



THE GIFT OF *Contentment*



The Gift of Contentment
November 24-25, 2018
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INTRODUCTION

Our Thanksgiving holiday reminds us to pause and take stock of the many blessings in our lives. But our experience of gratitude and thankfulness can tend to rise and fall with the countless ups and downs of our circumstances. When things go our way or when we get something we've been wanting, we feel thankful. When things are difficult or we feel an unfulfilled want, that thankfulness evaporates. God wants to offer us a gift that's deeper and more lasting: Contentment in Christ. Real contentment can seem elusive and unattainable, but in Christ we can grow to be at peace with who we are, what we have, and where we are going.

WARMING UP

Are you lacking contentment in your life? Read through this survey and take a personal count of how many are a 'yes' for you:

- ✓ Have you felt frustrated lately with your income?
- ✓ Is your credit card balance larger now than 6 months ago?
- ✓ Do you feel like you're falling behind while others are getting ahead?
- ✓ Have you purchased anything recently and either regretted it or never really enjoyed it?
- ✓ When you think about your future, do you worry about how your needs will be met?
- ✓ Do you dream of having things that you feel you will never be able to get?
- ✓ Do you fear that if you totally surrendered control of your life to God he would likely lead you to places you wouldn't want to go?
- ✓ Have you complained about your car, your clothes, or your home this week?
- ✓ Do you feel envious when you see someone achieve or acquire something you lack?
- ✓ Do you feel short-changed, overlooked, or unfairly treated by your present situation?
- ✓ Do you feel like your life would be happier if you had just a little more?

Most of would say yes to at least half of these. Does that describe you too?

Can you share one circumstance in your life that makes it hard for you to experience contentment?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. All of us have circumstances in our lives that make it hard to experience contentment. The apostle Paul had more than his fair share. Read **2 Corinthians 11:24-28** and think about how hard it would be to feel content in the midst of all that. Next read **Acts 16:22-25**. How do you think Paul could sing praise songs to God in the midst of what he was experiencing at that time?
2. Read **Philippians 4:11-13**. Paul tells us he's learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, but he doesn't exactly explain the secret itself. What clues to his contentment do you find in this passage?

3. This week's main idea was that **Contentment comes from being at peace with who you are, what you have, and where you are going in Christ.** In which of those three aspects of life do you most need to find greater contentment?
4. In **2 Corinthians 12:9-10** Paul shares with us the words Christ shared with him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." As we struggle with feeling discontent in our lives, what do Jesus' words here mean for us? What is one weakness, hardship, or difficulty in your life? What would it mean for you to "boast" in that? And how might that help you to experience Christ's sufficiency for you in a deeper way?
5. Take a look at what Paul shares in **Philippians 3:7-9**. This is Paul's description the incredible change of heart that came from encountering Jesus personally. Look carefully at what Paul is saying in this passage and try to explain how knowing Jesus changed his view and value of everything else in his life. Does knowing Jesus have the same worth to us as it did for Paul? What are some things we chase after in life that might start to look more like "garbage" if we came to value knowing Jesus as much as Paul did?
6. It's not just greed or unmet desires that diminish our contentment. Fears and worries rob us of contentment too. What are some of those fears and worries that get in the way of contentment for you?
7. God gives us two vitally important promises in **Romans 8:28** and in **Romans 8:38-39**. How would you sum up or explain each of those promises? How should these two scriptures lead us back into contentment in the midst of our present circumstances – no matter how difficult they might be?

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Pick one of these three exercises to try this week as a way to pursue and deepen your experience of contentment in Christ:

1. Make a list of your top five personal weaknesses. Then, instead of lamenting them, "boast" of them with Jesus. Tell the Lord you trust that in those places where you feel weak or inadequate you want to feel *his* strength and sufficiency for you.
2. Go to your favorite place to shop and buy absolutely nothing. (This could be your favorite store or website.) Take a few minutes to browse, but as you do so have a conversation with Jesus to tell yourself and Him, "I don't need any of this, because having You in my life is worth far more to me than all of this."
3. In the center of a piece of paper, write down a few of your greatest sources of stress and worry. Then around those, write down all the things you know God has already done for you –personally in your life and in the bigger story of his saving acts in our world. Then around those, write down what God has yet promised to for us –in this life and especially in eternity.

COMMIT TO MEMORY

"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. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Philippians 4:12b-13

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Share prayer requests and close in prayer. Commit to praying for each other throughout the week.