

Contentment

Key Verse

"...for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am." (Philippians 4:11b)

Basic Biblical Understanding

Benjamin Franklin said, "Contentment makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor." Discontentment manifests itself in that little voice that says our lives would be perfect if we had just a little more, a little newer, a better upgrade, a bigger something. When we're constantly striving for the next thing, we rarely enjoy what we currently possess. In Philippians 4:11b–13 (read below), Paul shared four simple truths about contentment.

First, contentment is learned. He says in verses 11 and 12, "I have learned to be content..." Paul's life was filled with ups and downs, freedom and imprisonment, miracles and providence. Through it all, he learned contentment. God uses everything. There's no such thing as a wasted experience.

Second, circumstances have nothing to do with contentment. Paul "learned to be content in whatever circumstances..." (Philippians 4:11). Contentment does not come when we get everything we want. Contentment is an attitude of gratefulness and satisfaction.

Third, we can be content with much or nothing. Paul said in verse 12, "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity..." God taught Paul contentment on both ends of the lifestyle spectrum. Contentment is not about how much you have, but who you have. That brings us to a final thought.

Fourth, contentment is found in Christ. In verse 12, Paul says he has learned "the secret." Verse 13 is the secret: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." This verse could be one of the most misquoted verses in Scripture. We use it as a "pick yourself up" pep talk. Paul is not saying, "I can do anything! I'm awesome!" The focus is Jesus. He's saying, "I can face any challenge, be content under any circumstances, find joy in every moment, because Jesus strengthens me." The key to contentment is Jesus.

Only Jesus can fully satisfy. Things can make a satisfied life more enjoyable, but things can never make a discontented life satisfied.

Verses (ask God to show you how they apply to your life)

- "...for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." Philippians 4:11b–13
- "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth." Psalm 73:25

Helpful Questions and Application

1. God has created us so that ultimate satisfaction can only be found in relationship with Him. Are you looking for fulfillment in degrees, knowledge, accomplishments, people, positions, success, or anything else? When will Jesus be enough?
2. God is not against people having things, setting goals, or enjoying the finer things in life. There is a problem when we stop pursuing God and chase after something else. Is there anything you're chasing more than God? If you lose intimacy with God while gaining something else, is it worth it?

Additional Resources

Scripture references: Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:6–11; Matthew 6:31–33; Luke 12:15

WordTruth articles: ["Becoming a Christ-like Servant"](#)
["God's Peace is Available"](#)