Redeemer Bible Church, Fort Worth, TX Dr. Rick Griffith

18 June 2023 Single Message

NLT 30 Minutes

**Learning Contentment**

Title

***Philippians 4:10-13***

**Topic:** Contentment

**Subject:** What is the secret of contentment?

**Complement:** Learn contentment by relying on Christ’s strength.

**Purpose:** The listeners will learn how to find contentment by trusting Christ.

# Introduction

### Interest: I wonder if you would agree with me that most people aren’t content. Are most of us satisfied with our possessions or situation in life?

Things

#### We compare ourselves with others. It seems that others always have more things or more likes on Facebook or more views on YouTube.

#### Our ambition makes us never feel we have enough. Whoever said that they don’t need more money?

#### We want to please others and feel that they will never be happy with us.

#### Fathers, it is Father’s Day, so how are you doing today? Is your contentment related to how much appreciation you receive?

### Need: For all of you, are you content?

Are you content?

#### Are you happy with how others drive?

#### Do you wish others would change their behavior?

#### Would those who know you best say that you are content?

The List

#### What are we often discontent about? (Share examples.)

What is Content?

#### What is contentment? It is…

##### Being confident that you have all that you need for whatever you're facing, and…

##### Therefore, it is being at peace (satisfied) with your current situation.

##### Do you want to live like this? I do!

### Subject: What is the secret of contentment? How can we live with optimism above life’s circumstances?

Subject

### Background: [Paul was content in prison writing to discontent free people.]

#### What if we found a letter written to a prisoner to cheer him up? Would that help us learn contentment?

Paul in Prison

#### Now switch it around. Today we will look at a letter written by the content prisoner and sent to free people who were discontent.

#### Paul was content in prison writing to free discontented people.

Timeline

#### He had already written six missionary letters and three prison letters (share timeline).

### Preview: Today we will see what a joyful prisoner can tell us about contentment.

Verses  
(2 slides)

Joyful Prisoner

### Text: Let’s read Phil 4:10-13. These verses will answer how we can be content [read].

# (Paul does not immediately tell us contentment’s secret but he does say that…)

MP

# I. It’s good to thank God and people—even though that’s not the secret (10).

[Be a grateful person.]

## Paul responded to the Philippian gift by praising the Lord (10).

Philippi Map

### The church had supported him during a time of great need in nearby Thessalonica.

### He didn’t just thank the church, but he credited God for putting it on their hearts to help him.

### I think people need to know that they have been an answer to prayer.

### We thank God for your faithful support over the past 33 years!

SBC

#### You have faithfully given while we were in Singapore.

#### We thank God for you!

Gratitude

## Are you a grateful person?

### What percentage of the statements that you make every day are positive? I know some people that make over 90% of their speech negative.

### “Contentment is simply gratitude, appreciation, and acceptance for the way things are right now.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

### If you can be thankful for how things are right now, then your gratefulness will always be current!

### You have blessed our switch from East Asia to West Asia.

East-West Map

### We have been learning about gratefulness in advance.

JETS

#### We knew that shifting to Jordan would require another $1500 in monthly support, plus $30k for a car. We also knew that Jordan has more water issues than nearly any nation with the falling level of the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea. But we could move to join a school providing 50% of Jordan’s pastors!

Map

#### So we just thanked God in advance for meeting our needs—and our Singapore church sent us out with the commitment to pay our rent, plus we ended up getting an apartment with a freshwater well underneath—no water issues!

Apartment

# (Before telling us the secret of contentment, Paul tells us where it is NOT found…)

MP

# II. Don’t think that contentment comes from having your needs met (11a).

[Satisfaction isn’t found in getting your way.]

## The source of Paul’s rejoicing was not in the gift (11a).

### Paul needed food, clothes, and shelter just like we all do.

### But he trusted God whether these needs were met or not.

### Imagine Paul’s conversation with his persecutors where they couldn’t stop him from being thankful.

## There are miserable billionaires and grateful poor folks.

### My experience is to see more appreciation from the poor than from the rich.

### We find more contentment in poor Jordan than in rich Singapore.

# (Is there a simple way to the secret of contentment? Not really. In verse 12 Paul says that…)

P & P

(2 slides)

Internet Discontent

Crybaby

Food & Clothing

3 Contrasts

BKC   
Quote

Blue Cross

MP

# III. Contentment is a learned trait (11b-12).

[We all have to grow in contentment.]

## The reason Paul could be content was because he had ***learned*** the secret of contentment despite his circumstances (11b-12).

### Even the great Apostle Paul had to learn contentment!

### You can see this progression in his letters, beginning with his dissatisfaction with the Galatians in his first letter.

### By the time he wrote this letter to the Philippians, he had been in prison the past four years—two years in prison in Caesarea, interrupted by a shipwreck, and then two years under house arrest in Rome.

### But he said that learning contentment for him was a process.

### What does it mean to “be content” (4:11-12)?

#### The Greek word means “self-sufficient.”

#### But Paul applied it to divine sufficiency (BKC quote).

#### Paul applied contentment to three contrasts.

#### He later applied it only to food and clothing (1 Tim 6:8).

## We start discontent as babies and have to learn contentment.

### Is contentment a choice? If we think it is something that happens to us, then we have confused it with happiness.

### Happiness is based on happenings, so anyone can be happy. There is no virtue in enjoying the easy things happening to you.

### But contentment can be learned—isn’t that encouraging? One study shows that the more internet, the less sleep, in-person social interaction, and less happiness.

### One of my goals is to be increasingly content in each of the remaining years of my life.

#### Susan and I seek to be easy to take in as guests. We don’t want our hosts to sigh when they close the door after we leave.

#### I think it would be great to be the most content when I take my last breath!

# (So what is the secret of contentment? Where can we find it? The climax is in verse 13 where Paul reveals that…)

Subject

# IV. Contentment comes by trusting in Christ’s strength (13).

MP

[You can’t be satisfied in your power—only in the power of Jesus.]

## The secret of contentment for Paul was Christ’s strength (13).

Cartoon Hair

### As an example, Jesus gives us the strength to control anger.

• mad

### Sometimes we say, “He makes me so mad!” But do we think about what this reveals about us? Is our anger in the hands of someone else? Maybe so! Maybe our contentment is controlled by somebody other than us—so we depend on someone else to make us happy as well.

• happy

### It is much better to find that Christ gives us the strength and power to control our temper. How much better to have our contentment in him.

4:13

## How are you trying to be content in your strength?

### A yoga teacher writes, “Most of us have been taught to believe that happiness is linked to our accomplishments. We think, ‘I’ll be happy when I get married’ or ‘I’ll be more satisfied at work when I get a promotion.’ We are convinced we’ll find joy when we finally run a marathon or buy that luxury car. The truth is that ***we can create*** a feeling of happiness right now, regardless of our circumstances” (ibid.). Really? Do we create it? This is the worldly philosophy of yoga teacher Julie Rosenberg.

Arabic

• Julie

Create quote

### Many times we claim that we ***cannot*** do something—I *cannot* learn Arabic in my 60s, I cannot move to the Middle East, I cannot… you fill in the blank for you! For me, I was tempted to say, “I can’t learn these 28 consonants that can each be written four different ways!” But God helped me learn to read this—it means “Dr Rick Griffith.”

• Dr Rick Griffith

• Arabic words

### Philippians 4:13 reveals that when we say, “I **can’t** do this,” we are really saying, “I **won’t** do this.”

• Won’t

Can’t

### Learning this truth years ago has stopped me from saying “I can’t” because I know that contentment and ability are found in Christ, in whom I **can** do everything.

• Can

# (So what is the secret of contentment? How can we live with optimism above life’s circumstances? Where can we find it? How can we sum up what Paul is saying in today’s text? Simply this…)

Subject

# Conclusion

MI

### Learn contentment by relying on Christ’s strength (Main Idea).

### The secret of our contentment despite our circumstances is learning to rely on Christ’s strength (restatement).

### What are you often discontent about?

Learning Content

### Exhortation

#### Where have you been trusting in your strength to be content?

3 Steps

#### Admit to Jesus that he is stronger than you.

#### Trust Jesus with that specific area where your contentment is challenged.

Black

### Prayer

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just before this passage?

### Paul addressed that the way to get peace is in Christ.

### Now he switches to contentment.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We all need to learn contentment.

### This applies no matter our status or place in life.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Paul writes from house arrest in Rome.

### His exhortation carries even greater weight since it comes from a contented prisoner to a discontented readership.

# Questions

### What is contentment?

### How is contentment different from happiness?

### How can we practically trust in Christ for contentment?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

The secret of contentment is trusting Jesus…

The way to overcome circumstances…

The reason we can live above circumstances…

# Possible Illustrations

### Here is a practical but worldly article on contentment from a yoga teacher:

Most of us have been taught to believe that [happiness is linked to our accomplishments](https://www.happify.com/hd/3-myths-of-happiness/). We think, “I’ll be happy when I get married” or “I’ll be more satisfied at work when I get a promotion.” We are convinced we’ll find joy when we finally run a marathon or buy that luxury car. The truth is that we can create a feeling of happiness right now, regardless of our circumstances.

True contentment is a deep-seated sense of accepting who and where you are at any given moment. Too often, we get so entrenched in our busy lives that we don’t even notice where we are now. When we finally come up for air, we focus more on where we were or where we want to be instead of where we are now. In other words, our focus is on the past or the future, rather than the present. Does that sound familiar? But before we can be content with where we are, we must first be aware of our present situation.

Here’s a helpful exercise to establish a sense of place that takes less than two minutes:

Look around where you are at this very moment. Describe your space without making any judgments. For example, instead of saying the room is cheerful or dreary (words of judgment), simply observe the texture of the carpet or floor, the color of the room, and the positioning and style of your furniture. Perhaps the walls are beige, the desk is facing a window, the fabric on your chair is slightly worn, and there is a photo of someone you love next to your computer. By noticing without judging, we allow ourselves to be aware of the present moment. [Contentment comes when we are most aware of the present moment](https://www.happify.com/hd/most-powerful-ways-to-boost-happiness/), and through the power of contentment, happiness becomes a more viable choice.

Happiness can be sustained by making a series of those [conscious choices](https://www.happify.com/hd/are-you-fearful-or-just-practical-2-questions-to-help-you-make-the-best-decisions-of-your-life/). Here are some tips for cultivating contentment in your life:

**1. Pause.** When you find yourself unhappy with someone or something, pause. Take a deep breath and remind yourself to accept that person as they are and to embrace their good qualities or to look on the bright side of any situation.

**2. Stop buying stuff you don’t need.** When you feel [the urge to buy something](https://www.happify.com/hd/can-money-ever-buy-you-happiness/), think about whether it’s a “need” or a “want.” If the item is a “want,” think about why you are not content with what you have now. As yourself: Do I need this now? Wait a few days and see if the urge to buy it dissipates.

**3. Show people you appreciate them.** Be present. Offer kind words and actions to help build up your emotional bank account. The more you put out in the world for others, the more you will receive in return.

**4. Practice gratitude.** Each day, identify at least one person, pet, or thing that enriches your life. Write your thoughts down in a journal. When you find yourself unhappy, take a moment to review your entries and think about all the good things in your life.

**5. Learn to enjoy simple things that don’t cost money.** Meaningful conversations. Walking in nature. Reading a good book. A trip to the beach. These things are all free and can often offer more joy than more expensive endeavors.

**6. Live in the moment.** [Don’t postpone happiness](https://www.happify.com/hd/are-you-putting-off-your-happiness-for-later) by waiting for a day when your life is less busy or less stressful. That day may never come. Instead, look for opportunities to savor the small pleasures of daily life. Focus on the positives of today rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.

Happiness gained through success or materialism is only temporary. Remind yourself that the grass is always greener on the other side, and virtually every person you think has everything likely doesn’t feel the same about themselves. Even people who seem like they have it all often don’t find contentment. Why? They are always driven to want more and are unhappy with themselves. Now, it’s important to clarify that contentment does not preclude ambition. It does not mean that you will not want more. Contentment is simply gratitude, appreciation, and acceptance for the way things are right now. So take that first step toward happiness. Doing so will be a gift that keep giving back to you for the rest of your life.

Julie Rosenberg, MD is an experienced pharmaceutical executive and recognized global healthcare leader. In addition, Julie has devoted the last 16 years to the in-depth study and practice of yoga. She uses her advanced training to help people take yoga beyond the mat, teaching them to incorporate the learnings from yoga into effective leadership and giving them skills for health optimization and disease prevention. Her book, [Beyond the Mat: Achieve Focus, Presence, and Enlightened Leadership Through the Principles and Practice of Yoga](https://www.julierosenbergmd.com/books/beyond-the-mat/) has been endorsed by health and wellness, yoga, and leadership experts including Harvard University Senior Fellow Thomas DeLong, Aetna CEO Mark Bertolini, and many more. For more information, visit her at [*www.julierosenbergmd.com*](https://www.julierosenbergmd.com).

# Possible Applications

### How content are you on a scale of 1 (miserable) to 10 (elated)?

### Main Points

#### It’s good to thank God and people—even though that’s not the secret (10).

#### Don’t think that contentment comes from having your needs met (11a).

#### Contentment is a learned trait (11b-12).

#### Contentment comes by trusting in Christ’s strength (13).

**Learning Contentment**

***Philippians 4:10-13***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# *Exegetical Idea*: The secret of Paul’s contentment despite his circumstances was learning to rely on Christ’s strength.

# I. The way Paul responded to the Philippian gift was to rejoice in the Lord greatly (10).

# II. The source or Paul’s rejoicing was not in the gift but in having learned contentment (11).

# III. The reason Paul could be content was because he had learned the secret of contentment despite his circumstances (12).

# IV. The secret of contentment for Paul was Christ’s strength (13).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will learn how to find contentment in trusting Christ.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: Most people aren’t content.

### Need: Are you content?

### Subject: What is the secret of contentment? How can we live with optimism above life’s circumstances?

### Background: Paul was content in prison writing to free discontent people.

### Preview: Today we will see what contentment is not and what it is.

### Text: Phil 4:10-13 will answer how we can be content.

# (Paul does not immediately tell us contentment’s secret but he does say that…)

# I. It’s good to thank God and people—even though that’s not the secret (10).

## Paul responded to the Philippian gift by praising the Lord (10).

## Are you a grateful person?

# (Before telling us the secret of contentment he tells us where it is NOT found…)

# II. Don’t think that contentment comes from having your needs met (11a).

## The source of Paul’s rejoicing was not in the gift (11a).

## There are miserable billionaires and grateful poor folks.

# (Is there a simple way to the secret of contentment? Not really. In verse 12 Paul says that…)

# III. Contentment is a learned trait (11b-12).

## The reason Paul could be content was because he had ***learned*** the secret of contentment despite his circumstances (11b-12).

## We start out discontent as babies and have to learn contentment.

# (So what is the secret of contentment? Where can we find it? The climax is in verse 13 where Paul reveals that…)

# IV. Contentment comes by trusting in Christ’s strength (13).

## The secret of contentment for Paul was Christ’s strength (13).

## How are you trying to be content in your strength?

# (What is the secret of contentment?)

# Conclusion

### Learn contentment by relying on Christ’s strength (Main Idea).

### Restatement: The secret of our contentment despite our circumstances is learning to rely on Christ’s strength.

### Main Points

### Exhortation

#### Where have you been trusting in your own strength to be content?

#### Admit to Jesus that he is stronger than you.

#### Trust Jesus with that specific area where your contentment is challenged.

### Prayer

**Dr Rick Griffith**

18 June 2023

Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary

**Learning Contentment**

***Philippians 4:10-13***

# Introduction

### Most people aren’t content.

### What is the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of contentment?

### Paul was content in prison writing to free discontented people.

# I. It’s good to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God and people—even though that’s not the secret (10).

## Paul responded to the Philippian gift by praising the Lord (10).

## Are you a grateful person?

# II. Don’t think that contentment comes from having your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ met (11a).

## The source of Paul’s rejoicing was not in the gift (11a).

## There are miserable billionaires and grateful poor folks.

# III. Contentment is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ trait (11b-12).

## The reason Paul could be content was because he had ***learned*** the secret of contentment despite his circumstances (11b-12).

## We start discontent as babies and have to learn contentment.

# IV. Contentment comes by trusting in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ strength (13).

## The secret of contentment for Paul was Christ’s strength (13).

## How are you trying to be content in your strength?

# Conclusion

### \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ contentment by relying on Christ’s strength (Main Idea).

### Think about it…

#### Where have you been trusting in your strength to be content?

#### Admit to Jesus that he is stronger than you.

#### Trust Jesus with that specific area where your contentment is challenged.

Download this sermon PPT and notes for free at BibleStudyDownloads.org/resource/new-testament-preaching/

1. Julie Rosenberg, “Sustainable Happiness: How to Find Contentment That Will Last,” https://www.happify.com/hd/sustainable-happiness-how-to-find-contentment-that-will-last/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)