



CONTENTMENT

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HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





CONTENTMENT

LESSON 1

CONTENTMENT CAN BE YOURS

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Get Healthy Contentment

Lesson One: Contentment Can Be *Yours*

In this lesson we will:

- **Explore the value of contentment**
- **Pinpoint the characteristics of a discontent woman vs. a content woman**
- **Learn the first two secrets of contentment**

My friend didn't mean to eavesdrop, but it was impossible not to overhear the man next to her. Cell phone conversations are like that. The well-groomed stranger was clearly talking to his wife, and judging by how infrequently he spoke, it was pretty much a one-sided conversation. Then suddenly, the stranger said good-bye—at precisely the same moment my friend looked up. She immediately noticed how his wrinkled brow mirrored the stress she'd heard in his voice. And, in that instant, the stranger realized his private conversation hadn't been private, at all.

He looked at my friend and shook his head, clearly defeated. "She's just not satisfied", he explained, apologetically.

She's just not satisfied.

These words could be the epitaph for our generation. Discontentment has become epidemic.

And it's making us miserable.

We're a generation of women who have closets full of clothes, opportunities to pursue endless dreams, a coffee shop on every corner, and access to every possession our heart desires. And yet, it's not enough.

We're empty. Dissatisfied. Wanting.

But maybe you're thinking, "Wait a minute. I'm satisfied. Honestly, I'm totally content." (And I hope you are!). But let me ask you a pointed question: are you equally content when your circumstances are difficult, as when they are easy? Ah. Now, we're getting real.

And getting real is the first step to getting healthy.

Most people aren't discontent with *everything* in their life. Instead, most of us have one or more areas where (if the truth were told) those close to us would say, "She's not satisfied with_____".

The little corner of our heart reserved for discontentment robs us of the emotional, spiritual and relational health that could be ours. Instead, we allow contentment to remain just outside our reach. **We want it, but we don't know how to get it.** We believe the lie that says, "I would be content if...", or "I will be content when...".

As a result, a piece of our soul remains Just. Not. Satisfied.

- 1. In your experience, what areas do women struggle with contentment most?**

- 2. Do you see areas where you've bought into the notion that you'd be more content if_____? If so, how does this belief affect your ability to be content with your life as it is, right now?**

Here's the good news: contentment isn't something you can have *if* or *when*; contentment is something you can have *right now*—even if your circumstances don't change one teensy bit.

Hang on, sweet friend, because we are about to learn how. But first, let's see how contentment affects your emotional, relational and spiritual health. Because it does.

- 3. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-8, and answer the following questions.**
 - a. According to verse 6, what is "great gain"?**

 - b. Why do you think godliness and contentment are great gain? In others words, how does godliness and contentment benefit someone?**

 - c. How would learning to be content be great gain for *you*?**

 - d. If you lived content, how would it benefit those around you, like your husband, children, or friends?**

Just in case you're still not convinced contentment can benefit your emotional, spiritual and relational health, take a look at the list of ways discontentment works itself out in the life of a woman.

4. Compare the real-life attitudes and actions of a content woman to a discontent woman. Check any that apply to you.

Content	Discontent
Lives fully and enjoys each moment	Lives in the past; worries over future
Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Positive	Negative
Controls thoughts and emotions	Thoughts and emotions control her
Joyful	Emotionally "Blah"
Focuses on what she can do	Focuses on what she can't do
Focuses on what she has	Focuses on what she wants
Encouraging	Critical
Peaceful	Anxious
Giving	Demanding
Emotionally full	Emotionally empty
Thinks "I Can"	Thinks "I can't because..."
Speaks positively about herself	Speaks negatively about herself
Speaks positively about others	Speaks negatively about others
Speaks positively about the future	Speaks negatively about the future
Grateful	Entitled
Aware	Unaware
Hopeful	Depressed
Fulfilled	Restless
Has long-term perspective	Wants her way right now
Other-centered	Self-centered
Trusting	Jealous
Unselfish	Possessive
Thankful	Resentful
Forgiving	Bitter
Kind	Catty
Secure	Insecure
Calm	Easily Annoyed
Praises	Complains
At ease	Stressed
Enviably	Envious

a. Do you identify with any of the attributes of discontentment? If so, which ones?

b. What characteristics of contentment do you need most?

- 5. Look up Philippians 4:10-13 and answer the following questions:**
- a. What stands out to you about Paul's attitude?**

 - b. What do you think: did Paul's circumstances lend themselves to contentment or discontentment? Why or why not?**

 - c. According to verse 11, is contentment something we are born with, or something we can learn?**

 - d. How does knowing contentment can be learned, give you hope?**

 - e. Write out Philippians 4:11, word for word.**

Paul says he "learned *how to*" (v 11) and "knows *how to*" (v 12). Paul uses two of the most beautiful words in the English language: "How To".

I have a secret pet peeve (which I guess now won't be so secret): I hate it when someone tells me I *should do* something, but leaves me with no clue about *how to* do something. I find it Totally. Not. Helpful.

What? You, too? You're going to love this Paul guy.

A little background on Paul: he was a highly educated (think Harvard or Yale) first century Jew, who persecuted the earliest Christians. While on his way to persecute believers, Paul met the resurrected Jesus. His life was never the same. Paul became one of Christianity's leading proponents, planted many first century churches, and wrote much of the New Testament, including the letter to the church at Philippi, which we know as the book of Philippians. He wrote this letter while imprisoned for his faith. For more information on what life was like for Paul when he penned the words found in Philippians 4, read the sidebar.

Paul may have spent as much as 25% of his time as a missionary in prison. Roman imprisonment was preceded by being stripped naked and then flogged, a humiliating, painful, and bloody ordeal. The bleeding wounds went untreated; prisoners sat in painful leg or wrist chains. Mutilated, bloodstained clothing was not replaced, even in the cold of winter. In his final imprisonment, Paul asked for a cloak, presumably because of the cold. Most cells were dark, especially the inner cells of a prison, like the one Paul and Silas inhabited in Philippi. Unbearable cold, lack of water, cramped quarters, and sickening stench from few toilets made sleeping difficult and waking hours miserable. Prison food, when available, was poor. Most prisoners had to provide their own food from outside sources. Because of the miserable conditions, many prisoners begged for a speedy death. Others simply committed suicide.

A prominent individual, or one expected to be released, might be kept under house arrest if he or she could afford the rent. In Rome, where housing prisoners was excessively expensive, Paul was given the privilege of house arrest, and he paid the rent himself (exactly how, we don't know).

In his final imprisonment in Rome, though, Paul's life came to an end in the woeful conditions of a Roman prison

(John McRay, "Paul and His Times," Christian History, No 47).

6. In Philippians 4:12 Paul gives us the inside scoop on contentment. Fill in the blanks below.

"I have learned the _____ of living in _____ situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little."

Contentment—true contentment—not the kind that lasts only as long as our ideal circumstance does, is a secret, because frankly, not many people know how to live content in every situation. Anyone can be content when life is perfect; but the godly can learn a way of living content that doesn't depend on an external circumstance, but on an internal perspective.

So what exactly is the big secret about how to be content? It's multi-layered, but here's the first part:

***SECRET TO CONTENTMENT#1:
Your contentment does not depend on
your circumstances***

Why is this truth a secret? Because most of us live like it does.

So right about now you might be thinking, *Give me a break. It's unrealistic to think my circumstances don't determine my contentment.* Others might protest, *Wait a minute...aren't I supposed to be discontent with some things?*

I know. I know. This concept is radical. That's why the definition of contentment is so important.

In the original Greek, the word "contentment" means "self-sufficiency; having all one needs

within (through the indwelling of Christ)". In other words, ***true contentment originates from what's going on inside me, not what's going on outside me.***

Simply put, **contentment is a by-product of what's happening in my soul.**

This is why contentment is so intricately intertwined with emotional, relational and spiritual health. It's also the reason two people can face the same circumstance, and one grows bitter, while the other grows better.

Most people mistakenly believe, "I'll be content when life gets better". But the truth is, "Life gets better when I am content".

Paul's next statement is about to show us how.

7. Write out Philippians 4:13, word for word, below:

Paul unveils a second part of his learned secret to contentment:

***SECRET TO CONTENTMENT #2:
You can do all things, through Christ, who strengthens you***

- 8. According to verse 13, who gives you the strength to face the circumstances of your life with contentment?**
- a. How do you think strength is given through Christ?**

 - b. Is there an area where you need Christ's strength to help you live with contentment? If so, what is it? Write it down below.**

Life Application:

1. **Memorize Phil 4:13. Don't skip this. You'll come back to it for the next five weeks. And you'll need it (trust me!) for the rest of your life.**
2. **Read the quote below and answer the following:**

"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. **Have I spent as much time trying to change the world within me (*my* attitude, *my* soul, *my* thoughts) as I have trying to control the world around me?**
 - d. **What is one practical, do-able step I will take to become aware of any discontent inside me and allow Christ to give me the strength to change it?** Remember: You *can* do all things (the whole thing; one individual thing at a time) *through Christ* who strengthens *you* (You, individually. You, personally).
 - e. **This week I will begin to apply the secret of contentment by**
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Optional: Further Reading, Reflection and Bible Study:

1. **Read Philippians Chapter 4. Make a list of all the commands. Pick one to apply to your life and make a note of how this affects your contentment.**
2. **Read 1 Timothy 6:6-21. Write down anything God speaks to your heart.**