

Philippians: Going to School to Learn Contentment| Philippians 4: 10-13

1. **THINK:** Why is it such a big deal to Paul that the Philippian church has expressed concern for him and actually has reviewed that concern, seemingly over and over? If Paul is not in need, why is he rejoicing in the Lord of their concern? **DO:** Think over your past or present circumstances. Rehearse and share with the small group what it is like for you when brothers and sisters in the Lord are concerned for you? Share how it encourages you. How does it change your day. How does it affect your day when things are going well, but still others take the time and effort to encourage you and express concern.

2. **THINK:** In your common situation in the context of your common conversation, would you say you spend more time talking with friends about what you want to get next, where you want to go next, what the next experience is you want to have, etc., or do you talk more about what you already have, what has already been given to you by God to steward and gratefulness and thankfulness that your needs today have been met by God? **DO:** Think back about your last extended or even short conversation with someone? What was the thrust of your conversation and share that with the group.

3. **THINK:** How do you allow it to affect you when someone you are close to gets something new that you'd really like to have? How do you choose to handle it when someone achieves something you really would have like to have been known for (a degree, a job, a gift, a blessing, an ability, an appearance) **DO:** Discuss how the idea of being lack and not being in plenty is good training for contentment. Discuss why having a lot of stuff and being able to afford anything you want is not good training ground for contentment?

4. **THINK:** What are some aspects of Paul's past that could have made it very easy for him to be discontent, jealous, or even envious of others? What did he go through that God used to train him to be content? What Scripture passages can you find that lead you to this conclusion? **DO:** Reflect on your own life. Are you training yourself for contentment or discontentment? How are you responding? Share with the group what circumstances in your life exist that are challenging your contentment quotient.

5. **THINK:** *How does a content person respond in these situations:*
 1. People are not encouraging you as much as they should in your recent trial
 2. Your car just broke down and the money you were saving for vacation will need to be spent on your vehicle
 3. Your child is not doing as well as others in a certain class
 4. You were not able to buy any new clothes for the spring or summer, much different than most people you know
 5. You are not making the spiritual progress that you want and you still struggle with things you struggled with a few years ago
 6. Your small group doesn't seem as exciting as some others out there
 7. You have just been given news that you have a long-term trial ahead of you
 8. Your life's existence seems to be a constant barrage of needing things, not affording things, running out of things, not having enough things to take care of your

things, not enough storage for your things, and watching your friends get more things than you do

9. Very few, if any, are truly appreciative of what you do all day

10. Your dreams and wishes and expectations of what life was going to be about are directly opposite of your current experience

11. Your prayer life consists of how God should be meeting your needs.

12. Your age is showing now more than ever.

13. Constant health problems seem to plague your life.

6. THINK: What should be the most satisfying driving force in your life? What was it for Paul? Are you any different in God's expectation of you than what He desired for Paul?

DO: List what variables were in place to teach Paul contentment. How did he learn contentment? **DO:** What variables are in place in your life to teach you contentment? What exists in your place, hand-picked by God to lead you to a deeper contentment in Him and in life? What, of those variables exist, do you need to see God's intention in them, and, instead of seeing them as enemies, you should see them as friends and embrace them?

7. THINK: Would God ever bring anything into your life if it was not for your ultimate good, to make you more like Christ, and to bring forth more glory for Him? If He would, and that is what you believe, what are those circumstances that God has brought into your life for your demise and to take glory from Him? **DO:** How should one pray for contentment? Should one pray for contentment? How would you pray, in the midst of all that God has brought into your life, that reflects a heart of contentment or at least a heart wanting contentment? Instead of focusing on relief, what should you focus on?

8. THINK: Instead of pursuing contentment, what should your pursuit be? What does it look like when you are in pursuit? What describes your life? If you are pursuing contentment, but not pursuing the producer of it, what damage could that have on your life? **DO:** Determine what a pursuit of Christ looks like in your life right now. Ask some friends around you if they observe what you are pursuing: what that is and what describes your life in that pursuit. **DO:** Repent of pursuing anything but Christ. Plan and train for your pursuit.

9. THINK: What does worship look like for a contented person? Is worship mundane? Is it work? What is the frequency of thanksgiving in a contented person? **DO:** Practice the presence of God. Believe in His absolute perfection no matter what. Embrace all that He is and worship Him most intentionally when things are hard.

10. THINK: What does the prayer life look like for a contented person? What does the flow of the contented person's prayer life look like and the regularity of it? **DO:** Intentionally include much thanksgiving in your prayer life. Do this before you ask for stuff. Make a point of keeping a gratefulness list going so you do not forget all that God has already given you.

11: THINK: What does the discontent person accuse God of when it gets down to it? What character aspects of God are under attack? **DO:** Get to know the character of God. Study Him. Find out who He is. He is the foundation of content, so find out why.