



Small Group Notes for The Joy Manual: Contentment

Discovering Together

What: are the things in life that bring you the deepest joy and happiness?

Describe a time when you felt truly content and at peace. What was your source of contentment?

Learning Together

Philippians 4:10-23

The Philippians, by their very act of giving, have refused to let their wealth control them and have instead taken control of it. They have therefore taken away its power and refused to allow it sacred status. Jacques Ellul puts it well: "There is one act par excellence which profanes money by going directly against the law of money, an act for which money is not made. This act is giving." Paul rejoiced in the Philippians' gift, not because he required it but because it was a useful step in their own sanctification. By giving their money, they demonstrated where their loyalties lay and strengthened their commitment to the God who would supply all that they ultimately needed through his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

—Frank Thielman, NIV Application Commentary on Philippians

1. According to the apostle Paul, what is the source of true contentment? What is contentment not based on?
2. How does Paul's understanding of contentment fly in the face of conventional wisdom?
3. We live in a world that is pathologically consumed with the accumulation of material things. What do you think the apostle Paul would say to a person who made one of the following statements:
 - I'll be content when I get my next promotion, raise, or new car.
 - I will be content when I have all my needs met.
 - This world is too uncertain; there is no hope for finding lasting contentment.
4. We tend to feel content when we are "well fed" and "living in plenty" (v. 12). Describe a time when you did not have some of the "basics" of life yet you still felt content.
5. How did your faith in Jesus Christ help fill you and satisfy your needs during this time?
6. Why did Paul want the Philippian church to grow in their discipline of giving?
7. What happens in the following areas when a follower of Christ learns to give joyfully and sacrificially?
 - In the life of the giver?
 - In the lives of those who receive the gift?
 - In the heart of God?

8. What can stand in the way of a follower of Christ giving freely?

9. What helps a Christian grow more confident and disciplined as a giver?

In the last two chapters of Philippians, Paul describes a type of contentment that isn't based on self-sufficiency. It comes in grateful acceptance of his dependence on God and the sharing in the gifts offered by others. His contentment isn't the satiation of appetites but the taming of appetites. His contentment doesn't bring the absence of suffering; it brings the enablement to continue in service to the Kingdom of God.

Paul gave himself to something bigger and greater than himself. His life had purpose and significance beyond itself. He was not free of worry, pain or limitations, but he was content.

Both joy and suffering come from beyond us and are bigger than us. Both say we are dependent and can never be complete in ourselves, that salvation and wholeness come only when we can admit we aren't self-made little gods.

—Rodney Clapp, Couple's Devotional Bible

8. Contentment comes when we know God is in control and will give us everything we need. How have you experienced the providing hand of God in your life in one of these areas?

- In your home
- In your church
- In the workplace

10. What are some of the spiritual blessings (glorious riches) you have in Christ that no person or situation could ever take away from you?

Serving Together

Pray together as a small group and give praise to God for how God has provided for your needs. Let your prayers move in two directions. First, celebrate God's provision of material needs. Next, take time to praise God for the many spiritual blessings He has poured into your life.

Take time in the coming week to communicate your love and appreciation to some of the people who have provided for you. Be sure to let them know that you can look back and see how God used them in your life.