

What if... We Were Content and Generous?

Philippians 4:10-23

PPT Title

What if We Were Content and Generous?

Main Point: Contentment comes from trusting God and generosity flows from it.

Key Verse: *I have learned the secret of being content no matter what happens... I can do everything by the power of Christ. He gives me strength.* - Philippians 4:12b-13

Props: A padded handle that looks like a whac-a-mole hammer (could even wrap a towel around your fist to give this impression); Optional long gray beard;

INTRO



Who knows what this game is? Who here has ever played “Whac-a-mole”? Who can explain how it works? You have a soft hammer-thing. And when a mole pops his head up through a hole, you try to whack him. That doesn't seem so difficult. But what makes it so tough? He moves pretty fast and as soon as you get him, another mole pops up somewhere else! (Act out as if you are playing it, “Here he is; no, there he is; oh, there's another; and another; and another...”)

Today we are going to talk about something that's a lot like the whac-a-mole game. It's discontentment. Does anyone know what it means to be discontent? Well, content means to be satisfied or happy with what you have. So to be discontent means not being happy with what you have; to want more than you currently have. The problem with not being happy with what you have is that you're not happy! If you're discontent, you are always chasing the next thing. You think, “If I only had the next (choose age-appropriate items) Play Station game, or an iPhone, or the next Lego set, or flying fairy, or the next whatever, then I would be happy. But the truth is, being discontent means that shortly after you get that thing, you'll want the next thing! It's like chasing after the next mole that pops his head up. If Legos are your thing, as soon as you get one set, the next set is popping its head up through another hole. Who wants to live like that - never happy, always feeling like you are missing out on something?

Content=
Happy

Discontent=
Unhappy

And you know what? When you are constantly chasing after that next thing in your mind, you don't have time to think about what's really important: God's goodness, His kingdom, and sharing it with other people. But being content means you can just put down the hammer, quit frantically chasing after stuff, and just be happy with what you have - no matter how little or how much you have. This brings so much peace and joy.

Well, in the final part of his letter, Paul told his friends the secret of *how* to be content. I bet this is one of the most often studied sections of the Bible, because being content is a struggle for almost everyone. So when Paul says he knows the secret, everyone (including me) wants to know what it is!

CONTENT



So back in prison, Paul's friends in Philippi sent gifts to Paul. The gifts aren't listed, but it might have been food, medicine, paper and ink, and other things like that. Paul is so thankful that his friends sent supplies, not because he needed anything, but because the gifts showed Paul that his friends still cared about him.

At last you are concerned about me again. That makes me very happy. We belong to the Lord. I know that you have been concerned. But you had no chance to show it.

I'm not saying that because I need anything. I have learned to be content no matter what happens to me. I know what it's like not to have what I need. I also know what it's like to have more than I need. I have learned the secret of being content no matter what happens. I am content whether I am well fed or hungry. I am content whether I have more than enough or not enough. I can do everything by the power of Christ. He gives me strength. - Philippians 4:10-13

Paul was not born content. (I doubt that anyone is!) He had to learn how to be content. I believe it came from years of trusting God. Listen to some other verses that Paul wrote earlier. Paul wrote down these words, but God told him exactly what to write (2 Timothy 3:16).

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him. He appointed them to be saved in keeping with his purpose. God planned that those He had chosen would become like His Son. - Romans 8:28-29a

Did you catch that? God makes all things—EVERYTHING—work together for good for everyone who loves Him. And, God wants us to become more and more like Jesus. What is Jesus like? (good, kind, giving, humble, sinless). Paul was 100% SURE of these two things. Whatever is going on in my life, God will use it for good, and it'll make me more like Jesus. So...

1 God will use this for good

2 It'll make me more like Jesus

Uh oh, I don't have enough to eat today. (Some people might beg other people for money or food.) But Paul knows: God will use this for good, and it'll make me more like Jesus. So I'll be content/happy right where I am.

Oh wow, Today I have way more food than I need. (Some people might be inclined to hoard it away, or want even *more*.) But Paul knows: God will use this for good, and it'll make me more like Jesus. So I'll be content/happy right where I am.

Uh oh, I'm on a ship that's about to crash on the rocks. (Most people would be paralyzed by fear.) But Paul knows: God will use this for good, and it'll make me more like Jesus. So I'll be content/happy right where I am.

Uh oh, I'm stuck in prison even though I'm completely innocent. (Many people would go crazy, screaming every day to be LET GO!) But Paul knows: God will use this for good, and it'll make me more like Jesus. So I'll be content/happy right where I am.

Remember what Paul just got finished saying (last week): Don't worry about anything. Instead, tell God about everything. Ask and pray. Give thanks to Him. Then God's peace will fill you. (Philippians 4:6-7) This wasn't just something Paul *said*. This is what Paul *did*! He didn't ask other people to fill his needs. In fact, knowing Paul, I bet he would say, "If this situation will make me more like Jesus, then I don't WANT anyone coming in to give me stuff and messing up God's plan!"



Make no mistake. Living through hunger or prison or pain or disappointment is tough stuff! But Jesus has been through it ALL (Hebrews 4:15) and Jesus gave Paul the power and strength to get through everything! So Paul didn't run around seeking the next thing that could make him happy. He looked for the good in whatever situation he was in, knowing God's promises and plan.

1 God will use this for good

2 It'll make me more like Jesus

Application: Do you think you can remember the two things Paul focused on? God will use it for my good and it'll make me more like Jesus. Wow. Nothing is better than that! And when it's tough, Jesus will give you the power you need to stay strong. When we really believe these things, we'll be content with whatever we have and wherever we are. We won't be chasing after the next thing to make us happy.

GENEROSITY



You really have to learn to be content before you can give the way God wants you to. Does anyone know how God wants you to give? The Bible says God loves a cheerful giver! (2 Corinthians 9:7) That means you don't give because you have to, or someone is forcing you to. You give because you want to. Once you are content, and you are certain that God will make sure that you have exactly what is good for you to have, then generosity comes easily. You don't have to cling to what you have! You are sure that if you give to someone else, God will give you what He wants you to have. We can learn a few more things about giving when we read what Paul said about the Philippians' gifts to him.

They are a sweet-smelling offering. They are a gift that God accepts. He is pleased with it. - Philippians 4:18b

God cares so deeply for His children that to show kindness to them is the same as showing kindness to Him. So remember that when you give to someone else, it's just like you are giving to God. It's like an offering to Him and He really likes it. Wouldn't it be fun to give a present to God? Giving to someone else is like giving to Him.

And finally, Paul encouraged his friends with this last promise about being generous:

My God will meet all your needs. He will meet them in keeping with His wonderful riches that come to you because you belong to Christ Jesus. Give glory to our God and Father for ever and ever. Amen. - Philippians 4:19-20

You can't out-give God. He owns everything. Don't worry about holding onto something because you might need it one day. If the day comes that you need it, God can certainly make sure you get it. Once again, trusting God is key!

For fun, put on a long gray beard. Who does this remind you of? Is anyone here a Duck Dynasty fan? Phil, the dad on the show, grew up dirt poor in a log cabin without any luxuries (like CocaCola). His family's cabin had no bathtub and no toilet. They didn't own a car. They didn't even know that grocery stores existed! Phil is very outspoken about Jesus now, but for years, he didn't believe in Jesus because no one had ever told him what Jesus did for him on the cross. But once he heard, he believed! And from that day on, he read the Bible and tried to obey, even if God's instructions didn't always make sense to him. (God's ways are way better than our ways!)

I want to show you part of a video in which Phil tells his life story. When he was a younger man and still very poor, he was a fisherman. It was hard work. Every day, he would throw big nets into the river. He would leave them over night, and in the morning, he'd haul in the big nets. When he caught fish, he could sell them and use the money to pay his bills. In this part of the video, Phil is talking about some guys that used to come sneaking out at night to steal the fish out of the fishermen's nets. The fishermen got so mad about it (and rightfully so)! But one day, Phil read this in the Bible: "But love your enemies. Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then you will receive a lot in return." (Luke 6:35) Let's see what happened:

Video
9:32 - 10:44
(could play
thru 12:11)

PLAY VIDEO: <http://therightscoop.com/i-am-second-duck-dynastys-phil-robertson-gets-candid-about-infidelity-and-alcoholism/>

Back then, Phil was really poor. He couldn't afford to give away a huge catch of fish. Yet, because God said to do it, he gave away his entire catch that night. He believed God would give him exactly what God wanted him to have (no more and no less). He trusted that God would use his now-empty net for good, and to make Phil more like Jesus. And you know what? God did! Now, none of us are guaranteed a million-dollar business! But we are guaranteed that our God—who knows us better than anyone—will give us exactly what is best for us to have.

The question is: Will you trust Him? When you trust Him, you'll be content/happy with what you have, and giving will just come naturally.

PPT Key Verse

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