

THE SECRET OF A SATISFYING LIFE
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 10 of 12
Philippians 4:10-13
Rick Warren

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13

"... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..." vs. 11-12

WHAT IS CONTENTMENT?

It's not apathy ... laziness ... complacency

DEF:

How do I get it?

HOW TO EXPERIENCE REAL CONTENTMENT

I. LEARN TO _____

"... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." vs. 11b

"We do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven ... The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever." 2 Cor. 4:18

Misconceptions about happiness:

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"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

I Timothy 6:6-8

Root Problem:

II. LEARN TO _____

"I know what it is to be in need, and I 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." vs. 12

"I have learned to be independent of circumstances." (Ber)

Types of Circumstances

- Those we can control and _____
- Those we can control and _____
- Those we _____

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." Romans 12:18

Key to adjusting:

III. LEARN TO _____

"I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."

"There is nothing I cannot master with the help of one who gives me strength." (JB)

"... I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me, that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency." (Amp)

"But God said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in (your) weakness.'" 2 Cor. 12:9

IV. LEARN TO _____

"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." vs. 19

"So do not start worrying: Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes? ... Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Instead, be concerned about everything else with God's kingdom ... and he will provide you will all these other things." Matt. 6:31-33 (GN)

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Remember the song, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." Twenty-five years later you still hear that as a common complaint. All the time you meet people who are unhappy, unfulfilled, and unsatisfied.

The Christmas season is the season of discontent. You see all the things that you can't have and your discontent level rises proportionally.

If you were to believe what the commercials tell you, you would believe that contentment was something that could be sprayed on, rolled, inhaled, eaten or driven. As if all of these products would give you lasting contentment. They don't.

What is the secret of a satisfying life? If you could bottle contentment you could make a million dollars overnight.

Philippians 4:11-12 ". I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation..."

What is contentment? It is not apathy, laziness, complacency.

Contentment is independent from circumstances. You do not base your happiness on the situation around you. Happiness comes from within. How do you get that kind of contentment and satisfaction in life?

Paul says contentment is learned. It's not something that's instant, in a one time experience. Life is a school of contentment and the problem is most people never learn and they die unfulfilled and unsatisfied and unhappy. How do you learn contentment?

HOW TO EXPERIENCE REAL CONTENTMENT

Paul gives us four lessons to learn that will give us a satisfying, abundant life.

1. LEARN TO AVOID COMPARISONS

Comparing yourself to others always leads to discontent. v. 11b "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" and that comes from not comparing yourself. If you want to learn to be content you have to avoid comparisons. There will always be people that make more money than you, who have greater opportunities than you have, who have fewer problems. So what? That has no bearing at all on your own personal happiness.

Paul continues, "We don't look around at what we see right now, the troubles all around us. But we look forward to the joys in heaven. The troubles will soon be over but the joys that come will last forever." 2 Cor. 4:18. Paul says, I don't look around, I look up. I don't spend my time comparing myself to other people. I keep my eyes on what is to happen.

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How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 10 of 12

Three misconceptions about happiness:

- 1) I must have what others have to be happy. That's the myth behind all fads and fashions. It's just not true.
- 2) I must be liked by everyone in order to be happy. You don't, you know. Many people spend so much time trying to win the approval of others. You cannot go through life without some disapproval -- if you do anything, somebody is not going to like it. Even Jesus couldn't please everybody. Only a fool would try to do what Jesus couldn't do. You don't need everybody's approval to be happy.
- 3) Having more will make me more happy. Howard Hughes was asked, "How much money does it take to make a man happy?" He said, "Just a little more." As your income goes up, so does your expenses.

I Timothy 6:6-8 "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."

All possessions are temporary. They're just loaned to us. We use them while we're here on earth, have a good time with them, enjoy them, use them for God's glory, but they're not going to last. Don't get an obsession with possessions.

Root problem: comparing myself to others.

II. LEARN TO ADJUST TO CHANGE

Life is full of ups and downs -- emotionally, physically, mentally, financially. There's nothing certain in life except change. Change is certain.

How well do you handle change? How well do you handle when things are shaken up a little? Do you get frightened? Moody? Angry? Uptight? Paul says that one of the secrets of learning to be content in life is the ability to adjust to all kinds of circumstances and change. Paul says you need to learn to adjust to it. Your happiness in life will be largely dependant upon your ability to adapt, adjust, be flexible. Change is going to happen whether you like it or not.

v. 12 "I know what it is to be in need, and I 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."

Paul says he's seen good times and bad times. What did experience teach Paul? Berkley translation: "I have learned to be independent of circumstances." That is the secret of a satisfying life. You don't get your joys or happiness out of things, people, possessions, pleasures, profits, popularity, prestige... Pauls says he's learned to be independent of circumstances.

THE SECRET OF A SATISFYING LIFE

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 10 of 12

When he's writing this, Paul is old, lonely and he's in a cold Roman prison. He's away from his friends. Yet he continually said, I can handle this, no problem, I can cope. I avoid comparisons and I adjust to change. I am flexible. We must be flexible because circumstances usually aren't. Paul says no matter what I go through I am not a victim. I choose not to be a victim. No matter what people do to me they are not going to control my life. No matter what hurt, experience or difficulty I go through and I have every reason to hve bad memories, I will not let it victimize me. I am independent of circumstances. That is real freedom -- when you can say I am not controled by my circumstances, I am not manipulated by the external things in my life.

People say "I'm OK, under the circumstances." Circumstances were never meant to be something you get under. Get on top of them. You don't have to live "under the circumstances" -- that's a choice.

There are three kinds of circumstances in life:

- 1) Those I can control and I do. Switch TV channels, if you're hungry you feed yourself.
- 2) Those I can control and I don't. This is not excuse for laziness. Contentment is not laziness or complacency. If you can change a situation you don't need contentment -- you need to get up and do something about it.
- 3) Those I cannot control and there are many in life. This is where you need contentment, in uncontrollable circumstances. Things that are beyond your power. You have done the best you could but they are still out of your hands. That's where you need to learn to relax, trust God, adjust and avoid comparing yourself.

Sometimes we have to adjust, not just to circumstances, but to people -- when they don't change. Romans 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

The key to adjusting is a sense of humor. The people who are the most emotionally balanced and stable in life are those who have developed a keen sense of humor -- the ability to laugh at themselves, their own problems and the difficulties. Rather than being devastated by problems they somehow find something funny in it all -- even in tragedy they can see humor here and there. That is crucial to learning to adjust. If you don't adjust you'll break down or burn out. Circumstances demand flexibility in life.

III. LEARN TO DRAW ON CHRIST'S POWER

Instead of just depending on my own effort to make it through circumstances and my own energy, I must learn to draw on Christ's power. v. 13 "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." You can handle when the kids are tearing the place apart, make it through the stock market crash, when you have problems and you don't know where to go. I can handle everything, Paul says. I can cope. He had an external power source. He was depending, not on his own power, but God's power.

THE SECRET OF A SATISFYING LIFE

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 10 of 12

Do you know how you know when you're depending on your own power? You get tired. Fatigue comes from living life on your own resources rather than on the resources of God.

Jerusalem Bible: "There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the one who gives me strength." What do you need to control? Do you need to get control of your time? your mouth? your temper? your weight? a bad habit? Paul says I can master anything with the help of Christ who gives me strength. I have quoted this verse thousands and thousands of times in situations where I've felt overwhelmed and it works!

Amplified version: "...I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me, that is I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency." Have you got a big problem that you're facing? Paul says I am ready for anything, I am confident. Satisfaction in life not only comes from contentment, it also comes from confidence. The confidence comes, not from your own power, but from Christ's power.

The Greek word for "strength" is the word from which we get the word "dynamite" or "dynamo". A dynamo is something that gives continual energy. Paul is saying, Jesus Christ is the dynamo of my life. He gives me continuous energy. I don't run out. I am confident and capable to cope with the circumstances of life because I draw on Christ's power.

"He infuses inner strength". When I plug into the power then I really come alive. Paul had a problem. He prayed about it three times and asked God to remove this particular weakness in his life, "a thorn in the flesh". God did not remove his weakness. He responded, "But God said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in (your) weakness.'" "Sufficient" is the same word as "contentment" in Philippians. Sufficiency is contentment. Contentment is independent of circumstances.

God allows you to go through problems in your life so you can learn contentment and sufficiency and He can show His power.

IV. LEARN TO TRUST GOD TO MEET MY NEEDS

This is the secret of satisfaction in life. v. 19 "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Not some or most or religious -- all.

When I buy an insurance policy I read through it to find out what is covered. When I know what's covered, I don't worry -- it's covered. The Bible is God's insurance policy. There are over 6000 promises in the Bible which you can claim. Many of you cannot claim them because you don't even know they're there. As you read the policy manual find out what God has guaranteed to do in your life. Once you know those guarantees you don't have to worry.

Matthew 6:31-33 (GN) "So do not start worrying: Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes? ... Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Instead be concerned about everything else with God's Kingdom ... and he will provide you will all these other things." Put God first and God will take care of your needs. Put Him at the center and everything else will be taken care of.

THE SECRET OF A SATISFYING LIFE

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 10 of 12

The real reason that people are unhappy, unsatisfied, and unfulfilled is because Jesus Christ is not the center of their lives. They are looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. They run from this to that... looking for something that is going to satisfy them. From relationship to relationship, from job to job, from hobby to sports to recreation ... fads, therapy, books, seminar - - looking for the key. But God has laid it out very clearly. You were made with a God shaped vacuum in your life and nothing will fill that void except God.

When you try to find satisfaction in life through people, fads, popularity, prestige... they don't last. Discontent just means that Jesus Christ is not the center of my life. When I'm not contented it means I'm looking for something else.

God wants you to have a happy, fulfilling, satisfying life. He said it. "I have come that you might have life and that you might have it abundantly." Life in the fullest is what God wants us to have. But the way you have that satisfaction in life is by learning the lessons of contentment.

Which of these four lessons do you need to learn? or relearn?

1. Have you learned the foolishness of comparing yourself to others? When you compare yourself to other people it makes you jealous, or envious, or prideful, or miserable. The Bible warns in 2 Corinthians about the foolishness of comparing ourselves to other people. You don't have to have what other people have to be happy.

Somebody may have a nicer car than I do. But that doesn't make them any more happy than I am. Happiness does not come from things.

You don't have to be liked by everybody to be happy. There are some people who are going to disapprove that you are a Christian or whatever. So what? That doesn't have to determine your happiness.

What situation has left you unsatisfied? Your marriage? Not married? Possessions? Your job? Your health? Paul says I have learned to be content in every situation. If you can change it, do it. Contentment is not complacency. But if it is an unchangeable element in your life, you need to learn contentment.

Contentment does not mean that you like the situation that you're in right now. You do not hear Paul saying he enjoys being in prison. He is not overjoyed with his situation. He is independent from his circumstance. Contentment is not conning yourself, psyc yourself out and pretending you like what you really don't like. That isn't contentment -- that's silly. Contentment is saying I don't care what I'm going through, with Christ's power in me, I can cope. I can handle it. I am sufficient for the problem. I don't like what I'm going through but I have learned to be content. I am independent of circumstance and it does not destroy my happiness. If you have to have a perfect situation and a perfect relationship to be happy you're never going to be happy. You have to learn to be happy in spite of your problems. That is contentment.

THE SECRET OF A SATISFYING LIFE

How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 10 of 12

How? You draw on Christ's power. Paul says I can master anything with Christ's power in me. You stop depending on your own power to make it. You get Christ's hope to cope. Plug in. When you give up on your own power God can fill you, infuse you with new power.