

The Secret of Contentment (Philippians 4:10-23)

How do you face difficulties and troubles? How do you cope with the dramatic ups and downs of life? Where will you find the strength to face whatever is coming next? Popular culture and modern philosophy says, *“Look within! All you have to do is look within yourself!”* Self-sufficiency, self-reliance and autonomy is the air we breathe. Philippians 4:10-23 tells us the secret of contentment is found somewhere else, outside of us, and it’s available for anyone and everyone.

1. Deep gratitude (Philippians 4:10)

Paul is deeply moved by the Philippian’s concern for him.
“Concern” = to show interest; set affections on; think about.

2. Humble Dependence (Philippians 4:11-18)

“Contentment” = self-sufficient; unrestricted by what life throws at you; to have the resources in yourself to meet every and any situation that comes your way.

Paul takes this idea and draws a direct line to the source of his strength; the reason he could say what he says here. He draws a direct line to the endless resources that are found in Christ Jesus. = total dependence on Jesus.

“I’m not looking within; I’m looking outside of myself! To Jesus – to the one who makes me who I am.”

John 7:37; Matthew 11:28

V14 *“It was kind of you to share in my trouble.”* = mixed up in my hardship, a partaker with me in it.

V17 your gift is an expression of sacrifice and worship to God.

3. Deep Assurance (Philippians 4:19-23)

He knows the generosity of God – evidenced in and through the gift of Jesus!
He’s leaning on what he knows is true about God.

The invitation inward to find strength is a trap. Philippians tells us the secret of contentment is found outside of us, in Christ Jesus - and it’s available for anyone and everyone.

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Philippians 4.10-23. How did the Spirit of God use this passage / sermon to speak to you?
2. What is contentment? What would you say is necessary for contentment?
3. Roman prisons didn’t provide food for prisoners. That was left for friends and family. Now that Epaphroditus has arrived, Paul has received the gift the Philippians had for him. How did Paul express his gratitude?
4. How do Paul’s words speak to a culture of discontent and cynicism? In what ways you find what Paul says challenging?
5. Read Philippians 4:12-13. What was the secret of Paul’s contentment? How were Paul’s circumstances a “classroom”? What have you been taught by circumstances in your own life? How have you found verse 13 to be true?
6. With whom have you entered OR with whom could you enter into partnership – “sharing in their troubles” like the Philippians did with Paul? What motivates you to do this?
7. According to Paul, what blessing comes from sacrificial giving? See VV18-19
8. In verse 19, what is Paul absolutely confident in? How can he be so confident?

The story of Jesus is meant to be the defining story of our lives. How has Jesus’ attitude of humility in the face of suffering helped shape your life? Read Philippians 2:3-11. Spend some time in prayer asking the Spirit of God to help us reflect Jesus’ attitude more and more. Ask that we (as a church) would experience his grace in a deeply personal and transformative way.