

A Discussion-Based Bible Study for Women

*7 Principles
of
Contentment*

Katie Hoffman

7 Principles of Contentment: A Discussion-Based Bible Study for Women

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The 7 Principles of Contentment

PRINCIPLE 1: Contentment comes from aligning our will with God's will.

PRINCIPLE 2: Contentment comes from seeking only to please God.

PRINCIPLE 3: Godliness with contentment is great gain, and worth all the effort.

PRINCIPLE 4: Contentment comes from seeing the blessing and joy in each moment.

PRINCIPLE 5: Contentment comes from believing that God sees our lives as His masterpiece.

PRINCIPLE 6: Contentment comes from trusting God.

PRINCIPLE 7: Contentment comes from Christ who gives us strength.

Content Because...

Content because God is enough for all we lack.

Content because heaven awaits us.

Content because we grow in seasons of self-denial.

Content because we recognize God's authority and wisdom in our lives.

Content because it brings great gain when accompanied by godliness.

Content because life is a vapor.

Content because we trust God, believing He loves us in the afflictions.

Content because Christ strengthens us to be content.

Content because we have received salvation and grace.

Content because those better than us have suffered just as much.

Content because we feel thankful, not guilty, for the blessings we get to enjoy.

Content because an ordinary life of obedience is radical, and a small life is not a wasted life.

Content When...

Content when we align our will and desires with God's will.

Content when we see the blessing and joy in each moment.

Content when we do not set our expectations on great things.

Content when we don't concern ourselves with the worries of tomorrow.

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Introduction

Thank you so much for joining me in this study on contentment. Throughout the years, God has reminded me again and again of the powerful truth that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” (1 Timothy 6:6 ESV) I hope you will enjoy this powerful gain in your life as you experience greater contentment. This study is designed so that advance preparation is unnecessary. (Although it never hurts!) You can do this study alone or with friends.

Each chapter will begin with a quote about the chapter topic. Following the quote will be an ice-breaker question for the group to discuss. After the question, I have included the single word “Prayer.” This is because of the many, many times I have started speaking or teaching and realized halfway through that I forgot to pray! This prayer with your group can be a simple prayer, a longer prayer for the requests of the group, or whatever works best with your group.

Next will come a short teaching section on the chapter topic. This can be read by the leader or the participants can take turns reading.

A study section with Bible verses for study will follow the teaching section. In many places, only the Bible verse reference will be given so that each verse can be looked up. I believe this is important as it adds to the interactive aspect of studying the Bible. Once a verse is read, women can take turns answering the questions given.

Finally, the study will end with personal application questions. I hope you will be blessed and draw closer to our Savior through this time.

Chapter 1: The Search for More

“Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.”

— Jeremiah Burroughs, “The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment,” 1648

Question for Group Discussion

Do you remember having a time in your life when you felt extremely content? Describe that time and the circumstances in your life.

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 1: Contentment comes from aligning our will with God’s will.

God is worthy of our trust. Because God knows what He is doing with our lives, He is worthy of our complete trust. Contentment is an inner state of satisfaction with our lives. It begins with a heart that has learned to rest in God. If we focus on God’s providence in our lives, then we ought to be thankful for whatever we have or don’t have each day.

When we are not content, it seems that whatever we need is always just out of reach. Whatever we long for is elusive, meant for someone else but not for us. We strive for things that never seem to come, and our hearts ache for things we cannot find.

Remember that God calls our lives His masterpiece. He is at work in every part of what we see and don't see. When we are not content, we are ultimately believing that God is not doing a good job with our lives. We are doubting that is both the author and finisher of our faith, the One who holds our very breath in His hands.

If we want to be content, it starts with trusting that God knows what He is doing. It means we praise God because we believe God knows what He is doing. We will grow in contentment when we thank God for every problem, trial, and blessing alike.

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

What is God's will for our lives?

In what circumstances does God tell us to give thanks?

Hebrews 12:2

Who is the author of our faith?

Who takes responsibility for finishing our faith?

Philippians 1:6

What is Paul confident of?

Matthew 10:29-31

How involved is God in the lives of sparrows?

Who is far more valuable than many sparrows?

Why do you think Jesus points out God's involvement with sparrows?

Psalm 139:1-6, 16-18

In what ways does God know you better than you know yourself?

Psalm 139:16 in the NLT says this: "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed."

What things were determined by God before you were even born?

Application Questions for Discussion

Some of the thoughts that trigger discontentment include:

"People do not treat me right."

"I sin so often."

"Why is God not helping?"

"This is not what I deserved."

"Others don't have such hard trials."

"Nobody else understands."

"I feel unused by God."

"Things used to be better."

"I have worked so hard to have it turn out so bad."

"It has been this way for so long."

Which of these statements do you most identify with?

What would complete contentment look like in your life?

If you could add one thing to your life, or achieve one goal, what would it be? Do you think this change would make you happier and more content?

In what way does lacking this thing help you learn to be content?

Prayer

Chapter 2: Content with God's Approval

"But you say: How can I trust surely that all my works are pleasing to God, when at times I fall, and talk, eat, drink and sleep too much, or otherwise transgress, as I cannot help doing? Answer: This question shows that you still regard faith as a work among other works, and do not set it above all works. For it is the highest work for this very reason, because it remains and blots out these daily sins by not doubting that God is so kind to you as to [overlook] such daily transgression and weakness. Aye, even if a deadly sin should occur (which, however, never or rarely happens to those who live in faith and trust toward God), yet faith rises again and does not doubt that its sin is already gone; as it is written I. John ii: "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ, Who is the propitiation of all our sins."

—Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," 1520,
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/418/418-h/418-h.htm>

Question for Group Discussion

If you had to spend one year in another country, and you could bring any family and friends you wanted, what country would you choose? Why?

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 2: Contentment comes from seeking only to please God.

When we focus on being approved by others, we define ourselves by their thoughts and words. Seeking honor, favor, or approval is a trap that snares us in a most dangerous way. Here are some examples of ways we may try to please others:

“I need my house to look just right if I’m going to invite people over.”

“I wish they realized that I used to be pretty/skinny/important/successful/etc.”

“If I’m truly following Christ, people will notice and call me a godly woman.”

“If the women at this study don’t seem excited to see me, they probably don’t want me here.”

“I’ll be sure to wear a long skirt so everyone knows how modestly I dress.”

“I need an expensive car so people will think I’m successful.”

“I’m not going to tell this person the truth because they will be mad at me if I do.”

“Someone criticized this thing I made/did/shared so I’m never going to do this thing again.”

“I want people to think I’m the very best singer/volunteer/teacher/employee/etc...”

What is the problem with any of these thoughts? When the motive is to gain the approval of others, we cannot be focused on pleasing Christ.

Now, as an aside, some of the examples I’ve listed are wrong thoughts only when the motive is wrong. A person who wants an expensive car to appear successful may need that car because they sell real estate and need to appear credible. There are exceptions to the examples given.

But when the heart desires the approval of others, we open ourselves up to continual disappointment. We think, “If only I _____, then people would realize that I _____.” We want others to validate our abilities, our value, our worth, and to generally think we are awesome, beautiful, godly, the best, and irreplaceable.

If hearing that we are loved, wanted, beautiful, successful, or godly by people is the criteria for being loved, wanted, beautiful, successful, or godly, we miss the joy of being wanted, loved, faultless, and flawless before God.

The problem is defining ourselves by what other people think. We feel godly, beautiful, talented, popular, etc., if other people think we are those things. For me, it's godliness. I want to follow Christ, to be sold out for Him. But then I will feel like maybe I'm not serving Jesus enough because other people haven't told me how radical I am. And my definition of godliness is no longer based on what's in my heart, but rather on what people see of me.

But to please Christ means I look at my spirit and define godliness by what Christ is doing in me, rather than whatever my life looks like to everyone else. If I define my godliness by what I think others see, I'm no longer pursuing godliness, but rather praise and honor for myself, which is the complete opposite of godliness.

Galatians 1:10 NASB says, "For am I now seeking the favor of people, or of God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."

If my heart longs for the approval of others, I will constantly be trying to meet people's expectations, and thus never be content because my self-worth will be based on what others think and not on Christ alone.

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

Galatians 1:10

According to this verse, what action prevents us from pleasing God?

Hebrews 11:1, 6

What is absolutely necessary to please God?

Why do you think faith is “above all works”?

Romans 5:1-2

What causes us to enter into God’s grace, and ultimately receive—because of the death and resurrection of Jesus—forgiveness of sins?

Matthew 23:1-5

What is the motive behind all the good works that the Pharisees do?

John 5:44

(To see who Jesus is talking to in this passage, refer back to John 5:18-19.)

What does Jesus say the Jews are seeking after/receiving from one another?

What does Jesus say keeps the Jews from believing?

What should they be seeking?

Application Questions for Discussion

What areas of your life do you define by the words or compliments of others?

In what areas of your life do you look in the Bible for your value and worth?

How does defining ourselves by what others think set us up for disappointment?

Prayer

Chapter 3: The Great Gain of Godliness Plus Contentment

“Facing another day, with ordinary callings to ordinary people all around us is much more difficult than chasing my own dreams that I have envisioned for the grand story of my life.”

— Michael S. Horton, *Ordinary: Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World*

“Be content to live unknown for a little while, and to walk your weary way through the fields of poverty, or up the hills of affliction; for by and by you shall reign with Christ, for he has “made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever.”

— Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*

Question for Group Discussion

What is one of the best foods you’ve ever eaten? Where were you when you ate it?

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 3: Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain, and Worth All the Effort.

Godliness with contentment is great gain. Contentment is being thankful and at peace with where God has placed you, what God has given you, and what God has called you to, right now. Godliness is being obedient to all that God has called you to do, while being filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. And these two together—godliness and contentment—is great gain. It is a great goal and a great achievement to be both godly and content.

There have been times when I've been guilty of thinking that if I'm truly living for Jesus, I'll do "spectacular" things for God. When I'm serving God in mundane ways, I've often wondered how I could be more "on fire" for Jesus.

I remember struggling with this exact issue. I felt so strongly that I needed to find the "mission" God had for me that I set aside a day to fast and pray. The question I brought before the Lord was, "What is missing from my life? What do I need to do so that I am serving You better, more wholeheartedly? How can I live more radically for Jesus?"

I needed direction from God about my life, and so I sought Him for an answer. But what I received was not what I expected. The message that I believe God impressed upon my heart that evening was simply this: Be content with the life you have right now, exactly the way it is.

What I needed was not some new "good work" to make me godlier, or some extravagant ministry, but rather, I needed to simply appreciate this place where God had already placed me. I need to be content ministering in Texas instead of some foreign mission field. I need to understand that full-time missionary work is serving Christ and full-time homeschooling is ALSO serving Christ.

If everything we do is for the glory of God, then we are living great lives. If we cook for our family to the glory of God, it is a great act, a wonderful good work. If we teach our children a Bible verse, or fold a basket of laundry, or drive a child to a basketball game, and we do it in faith, to the glory of God, we are living purposeful, radical lives.

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

1 Timothy 6:1-5

What is said about those who do not agree with the words of Jesus, but rather advocate a different doctrine?

Why do these people pursue godliness? (vs. 5)

1 Timothy 6:6

What is the difference between the gain spoken of in verse 5 and in verse 6?

What two things are necessary for the great gain spoken of in verse 6?

1 Timothy 6:7

According to this verse, what is one reason why financial gain is less valuable than godliness?

1 Timothy 6:8

What are the only two things we need on earth to be content?

1 Timothy 4:8

Why is godliness profitable?

Hebrews 13:5

With what should a Christian be content?

Why should a Christian be content?

Application Questions for Discussion

What does godliness with contentment look like to you? How would you describe this type of person?

What habit could you develop in your life that would encourage contentment?

If this is not something you are already doing, what is one thing you can pray for each person in your group?

Prayer

Chapter 4: Seeing the Blessing of Each Moment

“We are women, and my plea is ‘Let me be a woman, holy through and through, asking for nothing but what God wants to give me, receiving with both hands and with all my heart whatever that is.’”

— Elisabeth Elliot, “The Essence of Femininity” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2006)

Question for Group Discussion

What is a trait that either your mom or dad (or both) possessed that you both appreciated and have sought to emulate?

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 4: Contentment comes from seeing the blessing and joy in each moment.

Many earthly “achievements” give the illusion that they will provide satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment. Contentment is true wealth because it gives everything that is

hoped to be gained by temporary achievements — satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment.

Below is a chart comparing temporary desires with contentment:

Wealth	Contentment
Look good	Happy with how I look
Expensive, good tasting food	Enjoying whatever food I have
Big house	The right house
Security	Hidden in Christ
Comfortable Retirement	Comfortable in heaven forever
Getting to do whatever you want	Wanting whatever God gives you to do
Money to solve almost every problem	Jesus is making you like Him through the problems

The “temporary” achievements on the left are not wrong in and of themselves. But if the desire for any of these things keeps us from contentment and thankfulness when we don’t have them, we will miss seeing how blessed we already are.

Each of us has so many blessings that we could never count them all. But when we feel discontent, we become blind to many of those blessings and may even take them for granted.

When I forget to thank God for what He has given me, and instead look at the very few things I lack by comparison, feelings such as self-pity and bitterness begin to take hold. Yet if many of the things I take for granted were to be taken away, I would be devastated. And the truth is, those things for which I do not remain thankful are things that I am ultimately taking for granted.

When I focus on what is wrong, I am no longer being thankful. When I become discouraged in a relationship, it is usually because I am seeing the other person’s sin

and forgetting about my own. When I become discouraged in almost anything, it is usually because I am missing all that God is doing in the present situation.

The answer is to give thanks every day. I am in the exact place God has me. He leads me, and if I am here, He wants me here. This is the exact place God has me.

Each moment has enough joy and blessings that we don't need to be constantly looking ahead to what we think is better. Enjoy this moment, each moment. I cannot think about what I want, or what I don't have, or what has hurt me in the past, and enjoy the moment I am in. Today has enough blessings for me to be content.

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

Hebrews 13:15

How often should we offer up a sacrifice of praise?

How is this sacrifice of praise specifically described?

Psalm 69:30-31

Why do you think God is more pleased with thankfulness than with sacrifice?

Ephesians 5:19-20

What kind of words should we speak?

How often should we give thanks to God?

1 Thessalonians 5:18

For what circumstances should we thank God?

Philippians 4:6

To deal with anxiety, what steps should we take?

Why do you think giving thanks is so important during times when we feel anxious?

Colossians 3:15-17

What does this passage say about peace?

What does this passage say about thankfulness?

Application Questions for Discussion

Is it hard for you to thank God for things that you wish were different?

When you think of those things that you wish were different (that you would prefer that God change or remove), how do you think thanking God in everything—and giving Him the sacrifice of praise in that situation—might help change your perspective and let you see more clearly what God is doing?

Why do you think thankfulness is such a big deal to God?

We can often miss the blessings all around us because we are focused on what we don't like. What blessings in your life do you tend to overlook?

Prayer

Chapter 5: Content to be God's Masterpiece

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

— Ephesians 2:10 NLT

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. It appears that all is of grace, because all our spiritual advantages are from God. We are his workmanship; he means in respect of the new creation; not only as men, but as saints. The new man is a new creature; and God is its Creator. It is a new birth, and we are born or begotten of his will. In Christ Jesus, that is, on the account of what he has done and suffered, and by the influence and operation of his blessed Spirit.”

— Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary: Ephesians (1706)

Question for Group Discussion

What is something you've learned lately? How did you learn it and how does it apply to your life?

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 5: Contentment Comes from Believing that God Sees Our Lives as His Masterpiece.

In this place, with whatever you have or don't have, there are ways you can become more like Christ and do the good works prepared by God for you.

About a month ago, on a Saturday morning, I got out my to-do list and began seeing what I would get done. One of the items on that list—plan our family's dinner menu for the week—had been there for a few days already, so I decided it was a good time to finally get it finished. As I looked at meals I could make with the food we already had, I had this strong impression that I should make carnitas meat that night. I had bought this humongous piece of meat when it was on sale and put it in the freezer, and it pretty much took up the whole top shelf.

But though I felt I should make carnitas, logically it didn't make any sense. If I cooked all that meat, I would want to eat it for dinner and then split it up into lots of tacos for the freezer. The problem was that on that particular night, dinner was pretty much planned and set in stone. I was signed up to bring a meal to my friend who'd just had a baby, and since I'd signed up to bring her shrimp scampi, I bought double the ingredients. The plan was to make enough for both our families. So making two dinners really made no sense. Still, I could not get over the feeling that I really needed to cook the carnitas meat. So I prayed and inquired of the Lord. "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." (Romans 8:14 NASB)

Finally, but having no idea why, I started thawing out the meat for carnitas and thawing out the shrimp for dinner number two. We did our usual Saturday cleaning and I worked on the dinner for my new mom friend. Sometime later that afternoon, a very close family friend called my husband and said he was in town, and wanted to stop by tonight and see us with his family. It was almost time for me to leave and deliver the first dinner, so I had no time to prepare for guests.

But God knew they would be coming, and not just one family but another family also. He allowed both my house to be clean and a whole carnitas tacos dinner ready though I had no idea why I needed to make two dinners. We ended up having seventeen people in our house that night! And we had plenty of food and a great time.

You will not miss the place God has for you. If God leads me when I need to make dinner for lots of people, He will lead me—whether through my husband, my circumstances, or His Spirit—to the place where I should live and the way I should serve

Him. If I am following Him, I will always be in the place I need to be. So, this is where I am. Let me thank God for this place. Now, how can I live obediently, prayerfully, and filled with love in this place?

We experience contentment when we believe God is sovereign over our lives. We must remember to rest in this place because God is not restricted, and even when circumstances may cause us to feel like we are trapped, God is not bound. He is able to move us and cause us to be in exactly the place we need to be for whatever good works He has ordained for us to do.

When we wholly believe that God sees our lives as HIS masterpiece, then we will be free from feelings of inferiority, of not measuring up, or of lacking something. We will realize that since God is in charge of our lives—and He has every resource at His disposal in this work of art—we can feel peace that things really are okay. We don't need to strive for more and better. Rather, we just need to focus on being like Jesus in every way we possibly can, and He will take care of everything else.

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

Romans 8:4-5, 12-14

What are the prerequisites to being led by the Spirit of God?

Galatians 5:16-26

What are the differences between a person who is led by the Spirit of God and a person who is following the desires of their sinful nature?

What desires keep you from fully obeying God's Spirit?

If we are seeking to live obediently to God, gaining our strength from His Spirit, what "fruit" will be evident in our lives?

How can we practically "walk by the Spirit"?

Ephesians 2:10

What does God call us?

When did God prepare the good works we would do with our lives?

If God is responsible for our good works, do you think He will also make sure you are in the exact place you need to be, with exactly the resources you will need, for what He prepared for you?

Application Questions for Discussion

In every situation we are in, there are ways we can do good works, even if they are as simple as quietly thanking God in our heart. What are some of the simple ways you can serve and love God in this place of your life?

Has there been a time in your life where God led you in a certain direction, or to do a certain thing, and you didn't know why at the time, but then afterward you saw how God had been leading you?

In what ways has your life changed in unexpected ways? How were you able to serve God or what did you learn through those changes or new circumstances?

Prayer

Chapter 6: The Compatibility of Crying Out and Contentment

Contentment “is not opposed to making in an orderly manner our moan and complaint to God, and to our friends. Though a Christian ought to be quiet under God’s correcting hand, he may without any breach of Christian contentment complain to God. As one of the ancients says, Though not with a tumultuous clamor and shrieking out in a confused passion, yet in a quiet, still, submissive way he may unbosom his heart to God. Likewise he may communicate his sad condition to his Christian friends, showing them how God has dealt with him, and how heavy the affliction is upon him, that they may speak a word in season to his weary soul.

It is not opposed to all lawful seeking for help in different circumstances, nor to endeavoring simply to be delivered out of present afflictions by the use of lawful means.”

— Jeremiah Burroughs, “The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment,” 1648

Question for Group Discussion

If you could be instantly transported to another location for up to 24 hours, where would you go? Why would you go there and what would you do?

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 6: Contentment Comes from Trusting God.

One way to trust God is to run to Him for comfort. God knows and loves those who trust in Him, and so He protects them and provides for them. Like sheep who trust their shepherd, and don't want grass beyond the field the shepherd has chosen, in the same way, we trust in God.

We can trust God because He is capable of saving us, wise in what He allows for us, and full of kindness toward those who trust in Him. God is sovereign, good, loving, wise, and powerful. We must trust God's character even when things are difficult and seem to be going "wrong." But even when things do not go as we hoped, we can be assured that God is allowing every circumstance for a purpose, for our good, and because He loves us.

God's goodness toward us covers every single part of our lives. When I rely on my human understanding or evaluate my life according to what I see or hear apart from God's Word, I can get angry with how things are going. I can begin to doubt God's plan in my life.

Trusting God with contentment does not mean that we stop working to improve the things in our lives, but rather it means that while we pray for and work toward change when needed, we ask, "How do I serve God in this place?"

Contentment does not mean that we are silent about the difficulties that we face. Contentment is not at odds with grieving over afflictions. Throughout the Psalms, David repeatedly rotated between affirming his trust in God while explaining the difficulty of what he was going through.

Longing for God's deliverance is not discontentment. We can both long for eternity and long for God's mercy in our current circumstances while still trusting God and being content.

In Psalm 31:12, David says that he is "forgotten like a dead person, out of mind." (NASB) Have you ever felt like people forgot about you or overlooked you? Maybe you were passed up for an opportunity or position and didn't understand why. But David's response to these difficulties is that he trusts in the Lord, and that his times are in God's hand. He trusts in God's timing, in the way that God is working, and he trusts that God knows what He's doing when He allows people to overlook him or even slander him.

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

Psalm 25:15-21

What were the current trials that David was facing when he wrote these verses?

How does David show that he trusts in God during these trials?

Psalm 31:7-16

What trials does David describe in this passage?

Why does David say he will rejoice and be glad in God's lovingkindness?

How can David be content even though he is being fully honest about how he is feeling and the trials he is going through?

How would you describe the relationship between contentment and rejoicing?

Galatians 6:9

Why should we not grow weary in doing good?

Romans 12:12-21

What response should we have when we are in affliction (vs. 12)?

According to verses 13-21, what additional actions should we proactively take?

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

What are our “light and momentary troubles” achieving/preparing for us?

Why do you think Paul refers to our troubles as “light and momentary”?

What is the difference between what we see and what we do not see?

Application Questions for Discussion

Explain in your own words how a person can actively pray for God to change a situation while still being content in that situation.

How would you reconcile the hardest trials you have gone through with the phrase “light and momentary affliction?” How does our perspective of eternity change the way we see trials?

What has helped you to trust God during the hardest moments of your life?

Prayer

Chapter 7: Content with Weakness

“When we are weak we are strong [...] because then we are driven away from self to God. All strength is in God, and it is well to come to the one solitary storehouse and source of might. There is no power apart from God. As long as you and I look to the creature, we are looking to a cracked, broken cistern, that holds no water; but when we know that it is broken, and that there is not a drop of water in it, then we hasten to the great fountain and well-head. While we rest in any measure upon self, or the creature, we are standing with one foot on the sand; but when we get right away from human nature because we are too weak to have the least reliance upon self whatever, then we have both feet on the rock, and this is safe standing. If thou believest in the living God, and if all thine own existence is by believing, thou livest at a mighty rate. But if thou believest in God in a measure, and if, at the same time, thou trustest thyself in a measure, thou art living at a dying rate, and half the joy which is possible to thee is lost. Thou art taking in bread with one hand, and poison with the other: thou art feeding thy soul with substance and with shadow, and that makes a sorry mixture.”

— Charles Spurgeon, “A Paradox,” Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Volume 34 (1888)

Question for Group Discussion

Have you ever been given advice or feedback that changed who you are today or the course your life is on? How did that advice change you?

Prayer

Teaching Section

PRINCIPLE 7: Contentment Comes from Christ Who Gives Us Strength

God created a world where people could know Him, the creator of everything. They could literally talk directly to the very creator of everything, receive His comfort, ask for His help, and know Him deeply. But instead of obeying God in faithfulness, humans have resisted His laws and chased after wickedness. Even the Israelites, God's own chosen people, constantly went after other gods and worshipped them. They were repeatedly unable to remain faithful to the true and living God. Again and again, people have proved their inability to obey God.

Yet instead of wiping out every human on earth forever, God gave His people a beautiful promise. The day was coming when God Himself would dwell inside His people, causing them to walk in His ways and obey Him. The day was coming when God would put His own Spirit inside frail human flesh and cause people to do what He required. God gave the following promise: "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezek. 36:26).

The day when this promise will come is here. Paul says, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13). Because Jesus has ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit has been given to all those who come to God by faith in Jesus Christ. This means that God puts His own Spirit inside believers, enabling them with His strength to be obedient and faithful. God Himself lives inside people! Astounding! Yet He does. And because He does, we are now enabled to do what pleases Him.

So what does this have to do with contentment? Our contentment comes from Christ by His Spirit. He gives us the strength to be content. But how do we receive that strength? The Holy Spirit, who lives in us, helps us to be content. In fact, Paul said that when he was weak in himself, then he had strength because it was the Holy Spirit who made him strong: "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10 NIV)

Bible Verse Study

Read the following verses out loud and answer the questions about each verse.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Why does Paul say that he will boast about his weaknesses? (vs. 9)

With what things will Paul be content? (vs. 10)

Why does Paul say he will be content with these things? (vs. 8-9)

What does Paul value MORE than insults and distresses and persecutions and weaknesses and difficulties?

How is Paul strong when he is weak? (vs. 9-10)

Philippians 4:11-13

In what circumstances did Paul learn to be content?

What does Paul say is the secret to being content in every situation?

Isaiah 30:15

In what two attributes do we find strength?

Application Questions for Discussion

What makes you feel safe to share with someone about a personal struggle you are going through?

What would keep you from feeling safe to share a struggle with someone?

In what ways do you want to grow in your contentment?

In what ways have you become more content in your life?

Prayer

The 7 Principles of Contentment

PRINCIPLE 1: Contentment comes from aligning our will with God's will.

PRINCIPLE 2: Contentment comes from seeking only to please God.

PRINCIPLE 3: Godliness with contentment is great gain, and worth all the effort.

PRINCIPLE 4: Contentment comes from seeing the blessing and joy in each moment.

PRINCIPLE 5: Contentment comes from believing that God sees our lives as His masterpiece.

PRINCIPLE 6: Contentment comes from trusting God.

PRINCIPLE 7: Contentment comes from Christ who gives us strength.