

Content in Christ

Note to the Leader

In this day and age it seems hard to find contentment. I think that social media has many of us comparing ourselves to others and finding ourselves lacking in one way or another. The Bible has much to say to us about contentment as well as where striving after the things of this world can lead. It is my prayer that this study is a helpful tool to help walk through some of these things.

Opening Prayer

Opening Discussion

Ask your students what it means to be content.

Leader Note: You will probably receive a wide range of answers. I would imagine that at some point the discussion will come around to being content when you have all the things you want, have enough money or something along those lines. If that answer doesn't come up, then lead your students in that direction.

When we try to find contentment in the things of this world, we often find them temporary, and they leave us wanting more.

The Study

Begin by reading Philippians 4:11-13. This will serve as the overarching theme verse for this study. Not only does this verse talk about being content, but it also gives us a glimpse of what contentment in Christ does for us (verse 13.)

What keeps us from being content?

The short answer to this question is sin. Sin keeps us from being content with the things that God has given to us.

Where are we finding our "contentment" in today's world?

Generally, we try to find our contentment in the material things of this world. We live in a culture that says more is better. The more things you have, the happier you will be.

Where do you hear messages about being content?

Students may say Scripture, but they also may hear messages from places like social media, friends, family, or advertisements. This can be an entry point to talking about who they are listening to when it comes to finding contentment.

What are some things that can become idols in our lives and take the place of God?

Answers will vary here, but you should be able to get a pretty good list of things. If the kids are having trouble coming up with things you could start brainstorming with things like: money, technology, sports, video games etc.

Let's read Luke 12:13-34

What are some idols that we see at work in these verses?

- Verse 15
 - a. Covetousness
 - b. Abundance of possessions
- Verses 16-21
 - a. We see here a rich man who has ample goods. So much so that he has to tear down his barns and build bigger ones. However, once he has all of his possessions stored and accounted for he dies. In verses 21 and 22 we see that the man can't take his possessions with him. We also see that the person that lays up so much treasure here on earth is not rich towards God.
 - i. The rich man in these verses has put his possessions before God, and what has that gotten him?
- Verses 22-34
 - a. We see here not to be anxious about your life, food, or clothing.
 - i. In verse 28 we see that God will provide the things that we need for us.

What are the consequences of putting our faith in the things of this world?

- Luke 12:34
 - a. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Bible, ESV translation)
 - i. The things you put a priority on are the things you set your heart on. If you set your priority on making more money than anything else, then you will put all of your effort and time into making that happen. If it is your priority to have the newest and greatest of everything then you will spend your life chasing after that. When we focus on the things of this world, it takes our focus away from God. Our heart is on the things of this world and not on God.

These are just a few examples of idols that can consume our thoughts and take our focus away from God. We thank God that He has forgiven our sin of discontentment and looking to other things. Because of our gift of faith, we are able to see ways to be content in Jesus alone.

What else does scripture say about being content?

1. Hebrews 13:5
 - a. Be content with what you have.
 - b. God promises to never leave us or forsake us.
2. 1 Timothy 6:6-8
 - a. What is the great gain we see here?
Scripture tells us that godliness with contentment is great gain.
 - b. What have we brought into this world?
Nothing, we come into this world with absolutely nothing.
 - c. What will we take from this world according to verse 7?
Again, nothing. All that we have, has been given to us by God.
3. Matthew 6:33
 - a. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Contentment comes when through faith, we are looking to live out our faith and share the good news of Jesus with other. Everything else we need will come from this.

4. 2 Corinthians 12:10

- a. Contentment doesn't always look nice and pretty.

"I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities (Bible, ESV translation) Keeping focused on Christ is so counter-cultural in today's day and age that it will lead to things such as insults and persecutions.

"For when I am weak, then I am strong." (Bible, ESV translation) We must rely on God for the strength to get us through these times. Contentment comes from Jesus, not from our own trying.

5. Psalm 37:3-5

- a. These verses don't specifically say the word contentment in them, but we can see that if we delight ourselves in the Lord then he will give us the desires of our heart.

- i. What are the desires of our heart?

1. For believers, the desire of our heart is two-fold,

a. Forgiveness of sins

b. Eternal life

- ii. These desires of our heart are not possible without the gift of faith given by the Holy Spirit that commits our way to the Lord.

Let's turn back to our theme verse for this study and look at Philippians 4:11-13.

Life will have ups and downs. We have to look towards God and our saving faith as the only source of contentment that will last.

- We see in verse 12 that Paul talks about being brought low and knowing how to abound. We know that Paul has all kinds of experiences in his life. When he talks about facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need, he is speaking from experience.
- Despite the ups and downs, Paul ends the verses telling us how to be content and to make it through the things of this life: Jesus. Paul knows that no matter what happens it is God who is working in and through him to share the Gospel. "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Bible, ESV translation)

Final Discussion

Circle back to your original question about what it means to be content. I'm hopeful that this time around you will hear more answers about putting our contentment in God and serving Him through our vocations. It might be helpful to talk about how, through the Holy Spirit, we are able to stop trying to compare ourselves with others or look for things we can buy or do to be content.

Contentment comes in a life of faith that seeks to put God first and live out our faith in a way that points others towards Him. The things of this world are fleeting. They break down, disappoint us, and ultimately go away. God will never wear out, let us down, nor go away. He will always be with us, and he will provide both the things that we need for our earthly life (clothing, shoes, food, etc.) and our eternal life (forgiveness of sins and everlasting life with Him in heaven).