Joy and Contentment

Believers find joyous contentment in God’s eternal presence.

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-20

Philippians 4:10-11

I rejoiced in the Lord through the whole time, while I fought on God’s behalf and worked hard for his sake. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:12-13

Therefore I rejoice in the Lord, through the whole time. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:14-15

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:16-17

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:18-19

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:20-21

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:22-23

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:24-25

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:26-27

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:28-29

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.

Philippians 4:30-31

I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen. I was so thankful for the Workers and hezekiah’s help. I worked hard to make this happen.
What are some “thieves” that steal a sense of contentment today?

What picture comes to mind at the mention of contentment? Most of us have this picture of contentment, but we somehow rarely see ourselves in that picture. Paul challenged the Philippians to pursue contentment. He wasn’t promoting laziness or a lack of ambition. He was challenging them to find peace in Christ and joy in every situation.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Paul’s mind, unity and joy went hand-in-hand. Without the bond of Christ holding believers together, genuine joy and peace simply wasn’t possible. Conflict is always the enemy of contentment and satisfaction. That’s why Paul was quick to address the dangers of division at work within the church of Philippi.

One prime example of the Philippians’ lack of unity was the dispute between two women in the congregation: Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3). Paul’s words to them remind contemporary readers that while conflicts are real—even in the church—Christians should serve as agents of peace and unity.

Paul used the lesson on peace to springboard into another common theme of his letter: joy (vv. 4-5). He challenged his readers to find their joy in the Lord by paying close attention to what went on in their minds. If they allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by worry, the Philippians would never experience joy as God intended.

The remedy for worry was two-fold. First, believers should take their concerns directly to God in prayer (vv. 6-7). Second, they should keep their focus on things that will bring them closer to God (vv. 8-9). In this way, they would discover God’s peace. And by guarding their minds, they would experience God’s presence.

As he moved toward the close of his letter, Paul challenged the Philippians to focus on living with contentment (vv. 10-23). Contentment is defined by our relationship with Christ. So, whether our circumstances are up or down, Christians can still experience contentment through Jesus.

Paul tried to model contentment every day. He appreciated the gifts he received from the Philippians and others, but His ultimate source of help was Christ. As a result, he was able to thank God for the givers even more than for the gift. He wanted the same for his friends in Philippi.
PHILIPPIANS 4:10-20

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. 11 I don’t say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. 12 I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13 I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 Still, you did well by partnering with me in my hardship. 15 And you Philippians know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that is increasing to your account. 18 But I have received everything in full, and I have an abundance. I am fully supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you provided—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Passage Outline

In All Situations
(Phil. 4:10-14)

Through Other Believers
(Phil. 4:15-18)

For His Glory
(Phil. 4:19-20)

Key Words

A. The church ministered to Paul while in jail (Matt. 25:45).
B. Paul affirmed the work the church had done on his behalf.
C. The gospel isn’t lived out in isolation; it requires participation.
D. God increased the fruit of their labor because of their expressed concern for Paul.
E. Paul described him as “my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need” (Phil. 2:25).
F. Drawing on Old Testament language, the church provided “a sweet-smelling offering” (CEV, GNT) to Paul during his imprisonment, which was pleasing and acceptable to God.
The Philippians were God’s instruments, but Paul’s trust ultimately rested in Christ. The apostle never spoke out of need because he knew God was in control and providing for him. That allowed him to be content in whatever circumstances he faced. Instead of worrying about the present or the future, he knew that he could do all things through Jesus.

What are the dangers of viewing God as a means out of a challenge as opposed to the source of strength when facing a challenge?

Paul noted that the Philippians did well by partnering to meet his needs and to spread the gospel. What’s more, the Philippians’ fellowship joined them to his hardship. They were not simply casual acquaintances who stepped back when the heat was turned up. Rather, they were like family members who joined him in trials. Generosity is a hallmark of God’s people. The Bible clearly states that anything we “own” really doesn’t belong to us. God owns it all (Ps. 24:1) and gives us the responsibility to use it for His glory. When believers maintain this understanding of material things, generosity becomes much easier to practice. The Philippians apparently understood this concept because they had a history of being generous toward Paul. He was the first person to bring the gospel to Macedonia, beginning with Philippi (Acts 16). While they weren’t the only ones to benefit from his ministry, they were the only ones who had partnered in the matter of giving and receiving.

BIBLE SKILL: Reflect on and memorize a verse. Reflect on Philippians 4:19. Focus on each phrase and how that phrase impacts a person’s contentment. Memorize the verse. Use the verse in your prayers this week. How does this verse summarize Paul’s message to the Philippians?

Generosity opens the door for God to meet a believer’s needs. This was what Paul had experienced even during his imprisonment. It was what he wanted the Philippians to experience as well.

How does giving open the door for God to be honored? What safeguards could be put in place to make sure God is honored when we give?

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship. God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. (See Mal. 3:8-12.)
APPLY THE TEXT

• Christ provides contentment in all circumstances.
• Christ sometimes provides for a believer’s needs through other faithful believers.
• Bringing glory to God is the believer’s ultimate life purpose.

Reflect on how God has provided for you during a challenging time. Who do you know that is facing a challenge right now? How can you encourage them from this passage and your experience?

Discuss as a group ways your Bible study group can be more active in meeting the needs of others. How can the group be an agent in God’s provision for someone else?

Ask God to show you a need and a way to honor Him in meeting that need. What steps do you need to take to make sure you honor Him?

Prayer Requests

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Day 1: Be content in whatever your circumstances.

*Read Philippians 4:10-11, underlining verse 11.*

Paul had already challenged the Philippians to rejoice (v. 4). Joy is a recurring theme in the letter. Paul *rejoiced* because the Philippians had *renewed* their care for him. They had never stopped caring for Paul and acted in a tangible way when they discovered his true circumstances. This tangible support most notably came in a financial gift delivered by Epaphroditus. In general, Paul refused financial support for his missionary work. He always wanted to remove additional burdens from those he helped, and he wanted to debunk claims that he ministered only for the money. Paul emphasized their generosity and the fact that they had *lacked the opportunity* to demonstrate it earlier. Readers are not told why the Philippians were delayed, but Paul clearly appreciated the reestablished connection with his friends. Ultimately, Paul recognized God as the source of his contentment.

**Why did Paul need to emphasize contentment being found in Christ?**

Day 2: You can do all things through Christ.

*Read Philippians 4:12-13, looking for our true source of strength.*

Paul knew how to *make do with little*, and how to *make do with a lot*. He could be hungry or eating his fill. He could have plenty or little. Paul had been through all of those circumstances, and they only deepened his commitment to the Savior. He could survive—and even thrive—in any setting because His contentment rested in his relationship with God through Christ, not material possessions. Instead of worrying about the present or the future, he knew that he could *do all things* through Jesus. Paul knew his strength was not the result of his own actions. His faith was anchored in Christ (the “him” in v. 13), who had all the strength Paul would ever need. Many Christians quote verse 13 as a confession of their dependence on God without considering the context. They interpret it as a universal promise. In truth, contentment in the face of suffering provides a vivid backdrop for God’s demonstration of strength. Paul certainly believed in a mighty God but would never water down the importance of suffering in experiencing that strength. Moreover, all things likely refers to the entire list of circumstances—both positive and negative—in verses 11-12.

**What are the dangers of viewing God as a means out of a challenge as opposed to the source of strength when facing a challenge?**
Day 3: God blesses generosity and obedience.

Read Philippians 4:15-17, understanding the support the Philippians gave Paul.

The Philippians’ generosity must have provided a special blessing for Paul, considering what he received from others on his journeys. While the gifts from Philippi followed him from town to town, enemies also followed him and tried to cause trouble (Acts 17:13). One brought comfort and encouragement; the other created headaches. Few, if any, other congregations came to his aid. Other churches missed out on the opportunity to be a tangible part of the gospel work that Paul was building. Typically, Paul balanced appreciation for the gift with his absolute dependence on Christ. He did not seek the gift from the Philippians. He never begged for their offerings or held his ministry to them over their heads. They gave willingly and voluntarily of their own accord, and he saw them as agents of God’s provision. Paul’s letter was, in part, a receipt for their gift that gave them credit for their investment. Instead of focusing on financial gifts he received, Paul emphasized the spiritual blessings that the Philippians would experience. God never allows obedience and generosity to go unrewarded. As Jesus had noted, those who give receive a return that far exceeds the gift (Luke 6:38). To be clear, Paul was not promoting a “prosperity gospel” or a “name it and claim it” theology. God blesses generous givers because God blesses obedience. Also, Paul did not indicate that the rewards would be financial or even material. The Philippians were not giving to demand reimbursement. They gave out of love and faithfulness—which God always honors.

If Paul didn’t need the Philippian church’s gift, why was he rejoicing?

Day 4: God meets every need.

Read Philippians 4:18, considering Paul’s description of their generosity.

Returning to the subject of God’s provision, Paul stated again that he had received everything in full. God didn’t make a down payment or spread the blessings out over time. Instead, He met every need as it arose. In fact, God overpaid since Paul enjoyed an abundance that comes from being fully supplied. This confession also underscores the fact that Paul was not trying to get more from his friends in Philippi. In addition to financial terms, Paul also used language from the Old Testament to explain how God viewed the Philippians’ gift. Comparing their contribution to the offerings made by the ancient priests, Paul said the Philippians’ generosity had three qualities. First, it was a fragrant offering. Second, it was an acceptable sacrifice. Obedience demonstrates faith, which defines an acceptable offering. Also, the gift was pleasing to God. Readers may reflect on the similarities between the Philippians’ gift and Paul’s challenge to present a “living sacrifice” in Romans 12:1-2. One represents a physical sacrifice while the other is financial, but they are both rooted in faith. Financial generosity is a sign of personal devotion and discipleship. One cannot truly give financially from the heart until the heart has already been surrendered to God.

How are the needs of both the giver and the recipient met through the act of giving?
Day 5: God is glorified through generosity.

Read Philippians 4:19-20, noting the praise offered.

God’s provision includes two main characteristics. First, He leaves nothing to chance. Paul said that God would supply all your needs. Earlier in the passage, Paul had confessed to receiving everything in full and enjoying abundance from God (v. 18). God never shortchanges those who actively work for the kingdom. Second, God’s provision is limitless. Paul reminded his readers about God’s riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Since God owns all things, everything is available for His use. He can fill any gap, whether physical or spiritual. This is a privilege His people can receive. The Greek wording also indicates that God’s resources are not just available, but they are appropriate for every circumstance. As Paul thought about God’s provision, He responded with an outpouring of praise. Paul understood that as God’s people respond properly to His generous provision of their needs, He will be glorified, giving us a taste of heaven on earth.

How does giving open the door for God to be honored?
What safeguards could be put in place to make sure God is honored when you give?

TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Philippians 4, sharing with the other members of your Bible study group.

How can we learn from Paul’s experiences?
How does generosity help us grow spiritually?
How can our joyous contentment bring glory to God?