



CONTENTMENT

LESSON 3

HOW I VIEW AND WHAT I DO

HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





Get Healthy Contentment

Lesson Three: How I View and What I Do

Look Back – 10 Minutes

Last week we explored the concept of “Conscious Contentment”. We discussed the importance of living mindfully of our “haves”, our “needs” and our “wants”.

- 1. Share how you chose to focus on what you have, rather than what you don't have (to refresh your memory, last week's suggested activities are listed below). How did focusing on what you have affect your sense of contentment?**
 - 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. How often did you use the phrase “I need...” last week? Was it more or less than you thought it would be? What connection did you make between how you view what you “need” and your level of contentment?**
- 3. Share how you used the “Haves, Needs and Wants” graph to help you sift through things that might be stifling your contentment.**
- 4. Share any additional insights God is teaching you about living with contentment.**

Look Forward – 50 Minutes

Contentment doesn't just happen. Too much about our world—what we view on social media, what we hear on the news, what we see all day, every day— affects us negatively. By design, much of it creates feelings of inadequacy, anger, emptiness or disappointment, shredding any sliver of contentment we possess.

If contentment doesn't just happen (and it doesn't), and if our culture is designed to thwart our contentment (and it is), then how do we go about cultivating it? This week's lesson unveils another layer of the secret to contentment. **Contentment depends on how we view things, and how we do things.**

Half of our discontentment stems from how we view what happens in our lives; the other half of our discontentment stems from how we do things in our lives. If the way I view something isn't healthy, I'll never find contentment. If the way I do something isn't healthy, I won't find contentment, either.

How I view it. How I do it.

Confused? Stick with me for a minute, and you won't be.

1. Read Matthew 6:22-23 (NIV), written below:

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

- a. **I'm going to ask a couple of Sunday School questions, which have Sunday School answers (in other words, don't overthink this!): what does an eye do?**

- b. **According to Jesus, eyes can be either _____ or _____.**

- c. **What is the result of having healthy eyes? What's the result of having unhealthy eyes?**

- d. **When you are discontented, would you describe the feeling as full of light or full of darkness? How about when you feel contented?**

- e. **Our eyes determine *what* we see, but they also determine *how* we see (just ask anyone who wears glasses!) How does *what you see* on a regular basis (think social media, TV, internet, news, books, magazines, etc.) affect your contentment? Be specific. *Pinpoint how what you see, affects what you feel.***

I'm convinced that if we better managed what we see, our contentment would be better.

You and I are not victims. We get to determine our own emotional and spiritual health. We get to choose (mostly) whether our physical eyes see soul-satisfying, life-giving stuff, which leads to contentment, OR our eyes see soul-sucking, life-draining stuff, which leads to discontentment. **It's possible to experience big changes in our contentment by making small changes in what we view.**

2. Based on the above paragraph, is there anything you need to change about what you see so you can find more contentment? Something you need to avoid? You need to curb? You need to add? (like daily Bible reading or things with uplifting content). Write it down below:

3. Now let's think a little less literal. How does *how* you see things (your perspective) affect your contentment?

Healthy eyes see things in a healthy way: Clear. When our eyes are healthy, we have the capacity to see things up close as clearly as we see things far away. Healthy eyes are neither near-sighted, nor far-sighted.

Emotionally, relationally, and spiritually healthy women possess this kind of visual clarity about their lives too. **They see what's happening in their lives *right now* (what the Bible calls "temporal things") in light of their future (what the Bible calls "eternal things").** Because they accurately assess both the temporal and the eternal, healthy women have healthy perspectives on whatever issues confront them each day; emotional, physical, spiritual, relational, or professional. You name the issue, they see it clearly.

Clarity contributes to contentment.

4. Using the scale below, mark whether you are more near-sighted (looks at the immediate/temporal) or far-sighted (looks at the future/eternal).

Near-sighted

Far-sighted

a. How do you think being too near-sighted affects your contentment?

- b. Pinpoint one area you currently struggle being content. If your near-sighted perspective changed, how would this help alleviate some of your current discontentment?**

- c. Are your spiritual, emotional, and relational eyes healthy? Why or why not? How can you seek to improve your eyesight this week?**

Our contentment is determined by what we see and how we see. How we see is a function of how we think, and what we think. Which leads us to the question: *How do I “do” my thinking?*

I know. I know. Kind of a weird question. But trust me, **your contentment depends on your willingness to think about what you think about.**

Worry, Fear, Jealousy, Bitterness, Unforgiveness, Lust, Envy, Hatred, Insecurity; these things start in the mind, seep into the heart, and eventually express themselves in actions. In other words, what I “do” in my mind affects what I do in my life. Remember, *contentment depends on how I view, and what I do.*

5. Read Romans 8:5-8, written below, and answer the following questions.

⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

- a. We have a choice to set our mind two things. What are they?**

- b. What is the result of a mind set on the flesh?**

- c. In what ways does the result of a mind set on the flesh sound like the result of unhealthy eyes (darkness). Share a way you have experienced this truth.**

d. What is the result of a mind set on the Spirit? Write it down below:

The mind governed by the Spirit is _____ and _____.

e. Share one way you have experienced this truth.

f. Which sounds more like it would bring you the contentment you long for: a mind set on the flesh or a mind set on the Spirit? Why?

6. If you aren't convinced that your contentment (and in fact, all of your emotional, relational and spiritual health!) is affected by whether your flesh controls your thoughts, or the Spirit controls your thoughts, read Galatians 5:16-26. Answer the following:

a. Briefly compare the qualities of living by the flesh (vs. 19-21) to the qualities of living by the Spirit (vs. 22-23). Which list best describes someone who *actually experiences* contentment?

7. No one who wants to be healthy and live with contentment can willingly and consistently chose fleshly thinking. So how do we choose to set our minds on the Spirit *in real life*? Look up the following verses and note what they say about what *to do* with your thinking.

a. 2 Corinthians 10:5

- *For me, to apply this verse means I will*

- *For me, to ignore this verse means I will*

b. Romans 12:2

- *For me, to apply this verse means I will*

- *For me, to ignore this verse means I will*

c. **Philippians 4:8**

Write down everything you are to think about. The first one has been done for you.

- | | |
|---------------------|----|
| 1. Whatever is true | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

8. **Now we're going to get practical. Discuss what happens when you DON'T think the way Phil 4:8 tells us to think, using the list as your guide.** (For example, when I don't focus on the truth, my mind spins out of control with "what ifs". This always leads me down a path of fear and worry, which is most definitely unhealthy, and never leads to contentment.) For more information on what each word means, see the sidebar.

But what does it mean?

Sometimes my heart sincerely wants to put God's Word into practice, but my head doesn't quite know how. To help make the link between how we are instructed to think according to Philippians 4:8, and real life, below you'll find descriptions and definitions.

1. **True:** True in fact; true, as it accords with reality
2. **Noble:** Honorable; what is deeply respected
3. **Right:** Righteous; righteous in the eyes of God
4. **Pure:** Ethically pure; chaste; uncontaminated
5. **Lovely:** Pleasing; worthy of personal affection, dearly prized
6. **Admirable:** Well reported of, or spoken of
7. **Excellent:** Moral excellence, goodness, a gracious act
8. **Worthy of Praise:** enthusiastic acknowledgment for what deserves praise; appropriate because it fits into God's will

Life Application

1. Look again at Philippians 4: 8. Considering your own thinking habits, pick one you will focus on this week. Be prepared to share how applying the principles found in God's Word affected your thinking, your moods, and your actions during the week.
2. If (or should I say *when?*) you find yourself slipping into old patterns of thinking, which are not in alignment with Philippians 4:8, STOP. Write down what you *are* thinking. Next to it, write out what you *should be* thinking. If you can't write it down, say it out loud. No joke. *A change in thought patterns has to be conscious and concrete.*

What I Am Thinking

What I Should Be Thinking

3. Review your answers to question 5a and b. Choose to apply these principles this week. Do not to ignore them! It won't be easy to take *every* thought captive, so give yourself grace as you go. But if want to learn new, healthy patterns of thinking—patterns that will enable you to experience genuine contentment—you *must begin the process of allowing God to transform your thinking.*
4. Review question 1f. Is there anything you need to stop watching, reading, or seeing in order to be more content? Is there anything you need to start reading or watching to improve your contentment?

If so, what? _____

Optional: Further Reading, Reflection and Bible Study

This week's reading includes two of my favorite chapters in the Bible. Read to the end of each chapter and you'll see why. Write down anything God speaks to your heart as your read. In fact, before you read, ask God, "If you were with me right now (and you are!), what would you say to me today?"

1. Read Matthew 6
2. Read Romans 8