

## Week 4: Why Is Contentment So Important?

NCAC Adult Sunday School

October 1, 2023

## THE TREASURE OF CONTENTMENT

**Course Goal:** To better understand and more consistently display Christian contentment so that God is glorified, we become more joyful, and we are an encouragement and inspiration to others.

*"...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. <sup>12</sup> I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup> I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:10-13)*

Jeremiah Burroughs defines Christian contentment as "that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal at every condition."

**What have we learned so far about how to fight for contentment?**

### WHAT MAKES CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT A TREASURE WORTH PURSUING?

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**Why do we like to be around people who display Christian contentment?**

**1. Christian contentment is a form of worship.** We can worship God by *doing what pleases Him*; we can also worship God by *being pleased with what He does*. Contentment glorifies God as we express our acceptance of His plan for our life and our delight in Him above all else this world has to offer.

*"I strive to do what pleases God, and I strive to be pleased with what God does: this is what a true Christian does. It is only part of being a Christian to try to do what pleases God; you must also try to be content with what God does, and then you will be a complete Christian when you can do both, and that is the first step in mastering this grace of contentment." (Jeremiah Burroughs)*

*"I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you'...The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot...I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure...at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16)*

**2. Contentment is an essential component of all Christian virtues.** As the Holy Spirit strengthens our muscle of contentment, we'll find we more naturally display the fruit of the Spirit; and as the Holy Spirit develops the fruit of the Spirit in us, we'll find that our sense of contentment is also increased.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23a)*

**3. Contentment is essential if we're to see God work mightily in our lives.** 1 Peter 5:5 tells us *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* If discontentment flows from a proud state of the heart, we should expect God to withhold grace when we're discontent.

**How is discontentment connected with pride? How is contentment connected with humility?**

**4. Contentment makes us difficult to tempt.** "Burroughs says temptations will no more prevail over a contented man than a flaming arrow fired against a metal wall. Conversely, a discontent person is like a bundle of oil-soaked straw, waiting for a single arrow of temptation to ignite it into a raging bonfire of evil desires." (Davis, *The Power of Christian Contentment*, p. 104)

**What makes this true? How have you experienced or observed this in your own life?**

**5. Contentment results in us living peaceful and hopeful lives in a world full of stress and turmoil.**

Those who have learned the secret of Christian contentment are not dependent on circumstances for peace and joy. Instead, they know how to draw comfort from an inheritance they do not yet fully possess and find rest in God's presence and promises, confident that He is working all things for good.

*"<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

**Philippians 4:4-7 presents both a recipe for attaining contentment and a description of what it means to have Christian contentment.**

**What can we learn from these verses about how to pursue Christian contentment?**

**What do these verses teach us about what we can expect as we pursue contentment in Christ?**

## **WHAT MAKES DISCONTENTMENT AN EVIL WE MUST RESIST?**

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**What are some signs that we're discontent, even if we're not fully aware of our discontentment?**

**1. Complaining is the opposite of praise and worship.** 1 Peter 2:9 tells us God saved us so that we *"may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*

**In what sense is complaining the opposite of praise and worship?**

**2. Complaining is a form of rebellion against God.** Discontentment involves a refusal to submit to God's plan for our lives, and God makes clear He is not pleased with our grumbling and complaining. Even lack of gratitude is considered a sin, as we fail to acknowledge God's many blessings in our lives.

*"For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God **or give thanks to him**, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."* (Romans 1:21)

*"**Do all things without grumbling** or disputing..."* (Philippians 2:14a)

*"These are **grumblers, malcontents**, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage."* (Jude 16)

*And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, "**How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me?** I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. Say to them, 'As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: **your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness, and of all your number**, listed in the census from twenty years old and upward, **who have grumbled against me...**"* (Numbers 14:26-29)

*"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? **You desire and do not have**, so you murder. **You covet and cannot obtain**, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."* (James 4:1-3)

**3. Complaining is opposed to the entire work of conversion.** "Burroughs...leads his readers through a step-by-step analysis of the heart work the Holy Spirit does in us, resulting in our conversion to Christ, and goes on to show how discontentment and complaining (which he calls 'murmuring') are opposed to each step." (Davis, *The Power of Contentment*, pp. 114-117)

| The Six Steps of Conversion   | How Complaining Stands Opposite That Step  |
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| Conversion involves seeing that our sin is evil, offensive, and deserving of eternal condemnation | Complaining assumes we deserve something better than what we're currently experiencing                   |
| Conversion involves recognizing the infinite glory, greatness, and majesty of Christ              | Complaining effectively says that Christ is not enough for us and that we must have more                 |
| Conversion involves turning from the world's pleasures and allurements toward Christ              | Complaining involves forgetting we have forsaken the world and its empty promises in favor of Christ     |
| Conversion involves casting ourselves fully on Christ as our eternal source of joy                | Complaining results from thirsting after something other than God and what He has chosen to give us      |
| Conversion involves fully submitting ourselves to Christ as our good, wise, and just King         | Complaining is an act of resistance against Christ's reign and a challenge to His rulership of our lives |
| Conversion involves making a lasting covenant with God that you are His, and He is yours          | Complaining attacks that covenant by denying the sufficiency of Christ as our Lord and Savior            |

**4. Complaining is unworthy of a child of the King.** “It is...wrong for those who are heirs of the King of the Universe to be miserable day after day over any earthly issue. To complain is to forget how rich you are as an heir of the King.” (Davis, *The Power of Contentment*, p. 117)

*“Why are you, the king’s son, so miserable every morning?” (2 Samuel 13:4, CSB)*

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...” (Ephesians 1:3)*

**5. Complaining sets a bad example.** People are always watching us, and when we murmur against God we are setting a poor example of what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ.

“God has put us on display in front of everyone we know, but especially our spouse and our children. We can make life bitter for the person we embraced on our wedding day and strongly tempt that loving soul to discontentment as well. Not only that, but if you have children, think of them. They have been watching your example for years, quietly drinking in how to react to ‘any and every circumstance.’ When you complain, you are training them to follow your bad example.

“Beyond this is the role we have in the lives of watching Christian brothers and sisters. God has ordained the church to be a disciple-making organism. There are two patterns of discipleship by which we are being conformed to Christ: the pattern of sound doctrine (2 Tim. 1:13) and the pattern of godly example (Phil. 3:17). Paul says boldly, *‘What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you’* (Phil. 4:9). Role-modeling in the Christian church is essential to God’s plan of discipleship. But when we murmur, complain, and whine, we are polluting those watching us. We are undoing any good that the Lord would have us do.” (Davis, *The Power of Contentment*, p. 119)

**6. Complaining makes no unbeliever want to be like you.** The world around us is full of pain and suffering. God may well have orchestrated our suffering to give us a platform to speak into their lives, or to at least set an example before them of what it means to trust supremely in Christ. But if we instead grumble, complain, moan, and persist in discontentment, what reason would anyone have to ask us about the reason for the hope that is inside us (1 Peter 3:15)?

*“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...” (Philippians 2:14-15a)*

**How else have you seen contentment lead to good things or discontentment lead to negative things?**

**Coming up in the next two weeks:** How do we maintain Christian contentment in both poverty and abundance? And, how is contentment different from apathy, complacency, and indifference?