



## Sermon Title: Pursuing the Kingdom: Being Content (Philippians 4:4-13)

### **IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group**

1. Who is someone you know who displays 'contentment'?  
How do you think they do it?

### **UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God**

**Case Study:** Read through the following scenario. Answer the questions at the end.

*Joe and Sally were married in the church, but their work schedules (shift work) and other interests/responsibilities (skiing, baseball, camping trips, caring for Sally's Mother etc) took them away from any regular attendance and involvement at the church. Their two children, Don (13 years old) and Lori (11 years old) also had busy lives with sports/school activities and friendships.*

*Over a period of time, the family accumulated significant debt; stresses developed in the marriage. Other friends and neighbours were going through separation and divorce. Joe and Sally wondered if that was the best way to end the fights and discontentment they had with each other before it ended up in harm to themselves and the children.*

*As a last resort, Joe and Sally did go to their Pastor. He asked them to stay together another six months before making any decision about their family's future. In addition, he assigned them to attend our weekly Community Group (no excuses for missing!). You were studying Philippians, focusing on the topic of contentment (4:4-13).*

- What steps would your Group take to encourage Joe and Sally?
- What support would you give to them? Accountability?
- What principles would you teach at your Bible study time about 'contentment'?
- What specific ideas would you give to them about rearranging their finances?  
Rearranging their lifestyle?
- What do you think was their conversation with the Pastor when they returned to him six months later?

### **OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community**

1. Which principle from this message is most difficult for you to live out?
2. What steps do you need to take in order to know contentment?  
(Talk to the person in the first question for more insight.)
3. How can you invest more generously in the lives of others?

*UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

### **THE WORD (NIV)**

#### **Proverbs 14:30; 23:7**

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones. . . . for he is the kind of person who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

#### **Acts 20:35**

<sup>35</sup>In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

#### **Romans 8:28**

<sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

#### **Philippians 1:21**

<sup>21</sup>For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

#### **Philippians 4:4-13**

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup>Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. <sup>10</sup>I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup>I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup>I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup>I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

#### **1 Timothy 6:9, 17**

<sup>9</sup>Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. . . . <sup>17</sup>Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.



Today's message began praising God and thanking everyone for their generous and joyful response to invest in the "Build" program to influence the lives of the next generations of those who seek and are in need of the Lord. Research confirms Jesus' words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35). One study discovered that consistently generous people are happier, healthier, with a greater sense of purpose than those who are not, or only occasionally, generous.

But if we are to be consistently generous as a normal part of our lifestyle, we need 'margin' in our time and finances. That becomes reality to the extent we learn what it means to be content. In Philippians 4, the Apostle Paul writes, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation" (v.12). Paul teaches us what this means in the 21st century in our lives on a practical day-to-day basis. A recent study, exploring how happy and content people were, found that even those with an average net worth of \$78 MM still felt discontented and financially insecure and indicated a need of at least 25% MORE for real security! And when the rest of the world compares our wealth to theirs, they find it just as mind-boggling to believe that we are anxious and discontented with our life. We often believe the secret to contentment is "just one MORE" thing away. Many spend their entire life discontented with their lifestyle, bank account, work, pay and position; unhappy with, and for whom, they work; and disappointed in close relationships. Grumbling and complaining, we struggle with what contentment means and how to live a contented life.

In Philippians 4:4-13, Paul's life and teaching show us what contentment is and how we can learn to be content. Fundamentally, contentment is coming to that place in your life when you can say: I am satisfied (v.11), I have all I need (Phil 1:21). I may not like the circumstances, but I am satisfied because I have all I need **in Christ**. It is not complacency, apathy or caring less about the situation I am in. There is a holy discontentment that wells up inside us to show us what is not right, what is intolerable and must be stopped: that something must be done. And we step out in obedience to God's prompting to pray, serve or give help to accomplish His redemptive purposes. Paul was ambitious in this way (Phil 3:14): not for his glory but by making the Invisible Christ visible to all. When Paul says that he has 'learned to be content' (v.11) he is indicating a long, arduous process. Contentment is not something you seek, but rather something that comes to you.

The **first** great truth is that contentment comes when you put your **TRUST** in Jesus (v.6). Fear is a key killer of contentment. Our culture teaches that our worth and competence is proven by MORE money. We fear basic needs being unmet; of not gaining others' respect because of a low-status career or modest lifestyle. Paul speaks to that fear (v.12) and tells that our identity and value are not found in externals, but in Christ. Contentment does not come **from** the Lord, it comes to those who place their trust and hope **in** the Lord. When Paul says "I can do all this through Christ" (v.13) he is not saying that we can be anything, or accomplish anything, we want; but that we can do anything that Christ asks us to do - He will strengthen and empower us. Paul gives several practical ways to help us grow in our trust in Christ on a daily basis. Contentment comes to those who pray about everything and with thanksgiving (v.6). When you are anxious or fearful, stop worrying and start praying. Focus on talking to the Lord about your concern or fear; the length of your prayer doesn't matter. Leave it with Him and trust Him to do what you can't. Paul could be content in prison because he was convinced that someone greater and more powerful than all his fears and problems was with him. He knew his responsibility: pray and leave the rest with the Lord. Furthermore, Paul says that contentment comes to those who are thankful **in** (not **for**) all circumstances (1 Thes 5:18). We are called to choose: do we envy what others have, or are we grateful for what we have? As in Mark Buchanan's story, have we ever thanked God for a pair of shoes? When was the last time we thanked God for all we take for granted, all that He has provided (1 Tim 6:17)? When we are thankful, we see our circumstances differently (Rom 8:28).

The **second** great truth is that contentment comes when you **THINK** like Jesus (v.8). The way you think shapes you as a person and affects your attitudes, values and behaviours (Prov 23:7). What we attend, read, watch, listen to, as well as our conversations with friends--all work to shape our mind and character. Our level of contentment varies as we are discontented, discouraged or stimulated by media promotions suggesting desirability. Note that our desires are from God and not evil or wrong in themselves; but our desires are distorted and perverted by sin. Our desires are never fully satisfied: desire for MORE money creates anxiety in life and relationships, as well as serious debt (1 Tim 6:9). Harmful desires can wreak havoc UNLESS we begin saying 'no' to our desire for MORE. However, Paul says that we can change the kind of person we are by deliberately exposing our mind to what is right and true. Read and meditate on the Scripture. Meet with other believers. Regularly attend worship services. Be kind to one another. We tend to reflect whatever truth we have thought about and embraced. Paul learned by intentionally thinking about what is true, noble, right, pure, admirable and praiseworthy (v.8), which implies he intentionally refused to think about or expose his mind to anything that could lead to ruin. Remove yourself from an environment that stimulates a desire to acquire MORE. Learn to avoid the comparison trap. Heed the 10th Commandment - covetousness is the opposite of contentment. Per Tim Keller: we are not discontent because we have too little, but because we believe we don't have as much as someone else does, (also Prov 14:30). Limit your exposure to things that stimulate the desire for MORE. Instead, expose your mind to what matters to God. Don't focus on the current culture; instead challenge yourself and friends to awareness of opportunities to serve and needs to minister to. Pray and ask God to show you what He would have you do. Share stories of what God is doing. By doing this, we and our friends, personally and intentionally, find ourselves far more able to kill the DESIRE for MORE. By trusting and thinking like Jesus, we align ourselves with His mission: investing in the spiritual and practical needs of people. Paul did this and found contentment (v.7).

Pastor Henry challenged us with two praiseworthy thoughts (per Derryl Johnson). **First:** Love people over things. You can take only three things to heaven: your friendship with Jesus, the people you have introduced to Jesus, and whatever you have done in the name of Jesus. Everything else is left behind. **Second:** Seek to please Jesus rather than try to impress others.