthy people—contented people—can separate their wants from their needs.

8. Read Philippians 4:10-20, written below. Circle the words "need", "want" and "desire". Then answer the follow questions:

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

a. Our culture thrives by blurring lines between what we need and what we want. How do you think the ability to separate our wants from our needs helps us to live with contentment?

b. On a scale from 1-10, how well do you separate your needs from your wants?

- c. **The telltale sign of how well we separate our needs from our wants is what we think, and what we say. Are you more prone to think (or say), “I need ...” or “I want...”? (Example: I *need* my husband to pay more attention to me vs. I *want* my husband to pay more attention to me. I *need* to get a new couch vs. I *want* to get a new couch.)**

The key to contentment starts with accurately assessing what we have, what we need, and what we want.

When a desire becomes a demand, we get stuck being discontented until our desire is met.

We buy into the lie that says we can't be happy without it.

And here's the thing: if you stay stuck being discontent until your desire is fulfilled, you will never enjoy the fullness of your life as it is *right now*. And the contentment you long for will forever remain out of reach.

Don't miss one more second of your life waiting to be content “when”. Choose to lay hold of contentment starting now. Learn to live content while you wait for the desire. *You can do this, through Christ who strengthens you!*

*“He who is not contented with what he has,
would not be contented with what he would like to have.”
— Socrates*

Life Application

1. **This week, choose to live mindful of what you have, rather than what you don't have.**
 - a. Walk around your house or apartment and look at all your stuff. Thank God for all of it.
 - b. Consider your relationships. Each one is a gift from God—even the difficult ones. Write down (or better yet, tell the person!) something you like about them.
 - c. Think about your job, your church, and the area you live in. Each day this week, make a conscious choice to consider all you have in these areas.
 - d. Consider all God has done for you in the past, and is doing for you now. Write down a prayer telling God “thank you”.

2. **Pay attention to how often you use the phrase “I need...” Make a mental note of whether your “need” is a real need or a desire. See if you can**

make any connection between how you view what you “need” and your level of contentment.

- 3. If you have an area where you are struggling with discontentment, it helps to get your thoughts out of your head, and onto paper. Use the graph below to separate what you have, what you need, and what you want. Use the graph as a springboard for reflection and prayer.**

What I Have

What I Need

What I Want

Optional: Further Reading, Reflection and Bible Study

- a. Read Psalm 23. List everything God has done for you, or will do for you.**
- b. Read Psalm 131 (it’s just three verses!). Insert your name into verse three.**