

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE®

## ADULTS

### Personal Study Guide

FALL 2019 | CSB

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#### **STUDY 1:**

*Simplicity:  
Finding Contentment  
in a Busy Life*

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#### **STUDY 2:**

*How to Know  
God's Will*



# 1

## A Centered Life



### QUESTION 1:

*What are some things you never worry about anymore?*

## THE POINT

When your life is centered  
in Christ, you find  
all you need.



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Worry. Can you relate to that word? A lot of us can. Two out of five Americans admit to worrying.<sup>1</sup> And I'm in that group.

I worry a lot. I worry about church, family, health, my future, and lost people in my city. The list goes on and on. I've let worry consume me and even spiritually paralyze me for years. I play the "what-if" game a lot. What if I make the wrong decision? What if the desires of my heart never come to pass? What if my father never comes to know Christ?

Do you ever wish you could just stop worrying and fixating on things you can't control? I do. Jesus gave us the key, and it all has to do with our focus. When our focus is on the world, worry is usually the result, but when we focus on Christ . . . well, that changes everything.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus called us to seek His kingdom and His righteousness first. After that, everything else falls into place.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## MATTHEW 6:25-30

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? <sup>27</sup> Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying? <sup>28</sup> And why do you worry about clothes? Observe how the wildflowers of the field grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t he do much more for you—you of little faith?”

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us a sobering reminder of where the heart and mind of the believer could end up when our focus is on the physical rather than the spiritual. A wrong focus leads to a wrong state of mind which leads to anxiety and worry.

“Therefore I tell you: Don’t worry about your life” (v. 25). Easier said than done, right? But it’s an important word from Jesus, and His use of “I tell you” is to get us to pay close attention to what He was saying.

Let’s not lose sight of the fact that we are hearing these words from the mouth of the

Creator. The Creator of the universe, the One who put the stars in place, the One who controls the oceans, the One who holds the world in the palm of His hand was telling us, “Do not worry!” You would think that would be enough to cure us of worry, but it often isn’t. When we worry, it’s because we have allowed our minds to focus and live in disbelief.

Problems begin to arise in our lives when we allow our concern for physical needs to take priority over our spiritual needs. Jesus was clearly telling us that life is more than that.

### QUESTION 2:

*What kinds of things cause people to worry?*



So why shouldn't we worry when life seems overwhelming with so many unmet demands? Verse 26 tells us why, and the reason is tied to the great value we have in the eyes of our Father. Sometimes it's truly hard to comprehend that God loves us as His children. Some of us have not had the greatest father figures, and some of us have had no fathers at all. Others cannot

understand why God would love them when they are so flawed and sinful. But Jesus painted a wholly different picture of our heavenly Father as One who takes care of the birds and adorns the flowers yet loves us so much more. In spite of our sinfulness, God loves and values us deeply. That wonderful truth should change our perspective and, therefore, cure any worry.

## MATTHEW 6:31-32

<sup>31</sup> “So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’” <sup>32</sup> For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.”



A lack of trust produces a life of worry. According to Jesus, worry is a “Gentile” mindset. While we may sometimes equate “Gentile” with anyone who is not a Jew, in other contexts—like this one—it refers to those who are outside the family of God. This group of lost people has every reason to worry about the essentials of life. They express no trust in God, who is the Source of all we need.

Their trust is in their own ability to provide for themselves.

Without Christ, our minds are consumed with living the American dream. Accumulation is the name of the game. We seek the things of this world to give us identity and value.

Many of these things are not inherently bad—a nice home, a new car, a big salary—but we tend to let these things define us. Our trust is in our own ability to perform in order to get what we need or want.

But what do we actually achieve if we attain all these things? Sitting right next to us in our nice homes is a void, a hopelessness, and a lack of peace. None of these things truly satisfy; we're left hungry and thirsty for more. It boils down to a matter of trust: without Christ, our trust is in the wrong place.

Trust should be placed in God who does what is best for us. Consider how God provided for our greatest need. We are sinners in need of a Savior. God saw that need and sent His Son, His greatest treasure. God provided the perfect lamb for imperfect people. And we didn't have anything to do with that provision!

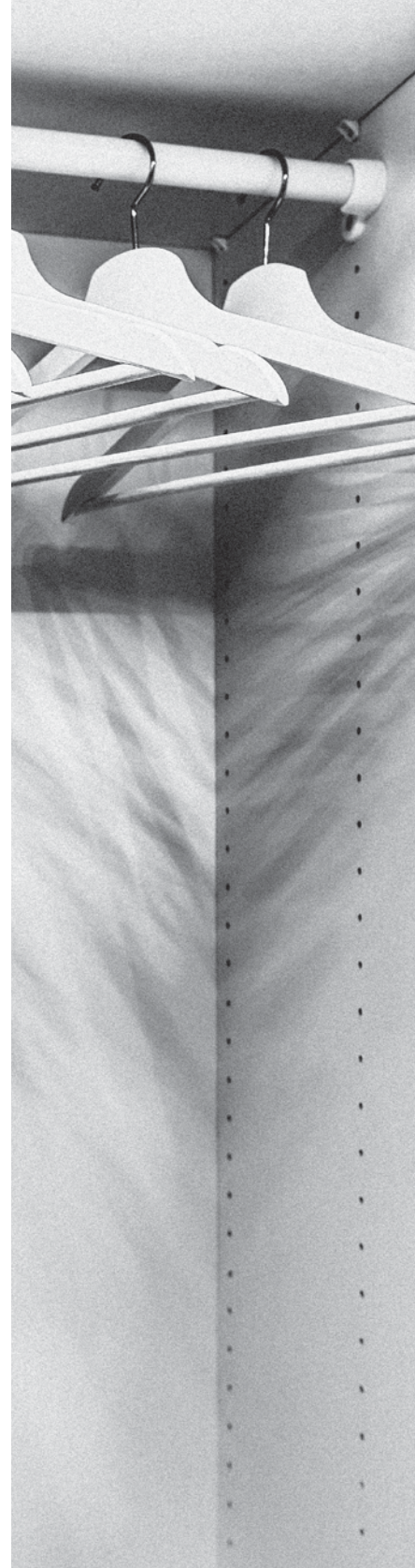
### QUESTION 3:

***When has God provided for you in an unexpected way?***

When we place our faith in Jesus, we are trusting that our greatest need was met. And since God has taken care of our biggest need, we can trust Him to take care of all our needs!

- ▶ God does not have a hearing problem. He hears our requests (Ps. 66:18-20).
- ▶ God does not have a providing problem. He owns “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10).
- ▶ God does not have a timing problem. He provides what we need when we need it (Prov. 3:5-6).

If there is a problem, it's with us. It's a faith problem. He called us “You of little faith.” Worry is simply a product of not trusting God. The good news is that we do not have to stay faithless!



## MATTHEW 6:33-34

<sup>33</sup> “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

“Seek first.” The word Jesus used for “seek” is *zeteo*, which means to desire and pursue. We are not seeking something that is hidden; instead, we are pursuing the things of God with a passion wherein it’s our highest priority.

Instead of being consumed with the temporary things of this world, we are called to be consumed with a desire for God and for the things of God. It’s not that the cares of this life are unimportant; even Jesus invited us to pray for these things: “Give us today our daily bread” (v. 11). As we focus on Christ and pursue Him with obedience, He takes care of everything else.

### QUESTION 4:

***What does it look like to seek God’s kingdom first?***

This does not mean that if you seek God wholeheartedly, you will have whatever you want. Consider how that idea of prosperity plays out in other parts of the world. There are countless believers who live in poverty. Jesus’ words do not promise American prosperity but God’s provision. He takes care of His children. Seeking God gives us proper perspective.

Jesus promised that each day will have enough trouble of its own. We cannot escape the troubled day, but we can escape worry. Today, focus on Christ. Make Him first. We can think about tomorrow . . . well, tomorrow.

Jesus was not speaking against planning or preparation for the future. My wife and I have four children and we are planning for their future. We have started college funds, we pray for their salvation, we pray for their purity, we pray for the right friends to enter their lives, and we pray for their spouses. After we plan, prepare, and pray, we leave the unknowns of the future in the hands of our Father. Without a focus on Christ, it’s easy to be terrified of what this world will do to our sweet children.

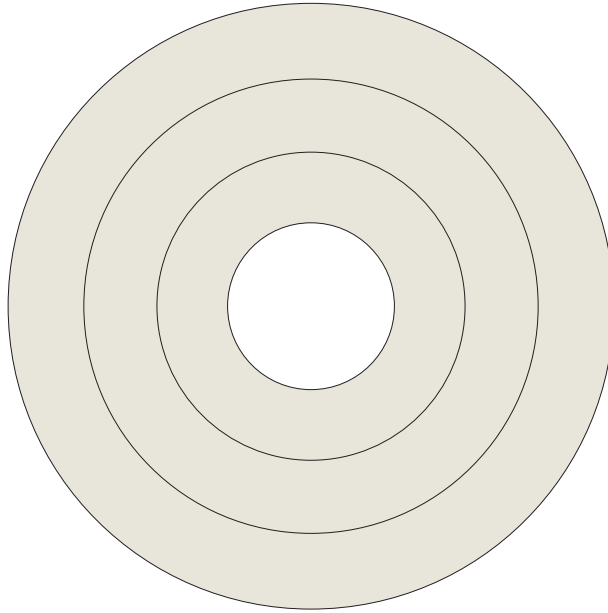
We have a decision to make: will we be paralyzed by fear of tomorrow’s unknowns, or will we choose to seek the kingdom of God? It’s a daily choice to trust the sovereign and loving God who sits on His throne.

### QUESTION 5:

***How can our group help one another prioritize the kingdom of God?***

## CENTERED IN CHRIST

*Reflect on the common areas of life listed below. Consider the circles as levels of concern in your life. Place the letter beside each word from the list onto the circle that represents its importance based on the amount of attention you give it.*



**A.** Work   **B.** Family Time   **C.** Recreation   **D.** Rest   **E.** House Maintenance  
**F.** Church Life   **G.** Christ   **H.** Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If Jesus is not in the center, offer a prayer of repentance and commitment to give Christ Lordship in your life.

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*“We sin not because we do not love Christ at all  
 but because we don’t love him above all.”*

BRYAN CHAPPELL



## LIVE IT OUT

How will you actively seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Confess.** In order to overcome worry, confess the areas where you struggle to trust God. Admit your struggles with worry and allow God to begin working in you.
- ▶ **Memorize.** Hold strongly to the promises of God and memorize Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.” Continually remind yourself of God’s promise to provide.
- ▶ **Share.** Find someone you trust and share the things that cause you to worry and the areas of your life where you lack a trust in God. Invite this friend to pray with you and for you.

It may feel at times as if worry is inevitable and you’re drowning in anxiety. Worry may have a way of worming its ugly head into your life, but it doesn’t have to consume you. Make a daily decision to pursue the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

1 Roni Caryn Rabin, “Worried? You’re Not Alone,” *New York Times*, May 9, 2016, <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/worried-youre-not-alone>.

# 2

## A Daily Pursuit



### QUESTION 1:

*When can you remember being especially thirsty?*

## THE POINT

Deepen your relationship with God by spending time with Him every day.



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We need water. Every day.

Water makes up 50-65 percent of a man's body weight and 45-60 percent for women. To keep our bodies in this optimal range, we need to drink half a gallon of water a day. All this water protects our tissues, joints, and spinal cord. It aids our digestion and helps remove the waste. Every part of our bodies needs water.<sup>1</sup>

Without water, dehydration kicks in—and that's not good for a body so dependent on water! Dry mouth, headaches, dry skin, dizziness, muscle cramps, and fatigue are all signs we need water.

We can get by for several weeks without food, but at best, we can survive only about three to four days without water.

Sadly, too many of us experience spiritual dehydration. We need daily contact with our Father. Dry souls, irritability, and difficulty in our spiritual walk are a few of the signs that we need to be replenished through time with God. The cure is as simple as a time of prayer and praise to the One who keeps us going.

We need Jesus. Every day.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

**<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.**

Many things can rob us of joy. Doubt, death, challenges at work, illness, relational difficulties, and numerous other problems can cause Christians to lose their joy. But we need not lose our joy. We do not rejoice in our circumstances; we rejoice in the Lord. Joy comes from our relationship with Jesus, not our circumstances.

### QUESTION 2:

***When was the last time you really rejoiced over something?***

Paul wasn't writing this letter from a comfortable back porch swing. He was in prison. Some of the Philippians surely remembered when, right there in their own city, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned, yet the two evangelists spent the night praying and singing hymns of praise (Acts 16:11-12, 22-25). Where did Paul's joy come from? It came from Jesus Christ.

Paul didn't tell us once to rejoice; he told us twice. He intentionally repeated himself. He viewed a spirit of rejoicing as critical in the Christian's life. The word Paul used was *chairō*, a verb of action. The fact that it is a verb is telling. Rejoicing is not something that happens by accident or through osmosis. It is a daily decision to choose to find our joy in Christ—regardless of our circumstances.

Early in my walk with Christ, I outlined my prayers with wants, needs, and complaints. I ended my prayer time by reminding God what I wanted just in case He forgot. The entire prayer time was about me, myself, and I.



Rarely did I pray for others or praise God for who He is or thank Him for what He had done. When I made a choice to change that, my prayer life was enriched and my walk with Christ was strengthened. I chose to always start my prayer time with praise—even when I was feeling discouraged. Regardless of my state of mind or state of life, God never changes and for that I have a reason to praise.

- Rejoice because the King is still on His throne!
- Rejoice because death has lost its sting!
- Rejoice because we do not fight to gain victory; we fight because the victory has been won in Christ!

Rejoice! What a way to start our day, rejoicing in who God is and what He has done.

## PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

**<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**

### QUESTION 3:

*What are some obstacles to experiencing the peace of God?*

“Don’t worry about anything.” We addressed the topic of worry in our previous session as we looked at Scripture where Jesus called us to pursue His kingdom and His righteousness. The antidote for worry comes as we center our lives on Christ, and in this passage, Paul gave us a key to centering our focus on Christ with three words.

1. **Prayer.** Prayer seems like the obvious thing to do, but it’s often the most neglected spiritual discipline of the Christian life. Prayer is more than communication with

God; it is communion with Him. Prayer includes a worshipful attitude in which we come before the throne of God.

2. **Petition.** Prayer is communion with God, and petition is a part of that. It’s asking God for something specific. Paul was telling us to communicate our needs—and things that tempt us to worry—to God.
3. **Thanksgiving.** Every night when my family sits around the dinner table, we share the highs and lows of our day, and then we discuss one thing we can each thank God for. I want my kids to see that life has inevitable highs and lows, but we can always be thankful to God. The highs and lows will change, but our God never does. With God on the throne, we always have a reason to be thankful.

Paul told us to run everything through prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. Everything. Not just the big things. Everything is to be filtered through prayer. Bring it all to the God who can handle it.

God's peace flooded Paul's soul through prayer. This peace transcends understanding. This peace comes when we lay our requests and worries before God and leave them there! That is called trust. Too often we place our requests at His feet only to pick them back up the next day. Faith leaves them



at the throne. God may not always answer our prayers on our own time schedule or with the exact answer we think is best. Faith trusts that God will answer at the right time. Faith trusts that God will give us the best answer—one that may even go beyond what we thought was best. Faith trusts and leaves the matter in the hands of our sovereign Lord.

## PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

<sup>8</sup> Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. <sup>9</sup> Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.



A life of daily praise and prayer puts our focus where it needs to be: on Jesus Christ, the One who replenishes us with the living water. Jesus said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him” (John 7:37-38).

**QUESTION 4:**

***What tools and strategies have you found helpful in dwelling on the things of God?***

We can’t stay focused on Christ if we allow the wrong things to crowd our minds. We have got to lose the harmful junk that crowds out the things of God. We carry around a lot of unnecessary baggage, but if we lose it, what takes its place? God wants us to fill our minds with His Word. We need God’s Word to saturate our thoughts daily so that our minds may be renewed and we will be kept from grievous ways. Paul called us to think on those things that are . . .

- ▶ . . . true, not false.
- ▶ . . . honorable, not dishonorable.
- ▶ . . . just, not unfair.
- ▶ . . . pure, not obscene.
- ▶ . . . lovely, not unlovely.
- ▶ . . . commendable, not wrong.
- ▶ . . . morally excellent, not corrupt.
- ▶ . . . praiseworthy, not shameful.

When we think on these things, we can “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Surrender your thought life to Jesus; don’t allow it to drift into the gutter. The wrong thoughts will still want to invade your mind, but be aggressive and take them captive!

In addition to thinking praiseworthy thoughts, Paul called us to follow godly examples. “Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me” (v. 9). Imitate believers who set their minds on our Creator and Redeemer. Watch them. Pay attention to their lives, what they read, topics of their conversations, and what they value. As a result of striving to be like other believers, Paul said that each follower would know more of God’s peace.

When we focus and trust in Christ, we have peace. Peace is the natural by-product of a mind that spends time with God every day. Dwelling on His Word and the things of God draws our hearts closer to Him, and intimacy with Christ takes on a new meaning when we saturate our daily thoughts with the things of God.

**QUESTION 5:**

***How can our group help one another live out these praiseworthy principles?***

## SPENDING TIME WITH JESUS

*Take a look at your planner or calendar. Write down some of your more important appointments this week. Then answer the questions.*

List some of the appointments you have kept this past week:


Number each according to the order of importance.

Where was your appointment with Jesus?  
Too often we think of a daily quiet time as *something* rather than Someone.

Take a moment now to pray and enjoy some time with Jesus.  
Look ahead at your calendar and make sure you have some appointments set aside for Him.

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*“Our busy schedules aren’t keeping us from prayer,  
our hearts are.”*

JACKIE HILL PERRY



## LIVE IT OUT

What steps are you willing to take in order to deepen your walk with Christ? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Praise daily.** Begin your day—every day—with praise. Praise puts the day ahead of you into perspective.
- ▶ **Pray daily.** Set aside time every day for uninterrupted prayer where you give God your full attention. Consider using a prayer journal to help you stay focused. Prayer is a daily decision. Pray about your day, and pray for the challenges others are facing. Let the peace of God rule your heart as you leave these needs in His hands.
- ▶ **Read daily.** Get into God's Word daily. Choose a Bible reading plan, and/or use this book as a guide for your daily focus in God's Word. Partner with others in your group to support and encourage each other in your daily prayer and reading.

Make a daily choice to do these things, and intimacy with Christ will naturally follow. Spiritual dehydration will be a thing of the past!

1 The USGS Water Science School, "The Water in You," USGS, July 23, 2018, <http://water.usgs.gov/edu/propertyyou.html>.

# 3

## The Key to Contentment



### QUESTION 1:

*What makes you feel especially content?*



## THE POINT

True contentment comes  
through Christ alone.



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Life is filled with stages—and no matter the stage we're in, we seem eager to jump to the next one.

- ▶ We couldn't wait to get to high school, but once we were there, we couldn't wait to graduate.
- ▶ We couldn't wait to get to college, but it didn't take long before we were eager to move to a career in "the real world."
- ▶ We couldn't wait to get married, but once we arrived, we began wanting to grow that family.
- ▶ We landed the job we wanted, but before long, we set our sights on another job, another position, or even retirement.

For most of us, each stage offers some degree of contentment, but we still have a yearning. Our hearts are hungry for more. If we're not careful, our hearts can live in discontentment.

The apostle Paul knew what it was to live a life of highs and lows, to have much and to be in need. As situations in his life changed, his contentment did not. In Philippians 4, Paul gave us the "secret" to being content regardless of our current situation.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## PHILIPPIANS 4:10-14

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. <sup>12</sup> I know both 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. <sup>13</sup> I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me. <sup>14</sup> Still, you did well by partnering with me in my hardship

### QUESTION 2:

*What do you appreciate about Paul's attitude expressed in these verses?*

It's a great boost to our faith when God takes care of us in a way that can only be explained by the work of God. We aren't the same when we see Him provide and no one else can get the credit. Paul knew well what it meant to move forward in faith and see God provide through a community of believers. In this passage, Paul wrote to express his appreciation for the financial support he received from the Philippians.

Some time had passed since the last time the Philippians were able to help Paul. They cared for him and what he was doing, but they "lacked the opportunity to show it" (v. 10). Perhaps they weren't aware of a need, or Paul didn't have a need. We don't know. We do know that, when the opportunity arose, they certainly stepped in.

Although this gift came from the Philippians, Paul knew very well that they were only the deliverers of God's provision. He knew the mighty hand of God was behind this provision. Paul "rejoiced in the Lord" (v. 10). His thanks was to the One who was behind the gift and Who moved the church to care and provide.



Even as Paul thanked them for their concern for him, he let them know he would be fine with or without a gift. The apostle Paul was no stranger to the trials of life that could have easily caused discontentment in his heart. He had been imprisoned, whipped five times with thirty-nine lashes, beaten with rods three times, and faced death and multiple dangers (2 Cor. 11:24-27). Paul often went without food and he knew what it was like to sleep in the cold, yet he could say, “I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself” (v. 11). Paul wasn’t exempt from pain and the trials of this life just because he was a faithful servant; in fact, it seems that his hardships were due to his faithfulness.

The secret to Paul’s contentment? “I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me” (v. 13). Whether he was well fed or hungry,

whether in abundance or in need, Paul found his strength and contentment in Christ.

Paul was writing specifically of his ability to be content in all circumstances. In order to achieve contentment, he needed to depend on Christ for his strength. The strength to rest in God and be fully satisfied came from Him.

It is unfortunate how many people take this passage out of context. Athletes like to quote verse 13 as if it was written to help them make a free throw in basketball or a triple play in baseball. People like to quote it before job interviews or daunting tasks. While we should certainly seek God and depend on Him in all circumstances, the point of this verse is that, however our circumstances turn out, we can be content because of Christ.

## PHILIPPIANS 4:15-18

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> For even in Thessalonica you sent gifts for my need several times. <sup>17</sup> Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that is increasing to your account. <sup>18</sup> 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.

### QUESTION 3:

*What’s the connection between contentment and generosity?*

## CONTENTMENT IN CHRIST

Choose one of the following images that would challenge your contentment. Then write what you would say to God to acknowledge your contentment in Christ in that situation.



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*“Keep your life free from the love of money.  
Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said,  
I will never leave you or abandon you.”*

HEBREWS 13:5



Paul expressed gratitude for the way the Philippian church supported him. In fact, it was the only church in Macedonia that supported him. He was grateful they believed in God's call on his life and contributed to the cause of spreading the gospel. This is a reminder that our churches should be leading the charge in supporting missionaries and church planters who have forsaken all for the great cause of spreading the gospel. Each church planter and missionary should be able to echo the words Paul wrote: "You sent gifts for my need several times" (v. 16).

Through Paul's ministry, he had spread the gospel and helped start many churches, but only Philippi reciprocated and supported him when he needed it. Paul mentioned this fact without a hint of complaint. He focused on thanksgiving for what was done instead of complaining about what was not done.

We are blessed to be a blessing in return. God has not only given to us so that we may be provided for, but He wants us to have the opportunity to be a provision for others. The American dream is to accumulate, while the gospel of Christ compels us to receive and give. We should all live as missionaries on this earth with a desire to spread the message of Christ, understanding that all we have is for Him and the advancement of His gospel. In the end, we will stand before our Father, and we will be held accountable for how we lived our lives. We must be careful that we don't get caught up in accumulating and forget to support the cause of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

To save is wise. To be a good steward is biblical. But to accumulate to the point of neglecting the spread of the gospel is ungodly. Live so that you leave a legacy of being a blessing to many!

## PHILIPPIANS 4:19-20

**<sup>19</sup> And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. <sup>20</sup> Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.**

“And my God will supply all your needs.” What a promise! The Philippians had helped Paul in his time of need. They supported him and sacrificed much. They gave out of a heart of generosity and a love for the gospel. They could do so freely because God would take care of them. Living with simplicity rests in the truth that God takes care of us.

**QUESTION 4:**

***How have you experienced God supplying all your needs?***

That wonderful promise gets even more wonderful when we see that God supplies what we need “according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (v. 19). Sometimes we might approach the throne of God and forget Who we are approaching: the Creator of the universe. The One who owns it all. The One who lacks absolutely nothing. Our God is not poor, in debt, or low on resources. His resources are unlimited—so we can rest in the truth that, when God provides, He provides abundantly!

This is not the false promise often proclaimed in the “prosperity gospel.” We can’t just name whatever we want and claim it. That indeed is a false gospel. God is not a genie who is here to answer all our commands, flood our accounts with money, and fill our homes with every possession we desire. God could

certainly do that with His unlimited resources, but our contentment comes through resting in Him, not in an abundance of stuff.

Living a life of simplicity rests in this truth. While we might acknowledge that truth, our human nature always wants more. We often don’t just pray for our needs; we seek after our wants. Having all our material desires met won’t make us any happier or more content, even though our sin nature will try to convince us otherwise.

God will meet our needs—and He will often do it in unexpected ways. We trust Him to provide in His timing and in the way that is best for us.

I have been praying for my atheist father to receive Christ as his Lord and Savior but it hasn’t happened—yet. I’ve asked and prayed, but no answer. Why? My only conclusion is that God knows best. He knows when to give me what I need and how to supply it. I will simply choose to trust that God knows how to supply my every need.

**QUESTION 5:**

***How can our group help one another give glory to God through our generosity?***





## LIVE IT OUT

A life of simplicity finds contentment in Christ alone. How can you live out that truth? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Choose Contentment.** Evaluate your heart for signs of discontentment. Ask yourself: *Am I trusting in money more than in Jesus? Do money and possessions bring me more joy than Jesus? Can I really say, "Christ is all I need?"*
- ▶ **Choose to Trust.** Make a daily decision not to allow circumstances to determine how content you will be in this life. Memorize Philippians 4:12-13 to remind you simply to trust Christ for all things: "In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me."
- ▶ **Choose to Give.** Give of your time, talent, or treasures. Sometimes the cure for discontentment is to give to others. Find those with needs and give to them. Let God use you as His answer to their prayers.

Regardless of what stage of life you're in, you'll find plenty of reasons to be discontented. Thankfully Jesus gives us a path to true contentment in Him.

# 4

## Godly Contentment



### QUESTION 1:

*What are some things you've enjoyed collecting over the years?*

## THE POINT

Godliness with contentment  
is great gain.

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

For many of us, collecting is a hobby. We collected comic books or action figures as kids. As adults, many of us still enjoy collecting a certain item. It's a hobby that includes the thrill of the hunt, organizing, displaying, and trading with others.

Unfortunately, collecting is not a hobby for some people. It is an obsession. Psychologists have identified a common trait among hoarders—those who compulsively collect anything and everything. That common trait is anxiety.<sup>1</sup> We've all experienced a feeling of security from

something we've possessed, even if that sense of security was short-lived. But seeking security and contentment from inanimate objects is elusive. Even trying to find security and contentment in people is ultimately unachievable because people will let us down at one time or another.

We don't get our contentment from people or things, no matter how many things or relationships we surround ourselves with. God offers us a simpler approach—an achievable approach to contentment—that grows out of our relationship with Him.



# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-8

**<sup>6</sup> But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup> For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. <sup>8</sup> If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.**

Earlier in chapter 6, Paul spoke against false doctrine and human greed. False teachers were twisting God's truth to mislead people into believing that godliness would result in material gain. They weren't motivated by a desire to please God; instead they were motivated by a desire to gain the riches of this world. This isn't godliness; it's greed.

### QUESTION 2:

***Why does contentment seem so elusive?***

This unfortunate false teaching resides in the hearts of many today. Over two-thirds of American churchgoers believe God wants them to prosper financially.

Most churches lift up the doctrine of grace—we are recipients of God's grace, a grace we do not deserve—yet we often act like our acts of service, devotion, and giving will receive

some form of reward from God. In fact, thirty-eight percent of churchgoers believe God rewards us when we give to the church.<sup>2</sup>

I have unfortunately been there. I would never have preached this false doctrine, but at one point I was living it. When I was single, I patiently waited for God to provide a wife. I was as faithful as I could be. I even fasted from dating for a whole year, and it wasn't easy. Surely God would bless my faithfulness to Him and provide a wife at the end of the year. I had earned it. But the years just passed. By the time I was twenty-five I was sure that God had called me to be single for the rest of my life, but I couldn't understand why. Why hadn't God blessed my faithfulness?

Then it hit me. I had been using my pursuit of godliness as a down payment for the things I wanted God to provide for me. I had been using God to fulfill my own desires. I did love Him and wanted to please Him, but my motives weren't for His glory; I was motivated by what I might gain.



Greed and godliness can never dwell in the same heart. One will be the resident, and the other will be the occasional visitor. Paul gave the antidote in verse 6: “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” True gain comes when godliness is married to contentment.

The word Paul used for “contentment” is *autarkeia*. It means to be totally satisfied with what one has.

We should be thankful for the simple things like food and clothing; the simple pleasures of life should satisfy us. When we are not content with simply having our daily needs met, we become discontent and push for more and more. The enemy loves the discontent heart, but contentment rests with the simple pleasures of life that come from God.

## 1 TIMOTHY 6:9-11

**<sup>9</sup> But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. <sup>11</sup> But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.**

Have you ever had a craving for something sweet in the middle of the night? Paul warned about another craving: the craving of riches. The difference in the craving for a snack and the craving of riches is that the latter will lead to ruin and destruction. Craving riches is not just foolish; it’s harmful. It’s not the mere presence of riches that brings harm; it’s the craving—the desire—for those riches that is so dangerous. Such desires are a trap set to capture our hearts and guide us away from finding contentment in the things of God. Our flesh—our sinful human nature—will always crave the things of this world that never satisfy. If Satan can capture our hearts, then he can set us in motion on the path to destruction.

### QUESTION 3:

***What examples of brokenness have you seen that are a result of the love of money?***

“All kinds of evil” grow out of a love for money. The most dangerous thing that this craving can cause is a wandering from the faith. At this point, people do not necessarily deny their faith, but they no longer let it play a role in their lives. If we don’t seek our contentment in a godly life in Christ, our hearts are left open for the enemy to fill.

## CHECKING OUR PRIORITIES

*Consider your family budget. Put a number beside each of these common family expenditures representing the approximate percentage of monthly income dedicated to each item. Then answer the questions.*

**House** \_\_\_\_\_

**Food** \_\_\_\_\_

**Insurance** \_\_\_\_\_

**Car** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tithe** (church) \_\_\_\_\_

**Entertainment** \_\_\_\_\_

**Utilities** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cable/Internet** \_\_\_\_\_

**Misc.** \_\_\_\_\_

How do each of these items help provide a sense of security and contentment?

How do they compare with the security and contentment you find in Christ?

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*“He then told them,  
‘Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because  
one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.’”*

LUKE 12:15

Paul gave Timothy an alternate course: “flee from these things.” Sound advice for sure, but by itself, it’s not enough. It’s one thing to flee from something; it’s equally important to consider what we run to. Paul called Timothy—and us—to pursue six traits:

▶ **Righteousness and godliness.** These two traits have to do with our personal integrity, upright conduct before others, and our relationship to God.

▶ **Faith and love.** These two traits speak to our trust, dependability, and actions toward both God and others.

▶ **Endurance and gentleness.** We need staying power in the face of difficulties, and gentleness in dealing with difficult situations and people.

## 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

**<sup>17</sup> Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup> Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, <sup>19</sup> storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.**

Paul’s warning about the love of money applies to all of us—rich, poor, and in-between. In verse 17, Paul issued a warning to those who have riches. I love the language he used here: “rich in the present age.” Any riches we possess in this present age are only in this present age; they won’t transfer to the age to come. Paul’s instructions were to guide the rich in how they should live with their temporary, current riches.

### QUESTION 4:

***What does it mean to store up treasures in heaven?***

▶ **Don’t be arrogant.** Riches can easily cause people to believe they are better than others because they have more. This arrogance is wrapped up in entitlement.

▶ **Don’t place your hope in wealth (which is uncertain).** Money can give us a false sense of identity and of security. Material things are bound to end one day. To place our hope and trust in wealth is like driving a car and never expecting it to run out of gas. Wealth will disappear, and when it does, so will our hope.

▶ **Hope in God.** It’s a whole different story when our hope rests in God! We have riches in God, but a different type of

riches. God “richly provides us with all things to enjoy” (v. 17). God doesn’t provide so that we can just exist. He gives us an abundant life (John 10:10).

► **Do what is good.** Want to be rich? Be rich in doing good works. Give. Be generous. Share. This is the cure for the craving of mere earthly riches. When the rich do this, they are “storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age” (v. 19). Giving here on earth is a deposit in heaven.



I opened my first savings account at the age of twenty-two. Each month I placed a specific amount into this account, and I loved to watch the balance grow. This was not a big deal at first, but I became obsessed with seeing the increase in my savings. I became so focused on the increase of my savings that I found reasons not to tithe to my church or give anywhere else. I justified my disobedience by saying things like, “I do not trust how my tithe is being used by the church.” “I will give when I make more money.” The truth was I did not want to give because I was greedy. My savings account slowly began to own me, and I became enslaved to my own riches.

I found the way to break this entrapment: I began giving again. The only cure for greed is generosity. I gave freely and began to experience godly contentment.

#### QUESTION 5:

*How can our group help one another strive for godly contentment?*



## LIVE IT OUT

How will you pursue godliness with contentment? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Be Content.** Begin your day—every day—with a focus on Christ. Ask Him to transform your thoughts from self to living a godly life for Him. Commit to finding your contentment in the things God provides and choose to live for Him.
- ▶ **Be Accountable.** If you struggle with craving and buying things to give you a sense of security and contentment, choose someone you trust to be your coach and mentor, holding you accountable for how you spend. Seek a person who will encourage you to find your contentment in God alone.
- ▶ **Be Generous.** If you're not in the habit of giving, start. Give faithfully through your church. When you see a need, forgo a purchase for yourself, and step in to help with the need.

It's easy to begin to rely on things or even people who bring us temporary happiness. But true contentment can only be found in our relationship with Christ.

1 Gregory L. Jantz, "The Psychology Behind Hoarding," *Psychology Today*, Sept. 5, 2014, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-relationships/201409/the-psychology-behind-hoarding>.

2 Bob Smetana, "Most Churchgoers Say God Wants Them to Prosper," *LifeWay Research*, July 3, 2018, <http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2018/07/31/most-churchgoers-say-god-wants-them-to-prosper-financially>.