

JUNE
2022

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Senior Pastor

FOLLOW



ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to ***introduce*** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, ***instruct*** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, ***inspire*** them to serve for God's kingdom, and ***incorporate*** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

There is an old hymn that we sang in church when I was a young man titled “Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow.” The emphasis in this should be where HE leads. Too often we have seen people who say they are a Christian, yet they follow after things that are squarely in conflict with scripture. As we have shared many times, God never leads contrary to His Word. Whether it is in relationships, life principles, culture, “religious views”, or even politics, all should be consistent with what the Bible says on the subject. As a follower of Christ, this means that He is leading (or should be leading) our life. The plumbline of a true follower is the measurement of His Word. Are you following Him?

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

When you follow Christ there are evidences that are manifest in your life. We must remember that it begins with knowing Him in a personal relationship. The foundation of following is the Who or What that we have chosen to build our life around, and upon.

-Blessings

Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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June 5, 2022



Follow Christ's Calling

Philippians 3:1-14

Focal Verse:

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

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Philippians 3:14

Introduce

Recently, I had an annual appointment with a doctor who specializes in the retina to assess any effects of macular degeneration on my eyes. Just as in any other physical, the physician's assistant began by asking about any changes to my medical history, including any changes to the medication which I take. Since I had last been, all my medication had changed—even to the point of taking less. In the course of the conversation, I related that I no longer take medication for diabetes and, in fact, my primary care physician



even stated that I am technically no longer a diabetic upon my last physical. Utterly flabbergasted, the physician's assistant inquired, "How did you accomplish that? It's almost impossible for someone to reverse diabetes."

Part of the change depended upon something that I could not do on my own, however. I finally found a primary care physician willing to listen and work with me to overcome chronic gout which severely limited my mobility. No matter how much I altered my diet and watched what I ate, I could not alleviate the effects of gout on my body. I needed help. And my primary care doctor through a process found the right medicine to help me. With the reduction of pain, this meant I could become more active. But this didn't automatically resolve the issue I had with my blood sugar. I needed to set a goal to achieve a healthier lifestyle.

To set this goal, it required a change in mindset first. I had to change the way I think which in turn influenced my actions and habits. I developed the routine of cooking rather than always eating out. I reduced my intake of carbohydrates by eating more vegetables, smaller portions, and balanced meals throughout the day. To succeed in this endeavor to live healthier, it required me to keep the goal at the forefront of my mind—to remember it constantly. I couldn't lose focus, but had to dedicate myself to this purpose.

After losing much weight which was expedited by COVID, I still have work to do. I have not yet fully arrived at the goal and must diligently continue striving to attain it. I may

Introduce

eat healthier making wiser choices, but I don't exercise as I should and still live a rather sedentary lifestyle exacerbated by the nature of my job. This is no excuse, however. Only laziness and apathy would prevent me from moving forward and striving toward this goal. As the physician's assistant noted, "It's almost impossible for someone to reverse diabetes," because we find it easy to revert to our old habits where we find comfort; it's easy to become apathetic and lazy, forgetting the goal before us. In Scripture, God has given us a clear goal to follow. We are to conform our lives to the image of His Son and live in holiness. Although we have fully attained salvation in Christ which leads to eternal life when we have a relationship with Him, we have not "already attained" complete holiness or are "already perfected" (Phil 3:12). We, like Paul, must "press toward [that] goal" to which Christ has called us" (Phil 3:14). We can't achieve this goal on our own through our own power and pedigree. We need Christ. He is the one who transforms us into His image. Although Christ works within us to accomplish this feat, we are responsible to participate in that effort by the choices we make and the way we conduct ourselves. Therefore, let us remember the goal and dedicate ourselves to the purpose for which we have been called in Christ. May we follow to the end pressing "on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Key
Question

How do you participate in the goal for which Jesus has called you? What goals have you set to help yourself in this endeavor?

Philippians 3:1-6

RESIST PLACING CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH:

As humans, we have the tendency to trust in the things we find familiar because they offer a sense of comfort and assurance even though they may lead us down the wrong path. We tend to revert to what we think we “know.” And human knowledge apart from the wisdom of God always gets us into trouble. For this reason, Paul has no qualms about writing **the same things to** the Philippians (v. 1). He wants to remind them that their **confidence** is not in the **flesh** or in what they can do, but it is in the Lord and what He has done for them. Salvation comes not from our own works of righteousness, our participation in ritual, or our physical heritage, it comes from Christ alone. At one point in his life, Paul himself had failed to understand this very principle and he doesn’t want the Philippians to forget and revert to their old way of thinking. Previously, Paul had placed his **confidence** in his own heritage and personal achievements rather than in the grace of God. When recalling his former misguided perceptions, it leads him to warn the Philippians against repeating this same fallacious way of thinking (v. 3).

In what do you tend to trust which is familiar and comfortable to you? What affect does this have upon your trust in the Lord?

Question
1

Paul begins verse 1 on a positive note with a command for the church to **rejoice in the Lord**, but he quickly turns to warn them again about the dangers of trusting in the **flesh** over God. When we have the right perspective in terms of God and salvation, worship becomes authentic and joyous, but when our perspective becomes skewed by legalistic religious activities in which we simply go through the motions it becomes tedious and onerous. By way of reminder, Paul admonishes them to **beware** of those who promote works through religious practices as a means of attaining eternal life (vv. 2-3). Specifically, he condemns the ritualistic practice of circumcision (i.e., **the mutilation**) when it interferes with the authentic **worship of God**. Since the time of Abraham, the circumcision of male children served as an outward reminder of the participation in God’s covenant, but it never meant that a person automatically inherited eternal life through their physical heritage ([Rom 9:6-8](#)). Salvation was always a gift of grace

from God rather than a rite of passage through a ritualistic work!

In-Depth Information



*In verse 2, Paul uses very harsh language against his opponents when he calls them **dogs**, **evil workers**, and **mutilators**. Formerly in our culture, to call someone a “dog” (often spelled dawg) carried with it little offense—“what up dawg?” However, to a Jew in the first century, calling someone a dog was highly offensive. Dogs were not pets or man’s best friend, but they were seen as vile scavengers which consumed garbage off the street. Consequently, the Jews used this term to describe Gentiles—those unclean and unrepentant people who were not part of God’s covenant with Israel. The Jews thought that performing good works by following religious duties earned salvation, but because they never actually had a relationship with Christ they were **evil workers** who misled people and **mutilated** the flesh because they did not understand the true intention of God’s Word.*

Just as many in Israel wrongly placed their **confidence** in circumcision as more than an outward sign, many people in the church today wrongly place **confidence** in their bap-

tism as a means of salvation. Like circumcision, baptism only reflects the true inner change through a symbolic, yet visible, expression. As a result, baptism in and of itself cannot change the heart and it cannot save, but rather it serves as an expression of the transformation that Jesus has produced within our hearts ([Rom 4:1-11](#)). Plainly speaking,

“HOW MUCH MORE SHALL THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, WHO THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT OFFERED HIMSELF WITHOUT SPOT TO GOD, CLEANSE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM DEAD WORKS TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD?”

Hebrews 9:14

if we do not have a relationship with Christ when we are plunged under the water, we will not have a relationship when we come out of it either. Therefore, our **confidence** should not be in religious ritual, but rather a renewed heart through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul, by his own admission, was once a such a misguided person who placed **confi-**

dence in his own heritage and his own achievements. He declares that **if anyone** has reason to **have confidence in the flesh**, he does (v. 4). First, he demonstrates why he had **confidence** in his heritage. His parents had followed the Law perfectly and had their son **circumcised** on **the eighth day** ([Lev 12:3](#)). He was physically born into God's people of promise, **Israel**—even being born into the small, but significant **tribe of Benjamin**. In every way, he thought that his physical heritage had given him every advantage.

Today, many people express **confidence** in their “Christian” heritage. They wrongly believe that they were born Christians—they have been “Christian” all their lives because their parents were or simply because they were born into a “Christian” nation; they also wrongly assume that they are “Christians” because they have always gone to church from the cradle to the grave. In addition, some merely call themselves “Christians” because they are not Jewish, Muslim, Hindi, or any other religion. The Bible clearly addresses this issue: we are not Christian because of our physical heritage, birth, or church attendance, but we are followers of Christ because we have believed in Jesus, repented of our sins, and surrendered our lives fully to Him.

In-Depth Information



*Paul specifies being from the **tribe of Benjamin** for two reasons. First, Benjamin was the last-born of Isaac and Rebekah—his favored wife ([Gen 35:16-18](#)). When he thought Joseph had died because his brothers had actually sold him into slavery, Isaac cherished his youngest son even more. In addition, the **tribe of Benjamin** was also significant because it produced the first king of Israel, Saul ([1 Samuel 9:1-2](#)).*

Second, Paul had not only wrongly placed **confidence** in his heritage, but also in his personal achievements. Not only did Paul speak the **Hebrew** language, but he was also an expert in the Law as a **Pharisee**. As a **Pharisee**, he was **zealous** to do what he thought were the things of God, but in reality he was opposing God. As a **Pharisee**, he **persecuted the church** because he thought he knew God's Word and was following the Law correctly. He saw himself as **righteous** and **blameless** according to the Law—following it to the letter. Paul again makes it abundantly clear that our achievements—whether it's how much we think we know or how much we think we've done—cannot merit eternal life and, as we will see in the next section, he now considers all these human deeds **rubbish** ([Phil 3:8](#)).

In-Depth Information



In verse 5, Paul claims that he is a **Hebrew of Hebrews**. He doesn't use this term arrogantly to suggest that he was the "best" Hebrew, better than anyone else, but rather it highlights the depth of his education.

Most people at this time spoke the more common language Aramaic, but those educated, especially in the Scriptures, would also be able to read and speak Hebrew—the predominate language of the Old Testament.

What are some areas in our Christian heritage in which we place confidence that might hinder us from accomplishing the goals that Christ has given us for the future?

Question
2

Philippians 3:7-11

REMAIN CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST:

Paul begins this section (vv. 7-11) by highlighting a major shift in his thinking. Through his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, he has come to realize that what he thought was **gain**, or an advantage for him, in reality should be **counted loss**, that is nothing, in terms **of Christ**. Having a post-graduate degree, a good-paying job with benefits, a home with a multitude of possessions, a large base of family and friends, or even having freedom as an American citizen is of no advantage to us in terms of eternal

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

Romans 8:9

life. The only thing of significance in our lives is the **knowledge of Christ Jesus** our **Lord** (v. 8). The word **knowledge** here means that which is attained through personal experience; therefore, to have **knowledge of Christ** means that we must have a personal relationship with Him and not just know cognitive information about Him. If we lose everything in this world

and have Christ, we have lost nothing. But if we have rejected Christ in this world, we

have lost everything (see also [Matt 16:25-27](#)).

How would you evaluate your knowledge of Christ? How does that knowledge correlate to your view of the world?

Question
3

Paul further emphasizes that salvation, to which he refers as to being **found in Him**, doesn't come through one's own **righteousness by the Law** (v. 9). In other words, we can't be good enough on our own merits to inherit eternal life ([Rom 3:10-11](#)). We must realize that the only way we can have salvation is **by faith** through the perfect sacrifice that our sinless (righteous) Savior endured on the cross. When we have that relationship with the Father based on Jesus' righteousness, we will naturally conform to the image of Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, Paul identifies three ways that we can have a more in-depth relationship with Christ by conforming our lives to Him. First, Paul desires to **know Him and the power of His resurrection** (v. 10). To **know** Him, means to have a relationship with Him on a daily basis through worship, Bible study, prayer, and service. To **know the power of His resurrection** means that we allow Him to transform our lives—attitudes, thoughts, actions, and words. In [Romans 6:4](#), Paul explains this concept clearly: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." To **know the power of the resurrection**, we must surrender the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit so that He guides us and transforms us from the inside out.

In what ways are you conformed to Christ's resurrection specifically?

Question
4

Second, Paul aspires to know Christ more intimately through the **fellowship of His sufferings**. The apostle isn't wishing that more trouble and heartache would find him, but rather that he might continue to have opportunity to minister just as Christ did—even if it means that he must suffer for the sake of the gospel ([2 Tim 2:10](#)). Before His crucifixion, Jesus plainly tells His disciples: "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" ([John 15:20](#)). After his experience on the road to Damascus, Jesus also reveals to Paul "how many things he must suffer for [His] name's sake" ([Acts 9:16](#)). Serving Christ is difficult and it will, at times, result in suffering because of the evil nature of this age, but we ought to gladly endure suffering when it comes and not let it dissuade us from

“THEREFORE I ENDURE ALL THINGS FOR THE SAKE OF THE ELECT, THAT THEY ALSO MAY OBTAIN THE SALVATION WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS WITH ETERNAL GLORY.”

2 Timothy 2:10



the work to which we have been called. Even as Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” ([Heb 12:2](#)), we should participate in the ministry to which He has called us despite the risks and challenges.

Third, Paul also longs to be **conformed to His death**. To be **conformed** to Jesus’ **death** means that we must die to our old, sinful way

of life and participate in the new life that He gives through His resurrection ([Luke 9:23-24](#)). We must no longer live according to our selfish desires which alienated us from the Lord, but rather we live obediently in accordance with God’s will. In [Galatians 2:20](#), Paul explains, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Even though we will never be perfect until He calls us home to live with Him forever, we should strive toward maturity and perfection in Him right here and now so that we can display the transformation He has produced within us to all.

In what ways have you conformed yourself to His death?

Question
5

In-Depth Information

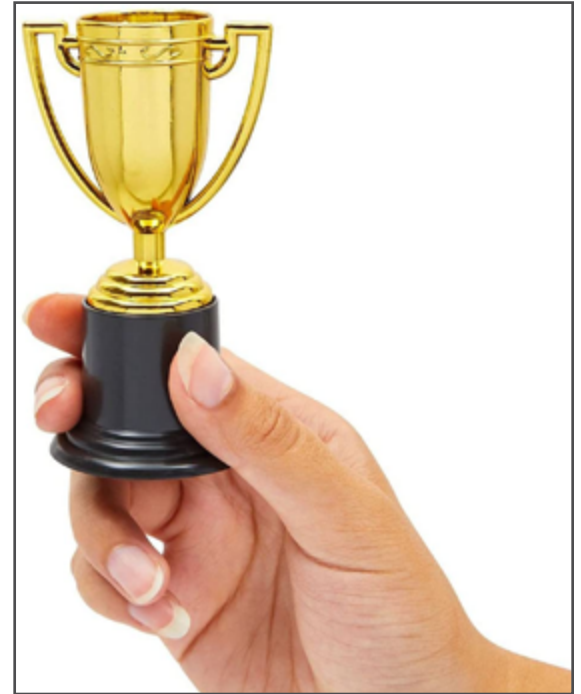


In verse 11, Paul incorporates the phrase, “**If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.**” In English, the translation of this verse sounds as if he expresses doubt about whether or not he will be resurrected from the dead. However, in the Greek, it actually indicates the idea of an assured resurrection; thus, Paul knows that if he dies before Jesus comes he will be resurrected bodily. Therefore, the uncertainty comes not from doubting the resurrection, but rather whether or not Paul will be dead when Christ returns or if he is dead then in what manner his death may occur—as an elderly man, as a martyr, or even executed as a prisoner never tasting freedom again.

Philippians 3:12-14

REMEMBER THE GOAL:

In 3:12-14, Paul stresses the need for us to focus on the **goal for the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus** (v. 14). The **goal** is that which Paul has just described in [3:7-11](#)—being conformed to the image of Christ. We need to seek to be **conformed** to Christ daily because we are not **already perfected** and have not **attained** complete maturity, but rather we should learn and grow until we have been called home; therefore, our growth in Christ becomes a daily endeavor to be more like Him and not let our fleshly desires resurface and dominate our lives. We must forget **those things which are behind**, whether our heritage, personal achievements, or even our failures, and focus on **those things that are ahead**. That which lies ahead is the aspiration to continue to die to our old way of life and manifest the inner change that Jesus has produced within us.



In using an athletic metaphor of crossing the finish line in a race, Paul challenges us not to become distracted. The moment we become distracted by focusing on the past we flounder, flail, and fall. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't chart our progress or have manageable goals as benchmarks. We should! In a marathon, runners have checkpoints which chart their progress and help them to determine if they're on course. In addition, each race also has a pacesetter who establishes the average time it takes to run the event. In life, Christ is our pacesetter because He has gone before us blazing the trail for us to follow ([Heb 12:1-2](#)). Scripture also provides us with benchmarks or checkpoints which helps us evaluate how well we are running the race as well as to ensure that we remain on course.

What goals have you set in life to become more like Christ?

Question
6

Too many people wander aimlessly in life without any feasible plan. Their purpose and goals are tied to the temporal. When things go awry and they encounter difficulty in life, they become distraught and easily blown off course because they do not know

Instruct

what to do or where to turn. Because Christ has run the race already, we have a pattern to follow; we have a person to whom we can turn. If we conform ourselves to His image and follow the pattern He has established for us, we will reject the principles of this world which lead to destruction. Instead, we will engage in righteousness which produces holiness in His honor. Moreover, we will respond with wisdom rather than react in ignorance when we imitate Christ and run the race well. Above all, we will endure to the end, trusting in Jesus' power to transform and sustain us rather than resting in our own worthless accomplishments and achievements which offer no hope beyond the moment. May our **goal** then be to conform our image to Christ and live in holiness as He has called us from the beginning when He graciously saved us.

Inspire

Just as doctors can help us overcome medical challenges, like gout, which we cannot course correct on our own, Jesus is the great physician who helps us overcome the greatest spiritual challenge in life which we could never resolve on our own: sin which leads to death. Only in Christ, not through our works or sheer willpower, can we attain life through the forgiveness of sin. When we accept this gracious gift of salvation in Him, Christ invests us with a new goal or purpose: to follow Him and conform ourselves to His image. Unlike the initial work of salvation which Jesus completed on the cross ([Phil 1:6](#)), this goal requires effort on our part. We must make wise choices which reflect His character, making sure that we pattern our lives according to His holy standards found in His Word.

Incorporate

What steps have you taken to resist placing confidence in anything other than Christ?

In what areas in your life can you say that you have conformed yourself to Christ?
On which areas do you need to work? What goals have you set to help you achieve conformity to Christ in these areas?

How has following Christ as the pacesetter in the race of life helped you endure the challenges you've faced and prevented you from becoming distracted?

June 12, 2022



Following Leads to Conformity

Philippians 3:15-21

Focal Verse:

“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”

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Philippians 3:15

Introduce

In 2015, I had the opportunity of traveling with a mission team from our church to

Brazil. As a boy who grew up in small-town Western Kentucky, I never dreamed that God would have given me the privilege of traveling throughout the world engaging in missions, for this was the fifth international mission trip I would get to take. Although each mission had its own unique set of experiences and challenges, we could clearly see God at work



orchestrating His divine plan. Just as in ministry on staff here at home, each trip required the ability to be flexible, to adapt, and to resolve problems that arose wisely. These are skills they don't often teach in formal education.

Like life, some of the problems we encounter on the mission field are self-inflicted. Yet, they still require a reasonable solution and mature response. After having passed through security at the international airport in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, we had a lengthy time to wait to board our flight to Miami, so I decided to purchase some bottled water to quench my thirst. I finally found a kiosk quite far from where we were standing to board the flight. I placed the water on the counter and carefully took out my passport with my plane ticket tucked inside and laid it on the counter too so I could access the money in my pocket. After presenting the cashier with the Reals to pay for the water, I picked up the bottle and went on my way.

Probably, around thirty minutes had passed when I realized that I had neither my passport nor my ticket. So, I let some in our group know that I was returning to the kiosk where I had purchased the water to look for it. Not even a few steps after departing from the group, I saw the cashier running toward me, waving frantically, and yelling, "Sir, sir, your passport." After thanking him for returning it, I explained, "I was just going to start looking for it." With complete shock, in the form of a half-question and half-statement, the cashier interjected, "But you're not panicked?! We had been calling you for a while. Most people would have gone crazy when they realized it was missing." After expressing gratitude once again, I replied, "How would panicking have resolved

Introduce

anything? It would have only made the situation worse.” I continued, “What would be the worst that could happen? I would be stuck here until I could work it out with the embassy and airline to replace it.” Certainly, the lack of panic in such a situation could only be described as the peace of God which stems from the maturity in wisdom He generously gives. Some of the events on other mission trips as well as experiences in life in general which He had allowed me to endure helped me to respond with maturity and wisdom. This maturity and rational approach to life can only come from the Lord who wants us to grow in His knowledge daily. When we display this kind of maturity in the Lord, people will notice!

In Philippians 3, Paul urges us to be mature as evidenced in the way we think by having the same perspective as God. When we think maturely with this heavenly mindset, it will dictate the way we walk—that is what we do. We will spend time investing in eternal things rather than in temporal things that lead to destruction. A heavenly mindset will, therefore, transform us and conform us to the image of Christ. When we bear this heavenly mindset, we will become examples to be followed because we will reflect the wisdom and character of Christ.

Key
Question

How has God produced maturity in your life specifically?

Philippians 3:15-16

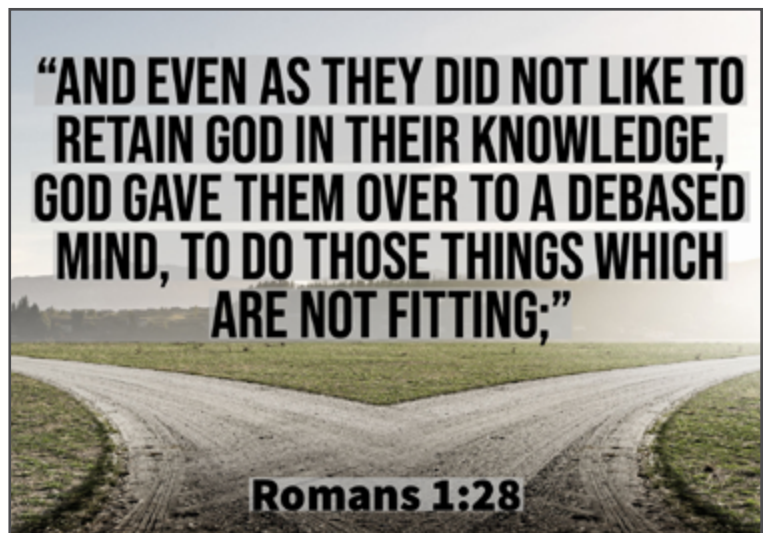
CONDUCT YOURSELF IN MATURITY:

In last week's lesson, we learned about the need to be conformed to the image of Christ in our daily walk and this week we will continue that same theme. In [Philippians 3:15-21](#), Paul outlines three areas in which we ought to conform our lives to Christ: 1) in the maturity of our thinking, 2) by being an example in our walk, and 3) in our righteous conduct as heavenly citizens. Paul deals with the maturity of our **mind** first because the culture has waged war to captivate our attention and influence our thinking. This influence has become even more prevalent in the twenty-first century in which we live. To have control over the **mind** means to have control over the entire person because it affects both what we believe and what we practice.

Therefore, Paul begins by appealing to **as many as those of us who are mature to have this mind**; thus, the result of conformity with Christ is maturity in our thinking.

When he exhorts the Philippians to **have this mind**, he recalls his command in [Philippians 2:5](#) which we learned meant to have the same perspective as Christ. Mature thinking in Christ contrasts starkly with the world's perspective which has an inward or selfish focus. The world speaks of "my truth" or about "what I believe" because it has a self-serving purpose of justifying their actions. This

gives them the impetus to deny the absolute truth which God has established to order the universe, so that they do not see the need to conform to it. As a result, they seek what benefits themselves—namely practicing pleasure in what feels good to them and fulfills their purpose of immediate gratification.



How is the world's thinking self-centered?
How would you evaluate the maturity of your thinking in comparison to the way of Christ and the way of the world?

Question
1

Instead of being self-centered in our thinking, we should seek to conduct ourselves in

Instruct

a way that honors God by how we live. Our view of the world must come from God. If we have a relationship with the Lord, He **will reveal** any area to us in which we fail to think or live with maturity. Scripture provides this clear pattern by which we should conform our thinking. Consequently, a mature perspective in the Lord displays several characteristics: a love for God and others ([Matt 22:36-40](#)), obedience ([John 14:15](#)), compassion ([1 Peter 3:8](#)), an attitude of service ([Phil 2:3-4](#)), and discernment ([Phil 1:9-10](#); [Hosea 14:9](#))—to name a few.

In-Depth Information



*The KJV uses the word perfect instead of **mature**. Indeed, the word Paul uses can mean perfect or complete, but in this context it signifies maturity. Only one perfect person has ever lived on this earth and He paid the penalty by giving His life for the sake of our sin; therefore, our goal should be progressing in His Word so that we may pattern our lives after His.*

What are some other characteristics that a person with mature, Christ-like thinking should exhibit?

Question
2

Unfortunately, our culture has engaged in a successful campaign to control the **mind**. Culture has accomplished this in four primary ways. First, it attempts to desensitize us to an idea by inundating media platforms with a particular agenda which often conflicts with the Lord's. At first, this occurs subtly, but it becomes ever more increasingly blatant until we find it everywhere on every platform and in every venue. Second, it censors rather than promotes the free exchange of ideas. This censorship is often not based on "popularity," but the loudest voice which has the most force to make itself heard or the elevation of marginalized ideological groups in the name of equality. Third, it seeks to control the narrative by redefining terms, manipulating evidence, and taking things out of context.

Finally, the culture understands how impressionable young children are and how important shaping their view of the world is, so they exert tremendous effort to control the curriculum of the secular educational system. They push social constructs on children from an early age rather than letting parents teach them in the home which is the biblical model established in Deuteronomy. Certainly, schools can help children learn how to think logically and reasonably about concrete concepts, but parents have been

entrusted by God with the responsibility to teach their children right from wrong and to serve Him alone. Today, the secular educational system has wrongly become the arbiter of morality, teaching a skewed view according to its flawed understanding which constantly shifts over time.

How does the world push its corrupt view of the world upon children? As believers, how must we counter that push?

Question
3

To **have the same mind**, we must have a perfect, flawless standard by which to assess everything we think, believe, and have “learned.” In verse 16, Paul implores the Philippians to **walk by the same rule**. In other words, as Christians we have a standard by which we have been called to live. Only God can provide this standard because He does not change; He always remains faithful to His Word and His holy character. Therefore, we must pattern our lives after His standard and practice the holy principles outlined in His Word. Consequently, the standard by which we assess our lives must be perfect and apart from human opinion. The problem today, however, is that people often use other imperfect human beings as the standard which skews the scales in their favor in an attempt to excuse or justify their unrighteous behavior.

When building a house, for example, we wouldn't use a device that we have discovered was imperfect to measure or test the level of the foundation because it would affect the integrity of the entire

structure and cause a multitude of problems. Then, why would we use an imperfect human standard to judge our lives? God has called us to a higher standard which became manifest through the earthly ministry of Jesus who lived in perfect obedience of the written Word; therefore, we ought to



examine our maturity in light of Jesus' perfect standard that He set and **have the same mind** that we find in Him which will govern how we walk ethically with integrity.

What is the predominate standard you use by which to judge your life?

Question
4

In-Depth Information

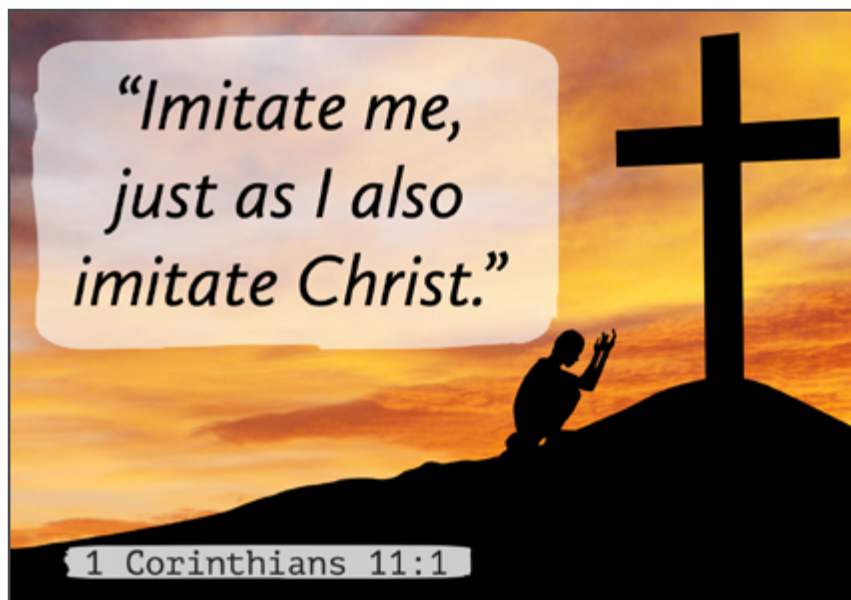


The word that Paul uses for **rule** is from where we get our modern word canon—not the weapon (cannon), but rather a general **rule** or principle by which something is judged. The Bible, as a collection of books judge by a certain set of criteria for truth, is often referred to as a canon because it is the standard by which we measure our lives.

Philippians 3:17-19

CONDUCT YOURSELF AS EXAMPLES:

When we live according to God’s standard, we become an **example** or **pattern** for others to follow. After discussing what it means to display mature thinking, Paul urges the Philippians to **join in following** his **example** (verse 17). Although we do not set the



standard by which we conduct ourselves, we can become an **example** to others when we imitate the life of the perfect standard—Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul makes it clear that he himself is not the standard by which to judge our lives, but rather Christ is. For this reason, he interjects, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Paul is an **example** of the right way to

live only because He follows the perfect pattern established in Christ! In order to know whether or not a person is worthy to be emulated as an **example**, we must first know the perfect standard through God’s Word. Only then can we discern the right way to conduct our lives and identify others who can serve as good examples.

Instead of continuing to describe his positive **example** of how to **walk** righteously, Paul lists three negative characteristics that violate the standards that God has established. Although they have physically seen the positive **example** in his life, he now reminds them that any time they fail to emulate Christ it violates God’s standards and leads to **destruction**. Paul refers to these negative examples as **enemies of the cross of Christ** (v. 18). For those who reject the sacrificial gift of Jesus and remain in their sin violating

God’s standards, the only recourse in their lives is death. Psalm 37:38 reiterates, “But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.” It grieves the apostle that some have refused to repent and have rejected the Messiah in favor of remaining in their sin, so he **weeps** as he outlines their negative qualities. First, he states that **their god is their belly** (v. 19). Figuratively, these negative examples follow their own fleshly desires just as one would follow a craving for his favorite food. In other words, they exercise little or no self-control. We live in a society that has become preoccupied or even addicted to many things which have distracted our attention from the Lord. Many people often live their lives according to the destructive principle: “If it feels good, then do it.” Moreover, history indicates that many Roman citizens also lived in such a way in which they indulged their sinful desires even so much so that eventually their cultural degradation destroyed their empire ([Rom 1:18-32](#)). This lack of self-control stands in stark contrasts to one’s obedience to follow the standard that God has set forth in His Word—in other words those who **walk by the same rule** (v. 16).

In-Depth Information



*Some have linked the phrase **their god is their belly** with the Jewish dietary laws, especially in light of what Paul warned in [Phil 3:2-3](#) about those who place confidence in the flesh and religious ritual. However, in this context, the phrase is more closely linked with **glorying in their shame** and having their focus **on earthly things** which seems to point more toward succumbing to one’s insatiable, sinful desires. They have an appetite for evil and unrighteousness!*

In what areas do you find it easiest to walk with discipline according to God’s holy standard?
In what areas do you find it most difficult to exercise self-control?

Question
5

Second, Paul contends that **their glory is in their shame**. In this context, the term **glory** means “delight”; thus, they boast or delight in their shameful activities. Rather than feel remorse for their sin, they celebrate it. In [1 Corinthians 5:2](#), Paul addresses a sin of sexual misconduct in the Corinthian church by pointing out that they “are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among” them. Even as a church who should have emulated the life of Christ, the Corinthians have taken pride in the commission of this indecent act and glorified the sin rather than mourned over it.

Instruct

Today, many praise their sinful lifestyles and celebrate their sin choices as moral, up-

“WOE TO THOSE WHO CALL
EVIL GOOD, AND GOOD EVIL;
WHO PUT DARKNESS FOR
LIGHT, AND LIGHT FOR DARKNESS;
WHO PUT BITTER FOR SWEET,
AND SWEET FOR BITTER!”

Isaiah 5:20

standing actions. They try to justify their sinful choices by saturating the culture until it is accepted as normal, not even realizing that their lifestyle leads to a path of **destruction**. The prophet Isaiah laments, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter” (Isa 5:20). In-

stead of **glorifying** the Lord by imitating Jesus’ righteousness, these people boast and delight in their sin.

In what ways have we seen society celebrate sin instead of mourning it? In what way have we seen this infiltrate the church today?

Question
6

Third, Paul claims that they **set their mind on earthly things**. These people focus on the here and now and live by the motto espoused by a rich man in one of Jesus’ parables. The rich man exclaims, “And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry’” (Luke 12:19). A person who has his **mind set on earthly things** will often see things from a selfish perspective—how do they benefit me? For this reason, they attempt to find happiness and pleasure in their money and possessions, their hobbies, their relationships, and even in some cases their charitable activities—doing good things for other people with the wrong motives only leads to tiredness rather than true contentment and joy.

These individuals wrongly try to ascertain what benefit they can get out of these areas rather than how they can invest in them to make an eternal impact. As a result, Jesus warns, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matt 6:19-20). Instead of living a humble life of service indebted to God seeking to

worship Him by caring for others' needs, these individuals are self-centered and view things in terms of what they can receive rather than what they can invest.

In what ways do people have their minds set on earthly things today?

Question
7

Philippians 3:20-21

CONDUCT YOURSELF AS CITIZENS OF HEAVEN:

In this section, Paul reminds the Philippians that they are not **enemies of the cross**, but rather that their **citizenship is in heaven**. Consequently, they ought to act righteously as good ambassadors for Christ. As citizens of the United States, or any country for that matter, we have certain responsibilities to conduct our lives in such a way that best represents our country—not just by following a set or prescribed rules, but rather through our visible character which projects integrity. When we identify ourselves as an American, especially when we travel abroad, we want others around the world to think highly of us because we as citizens have certain endearing qualities such as: kindness, charitableness, respectfulness, dignity, love, among many other characteristics.

In the same way, we should want others to see the character of Christ in us. Being a Christian, therefore, means that we are ambassadors who represent our sovereign Lord and His kingdom to the secular

world around us. God has not only specified the characteristics by which we should live in His Word, but He has given us the power to live them out! He has transformed us. We can only follow this standard in Christ Jesus because He **will transform** our **bodies**, so that they **may be conformed** to His. In other words, God gives us the ability

to live by these holy principles—something that we could not do on our own!

Each one of us bears a resemblance to our earthly parents whether physically or behaviorally. Many times, others will comment about how our character reflects that of one of our parents. This can either be in the form of praise or regret. She's pensive, thoughtful, and compassionate like her mother. He's resourceful, respectful, and in-



Instruct

genious like his father. Yet, sometimes, the negative characteristics far outweigh the positive. As believers, we should reflect the holy character of our heavenly Father. We shouldn't bring dishonor and disrepute upon His name because we live in rebellion to the conduct by which He has transformed us to abide and conformed us to His image when He saved us.

What characteristics do you bear of your earthly parents? What about your heavenly father?

Question
8

Inspire

Christ has called us to exhibit a mature mindset to the world that reflects His holy character, so that others may see the transformation He has produced within us. To achieve this, we must rid ourselves of worldly thinking which leads to destruction because it influences the way we conduct ourselves. Christ-like thinking helps us to conduct ourselves with love rather than anger, humility rather than hubris, forgiveness rather than retaliation, and righteousness rather than iniquity. People will see a clear difference between the way we conduct ourselves and the way that the world operates. As a result, we should be examples who point others to the transformation we have in salvation through Christ. When we bear the character and conduct of Christ, just as Paul did, we become examples who can be followed!

Incorporate

How intentional are you about growing in your walk with Christ? What do you do that helps you to mature? If any, what things hinder your maturation?

What examples do you follow in how you conduct your life whether consciously or unconsciously? If people were to imitate you, what kind of example would you be?

How well do you represent Christ as His ambassador? When people look at your life, what characteristics of Christ are most prominent?

June 19, 2022 (Father's Day)



*Following Leads
to Cooperation*
Philippians 4:1-9

Focal Verse:

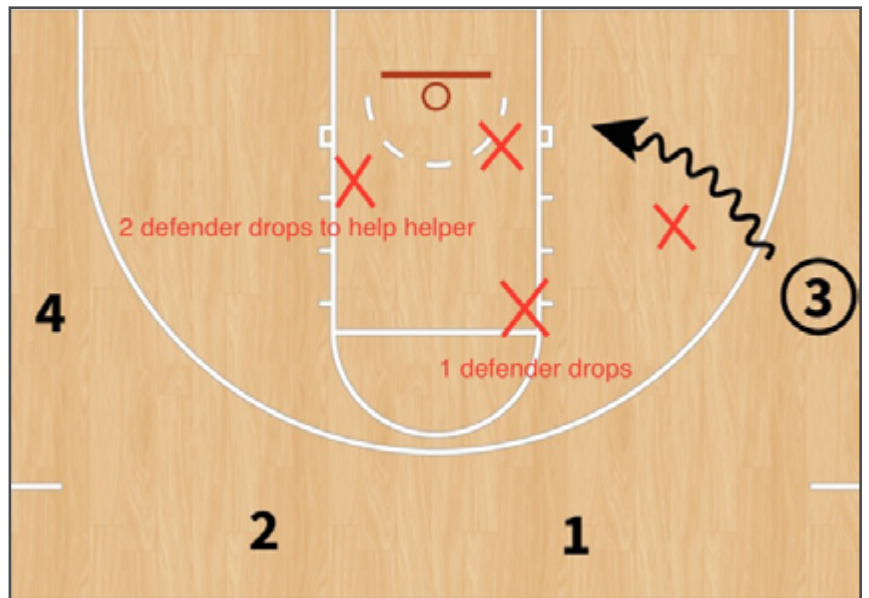
"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Philippians 4:6

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Introduce

We have probably heard this adage uttered in reference to almost any sport: “Defense wins championships.” Similarly, we’ve likely heard it phrased this way too: “The best offense is a good defense.” Defense plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of a game because it stops the opponent from advancing and scoring while at the same time allowing the offense to position itself to strike forcefully with precision. Especially in a



close-scoring contest, a defender cannot let down his guard even for a split-second because any lapse in concentration could lead to an onslaught by his opponent. Perhaps, no other sport thrives on good defense as much as basketball does. Good defense in basketball requires the defender to keep the offensive player in front of him at all times so he does not have the freedom to maneuver and advance. For this reason, he must stand on the balls of his feet in a position ready to pivot in whatever direction the offensive player may attempt to go. Standing flat-footed, however, slows the reaction time, allowing the other player to blow by the defender. Consequently, the defender must anticipate the moves of the opponent. He must recognize ball fakes, know the tendency of the player to go right or left off the dribble, and anticipate screens that the other offensive players may set. The defensive player must also put himself in the right position and maintain the right posture so that he can draw the charge rather than receive a foul.

Scripture places a premium on good defense. In Ephesians 6, for example, the armor of God has only one offensive weapon—the sword of the Spirit that is Scripture. The rest of the armament focuses on guarding or protecting the warrior against the bombardment of the enemy. In fact, Paul encourages us to “put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” In other words, we must guard ourselves to withstand the enemy’s attack and keep him from advancing against us.

In [Philippians 4:7](#), Paul reminds us that “the peace of God . . . will guard your hearts

Introduce

and minds through Christ Jesus.” Since chapter 2, Paul has focused on the importance of what we think which has a direct bearing upon how we live out our salvation by what we do. Both our thoughts and actions should reflect Christ, so we must exercise great care in not allowing the enemy to influence them. Above anything, we must guard our mind because it ultimately dictates and determines what we do. If the enemy captivates our thoughts which will in turn influence our actions, turmoil and destruction will result. Therefore, Paul cautions us to guard against disunity in the church, guard our testimony so that we will have fruitful discussions about Christ, and guard against anxiety or worry through prayer which all stems from defending our minds from the onslaught of the enemy who desperately seeks to control it.

Key
Question

In what ways must we guard our minds against the attack of the enemy?

Philippians 4:1-3

GUARD AGAINST DISUNITY:

In Philippians 4:1-3, Paul returns to the topic of unity to address a specific problem between two women in the church who had differing perspectives. Although he doesn't go into detail about the source of contention, he does remind the church as a whole to **stand fast in the Lord** (v. 1) which recalls his admonition in [Philippians 1:27](#) to **stand fast in one spirit**. As Christians, we are not to compete against one another to get our way, but rather we should have the perspective of Christ which recognizes the needs of others and esteems them highly ([Phil 2:3-4](#)). In other words, we are to live selflessly serving the Lord by the way we interact with others, putting aside our own preferences and needs to meet those of the others around us.

In Philippi, two women, Euodia (you-o-dee-a) and Syntyche (soon-too-kay), seem to be arguing over their personal preferences which has caused a rift or schism between them that has affected unity within the church and distracted the body from its primary purpose. Therefore, Paul urges them **to be of the same mind in the Lord** (v. 2). This recalls his admonition in Philippians 2:5 which bids us to display the perspective of Christ in our thinking! Because Paul does not address any doctrinal error as he does against those in [Philippians 3:1-3](#) who wrongly add religious rituals to the requirement of salvation, we can assume that Euodia and Syntyche's difference is only a matter of opinion or perspective. If doctrinal, Paul would have certainly exposed the error in their thinking explicitly. Consequently, we must learn from this squabble that we need to put personal preferences and opinions aside for the sake of the greater good of the gospel and ministry.

In-Depth Information



*In verse 1, Paul regards the Philippians as his **joy and crown**. Even though disunity has occurred within the church, he knows that the overarching spirit of its members is to make the gospel known. This brings great joy to the apostle, but he knows that if they continue on the path of elevating personal preferences that the church could lose its focus in a vast cavern of self-centeredness.*

Our society has cultivated an era of choice where personal preference matters more than cooperation. In the world of advertising, the old campaign slogan from Burger

King sums it up well: “Have it your way.” Some Christians want to have it their way in the church; they measure a church like being fitted for formal clothes—how does it fit me? Attendance, participation in serving, and tithing directly depend upon how the church meets their perceived needs—they only come, participate, or give when they see it as significant according to their perspective. Fortunately, the church is not a democratic institution stuck in status quo by trying to placate the preferences of its members. On the contrary, the church should be a divine monarchy with Christ as the head with each member utilizing his or her spiritual gift in the position in which he or she has been placed ([Eph 1:22](#))—Jesus alone determines the direction of the church along with the perspective of its members.



In what ways have you seen personal preference sidetrack the church (in general) from its main purpose?

Question
1

Instead of participating in the disunity by taking sides, we need to **help** resolve the dispute. Paul urges his **true companion** along with **Clement** to **help these women** (v. 3). When it comes to resolving a dispute based upon preference, we need to function as mediators who point to Christ and remind both parties of their higher calling. We aren't there to debate the issues and defend a particular side, but we are to glorify Christ. In Ephesians 4:29, Paul writes, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” Too often, we see opinionated arguments as about winning or losing, but in the church it's actually about imparting grace. Imagine if Jesus had not acted graciously while doing the Father's will here on earth and wanted everything His way. Yet, Jesus put aside His personal preferences and focused on His higher purpose—saving men, not destroying

them (Luke 9:56). Therefore, we should remind others of Jesus' grace and help them see the bigger picture of what is important in life—not getting one's way, but serving the Lord obediently with **joy**.

In-Depth Information



Paul doesn't identify the name of the true companion, but many think that it was Luke. Luke, as a doctor, likely lived in Philippi which had a well-known medical school. Philippi was also the first place where Luke joined Paul on his missionary journey: "We sought to go to Macedonia [Philippi]" ([Acts 16:10](#)).

What are some ways you can help someone overcome a disagreement by playing a unifying role?

Question
2

We should never compromise on the doctrinal truth espoused in Scripture while at the same time putting aside any personal desires that foment disunity and distract in the mission of the church. As humans, however, we tend to take sides in an argument without hearing all the evidence from both sides. This dangerously leads us to make assumptions and draw unfounded conclusions based on a one-sided perspective to which we give preference. Therefore, we most often choose sides and agree with the position with which we most identify. Perhaps, we have even been through a similar struggle which allows us to empathize with a particular position instead of seeking to understand the situation through the perspective of Christ and point people to Him. We must lay aside our personal preferences, especially the tendency to take sides in an argument based purely upon emotion and personal experiences, to strive for the greater good in Christ!

**"BE OF THE SAME MIND
TOWARD ONE ANOTHER.
DO NOT SET YOUR
MIND ON HIGH
THINGS, BUT ASSOCIATE
WITH THE HUMBLE.
DO NOT BE WISE IN
YOUR OWN OPINION."**

ROMANS 12:16

When have you had to put aside your personal preferences for the greater good in Christ?

Question
3

Philippians 4:4-5

GUARD YOUR TESTIMONY:

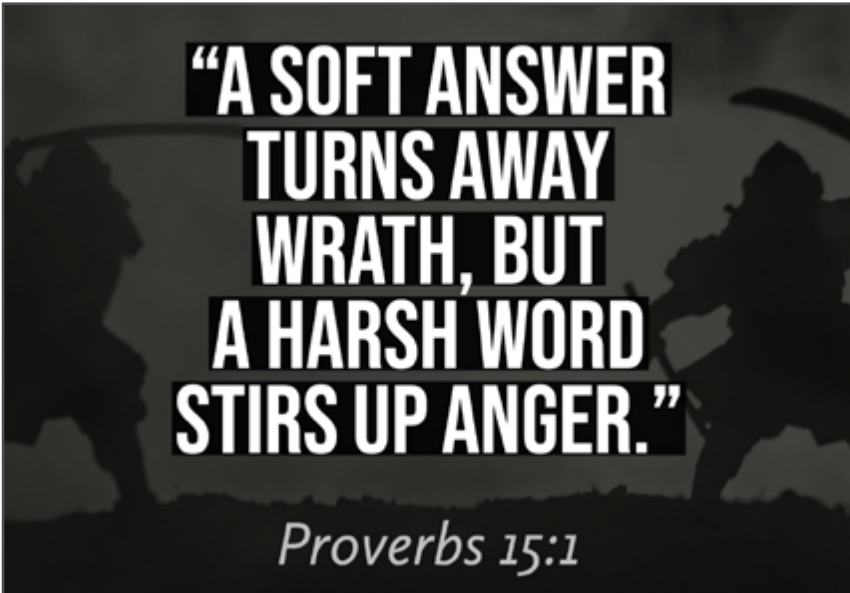
Not only do we need to guard against disunity, but we also need to guard our testimony so that we represent Jesus with integrity. In Philippians 4:4-5, Paul describes two traits that should characterize our testimony: joy and gentleness. First, he commands the Philippians to **rejoice in the Lord**. When we focus on our preferences and fail to have the perspective of Christ, we become bitter and tend to complain—especially when things don't go our way. We ought to rejoice in all circumstances; we don't rejoice because of the circumstances, but we rejoice despite them. If we are on the winning side, what reason do we have *not* to **rejoice**? Having an attitude of joy differentiates us from all others because they have no hope outside of Christ.

What in your life causes you to rejoice?

Question
4

Second, Paul exhorts them to **let their gentleness be known to all men**. Just as responding with joy characterizes our testimonies so does acting with integrity before all people. George Caird aptly defines **gentleness** in this context: "It is that considerate courtesy and respect for the integrity of others which prompts a man not to be forever standing on his rights." **Gentleness** doesn't mean that we allow people to trample viciously upon us while remaining silent, but it means that we are to respond to others in a respectful way that demonstrates integrity and love.

When someone engages in a dispute with us, for example, we don't have to have the



**"A SOFT ANSWER
TURNS AWAY
WRATH, BUT
A HARSH WORD
STIRS UP ANGER."**

Proverbs 15:1

last word or get in a zinger, but rather we should discuss the issue and treat them with respect—something that many secular debaters don't do. Jesus certainly had arguments with Pharisees where he exposed their fraudulent actions and poor theology, but He didn't do so in a way that demeaned them ([2 Cor 10:1](#)). When we have joy and a gentle spirit,

people will recognize that we belong to Christ because they will see a big difference in our testimony and that of the secular world around them.

In Reference



George Caird, *Paul's Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 150.

In what ways can we demonstrate gentleness to others?

Question
5

In life, I tend to express myself directly to the point of being blunt much of the time. Over the years, I have had to learn to stop and think about what effect my words and the way I express something has upon others—especially if it could lead to tension or hurting the other person even if spoken truthfully and sincerely. Bluntness can sometimes come across as disrespectful and arrogant—even if unintended. **Gentleness**, on the other hand, leads to diplomacy without distorting the truth. The way we convey an idea matters because we want to portray Christ and persuade others to adopt His perspective rather than alienate them by our tone and tenor.

Philippians 4:6-7

GUARD AGAINST ANXIETY:

In Philippians 4:6-7, Paul discusses the cure for worry or anxiety: **prayer**. Literally, when he pens **be anxious for nothing**, the way the expression is constructed in the Greek means to “stop worrying.” The Philippians, like we do, have many things in their lives which caused them to worry. Not only are they worried about Paul as their partner in ministry who is enduring hardship in prison, but they are also experiencing the **same conflict** in their own lives ([Phil 1:30](#)). In addition, they are worried about their friend Epaphroditus because he became gravely ill on his way to help Paul in Rome ([Phil 2:26-27](#)). For the most part the Philippians were not wealthy, they like Paul at times struggled to provide the basics for their families—food, clothing, and shelter ([Phil 4:11-12](#)). In fact, Paul notes in [2 Corinthians 8:2](#) that they gave out of “their deep poverty” to help the famine-stricken Jerusalem church.

Undoubtedly, if Paul were writing to many of us today, he would offer this same advice: stop worrying. We live in a world of uncertainty—politically, culturally, and economically. We worry about rising prices at the grocery store and gas pump. We worry about

rising property taxes and the general cost of living. We worry about global conflict with ongoing wars. Today, we fear for the safety of our families in a world of turmoil and violence; we fear financial problems that could arise at any moment with the loss of a job, natural disaster, or indebtedness; we fear for the health of our friends and family and being able to afford even the most basic healthcare. In the midst of these fears, we have the ability to rejoice



because we know victory has been secured. And we have a direct line of communication with the Victor who will sustain us through even the most difficult of times, promising us eternal life spent with Him.

At what times do you feel most anxious or worried? How do you deal with that anxiety?

Question
6

We experience anxiety most frequently when we have the wrong perspective. We look at a stressful situation in terms of what we can do rather than turning to God and trusting in what He can do. We may say that we trust God, but our actions indicate otherwise. For instance, many of us have been in the passenger seat with someone learning to drive. Technically, we have no control over the vehicle; we can't steer or push the brake. When something goes awry with the driver, sometimes we try to jerk the wheel and steer the car to safety, but it often ends by making the situation worse. To some degree, we do this with God. We invite Him into the driver's seat of our lives and then, when things get tough, we try to take control and grab the wheel making it worse. God, however, is not inexperienced in the things that we face in life, but He knows what's best for our lives ([Heb 4:15-16](#)).

The cure for anxiety is **prayer**; we aren't only to pray when things get tough, but rather we are to pray **in everything** (v. 6). How can we build a relationship with God based on trust if we only come to Him when the situation is dire and we need something immediately? Instead, we should offer **thanksgiving** to God when we see Him work in our

lives, but we also ought to **let our requests be made known**—not as a last resort, but through a loving relationship in which we trust God to guide us and meet our needs. There is no magic formula for reducing anxiety; we don't have ten steps to a worry-free life, but what it boils down to is our perspective: do we trust God and seek Him or do we trust humans more ([Matt 6:25-34](#)).

When we trust **God**, His supernatural **peace will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus** (v. 7). This is not an external peace whereby we are free from distress, turmoil, or even persecution, but rather internal peace which helps us to see the final picture: God has won and victory is assured. He has offered us a share in that victory if we have a relationship with His Son. Jesus experienced tremendous stress on the night before His crucifixion so much that His sweat became as drops of blood, but Jesus saw the bigger picture and didn't let fear dictate what He had come to do ([Luke 22:44](#)). If we would only trust God and seek Him in prayer, God would help us to endure difficult times by focusing on the larger picture of His grace and glory.

In what situations have you ever experienced the peace of God?

Question
7

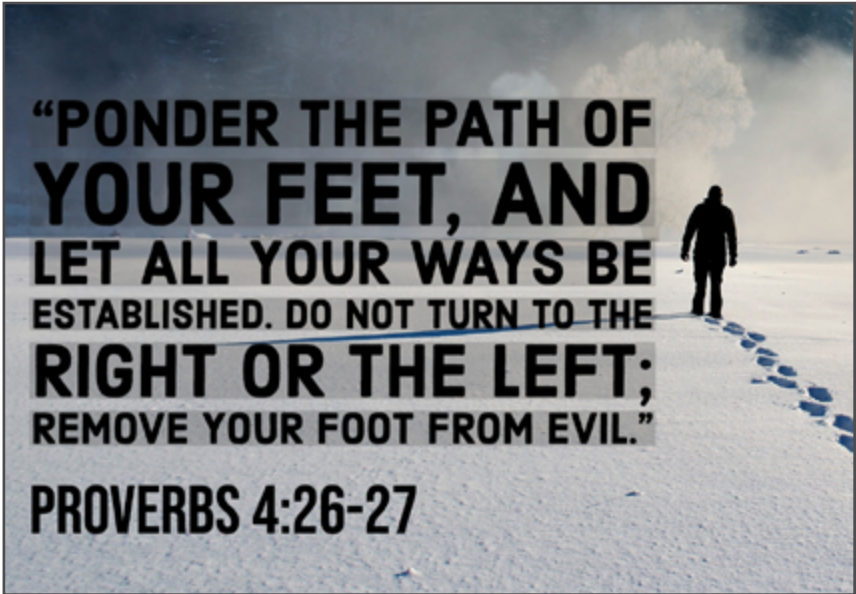
Philippians 4:8-9

GUARD YOUR MIND:

Guarding the mind actually represents the most prominent principle to heed in [4:1-7](#) because if we fail to protect our minds then we will have major problems in being unified, maintaining our testimony, and ridding ourselves of anxiety.

In verse 7, Paul noted that through prayer God would grant us a **peace** which would **guard our hearts and minds**. In verses 8-9, he explicitly lays out a plan which would help us to **guard our minds**; he begins by listing all the areas in which we must **meditate** (v. 8). In order to maintain a pure heart and act

with integrity, we need to watch on what we focus with our minds. What we consume by watching, reading, or doing ultimately influences what we think; therefore, we need



**“PONDER THE PATH OF
YOUR FEET, AND
LET ALL YOUR WAYS BE
ESTABLISHED. DO NOT TURN TO THE
RIGHT OR THE LEFT;
REMOVE YOUR FOOT FROM EVIL.”**

PROVERBS 4:26-27

Instruct

to monitor diligently what we put into our minds (v. 10).

Paul lists seven areas in which we must guard our minds. They can be summarized into three categories: 1) truth, 2) morality, and 3) worship. In order to judge whether an action is moral or immoral we need to identify **the things that are true**. Our society has tried to redefine truth and claim that it depends upon the eye of the beholder. Our society has attempted to redefine life, marriage, gender, love, and many other concepts ([Rom 1:22-23](#)). Truth, however, doesn't depend upon what others may say, but upon how God has created the world from the beginning. The truth, therefore, helps us to know and practice the things that are **noble, just, pure, lovely**, and of **good report**. For this reason, we are called not only to meditate on these things, but to apply them in our daily walk; thus, Paul encourages us to **do these** and God will give us **peace**. When we know and practice the truth, we can dwell upon the things that worship the Lord—**those things which are praiseworthy**. When we do these things, we will have a perspective that reflects the Lord and helps us to guard against the advance of the enemy in our lives.

In what ways do you protect the purity of your mind?

Question
8

Inspire

Nearly every sport requires good defense so that the opponent doesn't exploit and take advantage, scoring at will. Victory depends upon good defense. Although Christ guarantees victory and "winning" is not predicated upon what we do, we must practice good defense as His followers so that the enemy doesn't gain a foothold in our lives and distract us from the purpose to which Christ has called us. After all, to be friends with the world brings enmity with Christ. The world and the evil therein constantly bombards the church. If we don't make a concerted effort to guard our minds through the truth God has given us in His Word, we will stray off course, finding ourselves succumbing to the wiles of sin and degradation. Christ has called us to be holy and righteous which He empowers us to do. But this requires that we adopt His perspective and guard our minds by thinking on the righteous things He has outlined in His Word.

Incorporate

When you have a disagreement with someone, what process do you use to work things out? How did (or would have) focusing on Christ rather than getting your way have changed the situation?

What worries do you have? How has Christ helped you to overcome those worries? Why is it sometime difficult to trust God and surrender everything into His control so that we don't worry?

How can we know whether or not culture is indeed influencing our mind? What steps should we take if we find the culture is influencing our mind?

June 26, 2022



Following Leads to Contentment

Philippians 4:10-20

Focal Verse:

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”

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Philippians 4:11

Introduce

The world is on a constant quest to find contentment which it primarily equates with the fluctuating emotion of happiness. However, the contentment the world finds does not last because it is tied to its current circumstances. When our contentment is tied to our circumstances rather than the eternal promises of the Lord, we will have no stability or security in our lives because the world continually changes. The Lord, conversely, remains the same—immovably steadfast. Therefore, we can only find true contentment and joy in Him who does not change. We can count on Him whether we have little or much!

Four years ago in Japan, a man married a hologram called Miku Hatsune in a \$17,000 wedding ceremony. In a recent article, the man recounted, “I held the wedding ceremony because I thought I could be with her forever.”* Being bullied at work as a middle school teacher, the man thought he could find true contentment and comfort in a computer program instead of human interaction. Unfortunately, that contentment only lasted briefly until the “relationship” began to experience problems. The developer no longer supported and updated the software which ran Miku.



An inanimate object which the man had programmed to his own specifications suddenly stopped working and no longer produced contentment. The distraught man lamented that “their relationship” was “struggling with communication!” He continued to acknowledge that the lack of updates “has complicated their relationship, but not lessened his feelings.” Now, he walks around pining over a life-sized doll of Miku. Nothing he does can bring joy and happiness. Nothing will lead to contentment because he has sought it in the wrong place. Instead, his temporary joy has turned to misery because he cannot get updates and communicate with an artificially intelligent program! Even though he had the hologram programmed according to his own specifications, it has still led him to lack companionship through which he had sought contentment.

In [Philippians 4:13](#), Paul shares with us the key he has learned to being content in

Introduce

every circumstance. Christ gives us the strength to be content. We can only find our contentment and joy in Him. To have contentment, we must not focus on our circumstances; we must focus on Christ. Regardless of the circumstances, Christ remains faithful to His promises and in His faithfulness we can find hope to endure. Therefore, may we seek contentment that lasts. May we seek contentment only in our relationship with Christ who enables us to rejoice at all times, finding hope in His eternal promise never to leave us nor forsake us ([Heb 13:5](#)).

Key
Question

In what do you seek contentment?

In Reference



Jon Brown, [“Fictosexual’ Japanese Man No Longer Able to Communicate with Hologram He Married,”](#) available from www.foxnews.com (April 28, 2022).

Philippians 4:10

CONTENTMENT DISPLAYED THROUGH CARING:

As he does often in this letter, Paul breaks into spontaneous joy when he recalls his relationship with the Philippians, especially when he remembers their loving support for his welfare and ministry. Not only does the apostle **rejoice in the Lord**, but he does so **greatly** (v. 10). Part of his joy centers around their renewed **care for** him which has **flourished again** through their sending of Epaphroditus to his aid while under house arrest in Rome ([Phil 2:25-30](#)). As we will see in [4:14-18](#), the Philippians had a long history of partnering with and supporting the Apostle Paul, but in recent days they **lacked opportunity** to express their **care** in tangible ways. But with his imprisonment, their **care** once again became evident to all.

In-Depth Information



The word translated **care** and sometimes **concern** comes from the Greek word **mind** or **thought**—which has been a common theme throughout *Philippians* where Paul has urged them to have the **same mind** or have the **mind** of Christ Jesus. Literally, Paul is commending them for thinking about him—in other words showing **concern** or **care** when they could. If we have the **mind** of Christ Jesus ([Phil 2:5](#)), we will naturally exhibit **care** and **concern** for others and look for opportunities to serve and help when needed.

When we have contentment through the Lord, we will look for opportunities to assist others. True contentment finds joy in having a spirit of giving rather than one only centered upon receiving. Today, many people lack contentment because they focus on their needs and circumstances rather than seeing the bigger picture in which we find our satisfaction in the Lord by serving Him. In reality, sin is an expression of our discontentment. God had



“BUT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE DAY THAT YOU EAT OF IT YOU SHALL SURELY DIE.” Genesis 2:17

Instruct

given Adam and Eve every tree from the garden to eat, *except for one*. The couple, however, didn't see the bigger picture in their relationship with God and serving Him; they focused on their desires and were dissatisfied with eating of *all the other trees* in the garden that God had given them. This led them ultimately to eat the forbidden fruit. This discontentment with our lives has continued throughout human history. As God's people, however, we need to reverse this trend and seek satisfaction in Him.

How does discontentment lead to sin? In what areas do you lack contentment in your life?

Question
1

We serve in a loving church which thinks about others, placing them first and looking for opportunities to minister to them whenever we can. I have personally observed this many times when visiting our members in the hospital. Although I ask about their diagnosis to pray for them with direction, almost everyone I visit inevitably steers the conversation to ask about others in our church no matter how grave their own situation may be. Usually, they will say something like, "How is such and such doing? I've been praying for them." At a moment in which we could most naturally focus on ourselves, they are thinking about the needs of others and looking for opportunities to minister to them even from a hospital bed! This mentality flies in the face of the world's selfishness and demonstrates the transformed mind of Christ!

How has God given you opportunity to show care or concern for others?

Question
2

The Philippians expressed this same kind of concern for Paul. As we have learned in this letter, they were experiencing persecution just like Paul. At a time when they would naturally think about self-preservation, they were instead concerned about others! Although we must take care of ourselves and trust in God to meet our own needs so that we can be in a place to care for others, our focus ought to be how Christ wants to use us to meet the needs of others and minister to them no matter what circumstances we may be facing in life. We must look to Christ for guidance which will compel us to look out for the needs of others!

Philippians 4:11-13

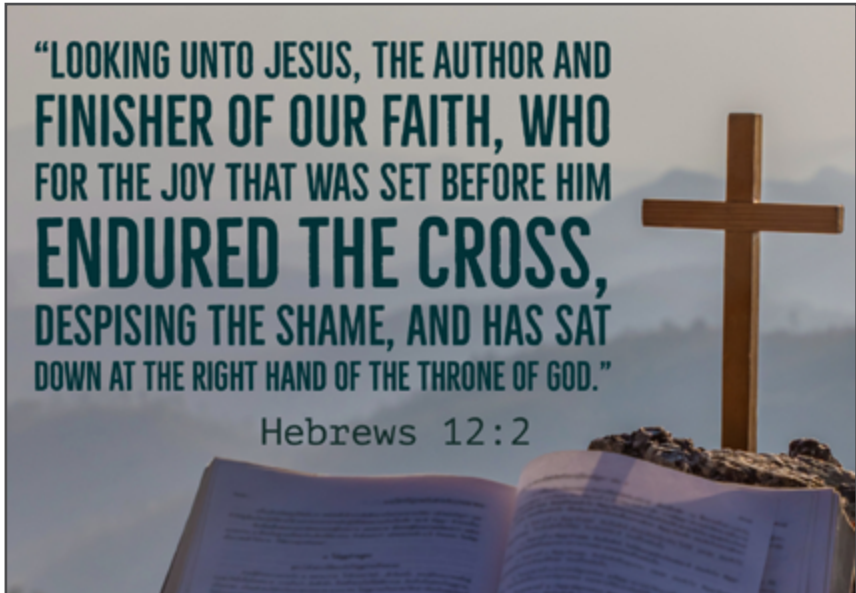
BE CONTENT IN EVERYTHING:

Paul doesn't speak out of **need** when he **rejoiced** over their **care** for him, but he emphasizes that he has **learned to be content** in any circumstance (v. 11). Although he was grateful for the Philippians' gift, he wants them to know that neither his joy nor his contentment depended upon it. He has **learned** the secret to contentment through the experiences God has given him. Because of the sinful condition of this world, being discontent is innate to us—that is we don't have to learn to be dissatisfied or unhappy. Children, no matter how young, throw temper tantrums when they don't get their way. Even babies, if they are not getting enough attention and want to be held, will wail with the force of a screeching siren until someone picks them up! Unfortunately, many adults never grow out of this phase and still throw temper tantrums when dissatisfied—albeit it through slightly different methods. Trying to find contentment, however, will always be a struggle when we have the wrong perspective.

In what way do we see discontentment in the world and in the church? How should we, as Christians overcome being discontent?

Question
3

In verse 12, Paul further explains in what situations he has **learned to be content**. He alternates between experiences which we would identify as bad and good. For example, Paul says he **knows how to be abased**—that is to have nothing—and **how to abound**. Yet, Paul himself doesn't label these experiences as bad or good because he doesn't focus on his circumstances. Rather, he focuses on Christ. As a result, whether something bad or good happens to him doesn't matter and it doesn't affect his contentment



“LOOKING UNTO JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH, WHO FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND HAS SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD.”

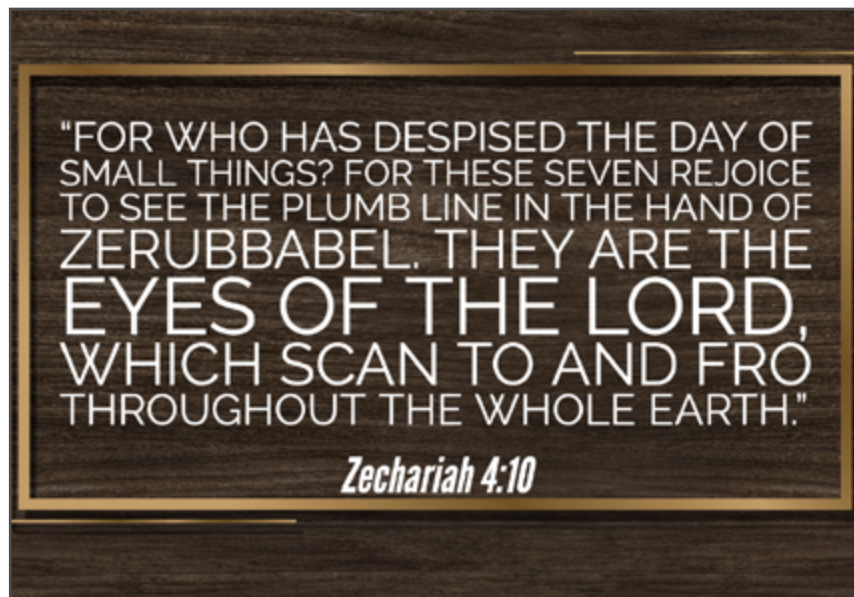
Hebrews 12:2

because he can see the bigger picture in Christ. The key to contentment, therefore, is looking to Christ and finding solace in His promises rather than focusing on our current circumstances whatever they may be.

Instruct

Paul describes three general areas in which he has **learned to be content**. First, he remains content even though he may **be abased** or whether he may **abound**. The word used for **abased** comes from the word often translated humbled; therefore, Paul asserts that he can live according to humble means—that is having very little or even nothing. **Abound**, obviously, represents the opposite in which he lives in abundance with much stability. In this first pair of experiences, Paul addresses physical needs which he also continues into the second pair where he has **learned to be content** whether he is **full** or **hungry**. No matter what may happen to him physically, Paul can remain **content** despite his circumstances.

Some of the most contented people I've meet in life had very meager physical possessions according to the world's standards. And some of the most discontent and dissatisfied people had everything that they could ever physically want. What



is the difference? Those who had contentment had the right perspective; they focused on what was most important in life. They valued relationships and the "small things" in life that God had given them ([Zech 4:10](#)). Some, however, may cynically argue that such people did not even know what they were missing because they never had it in the first place.

Yet, in this thinking lies the world's problem. They tie contentment to possessions and things. The world covets what they don't have rather than seeing what God has graciously given and placed right before them!

Finally, Paul can remain **content** whether he **abounds** or **suffers need**. This last category is more broad and includes not only physical needs, but also other social and ministerial needs; therefore, he can **be content** whether he is persecuted for the sake of the gospel or he has tremendous response, whether he has been imprisoned for Christ or he remains free, whether he has churches who partner with him effectively or the church has problems, and whether God removes the thorn in his flesh or allows it to remain ([2 Cor 12:7-9](#)). Paul can remain **content** in every circumstance because

he realizes that God’s “grace is sufficient for [him], for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). He has come to realize that God is right there with him, walking with him through whatever circumstances he may face.

In what areas of your life do you have contentment or discontentment? How can you be content in every area of your life?

Question
4

In verse 13, Paul states the secret to his contentment; he proclaims that he **can do all things through Christ who strengthens** him. Often this verse is taken out of context and applied broadly to show how God empowers us to do difficult or even impossible things in our lives as He so wills. Certainly, God can and does empower us to accomplish miraculous feats for Him as He wills, but in this context the verse signifies the **strength** that **Christ** supplies for us to remain **content** in whatever circumstance we encounter along our journey. Therefore, when Paul says he **can do all things** it points back to the previous verse where he states that he **has learned to be content everywhere and in all things**.

True contentment can only come as a result of a healthy relationship with Christ. Being content doesn’t equate with being lazy and doing nothing to better one’s circumstances, but it means that we trust God to meet our needs as He sees fit and work according to His will to serve and honor Him ([Matt 6:34](#)). We still must put forth effort in life! Discontentment can either arise through complaints about not having enough or it can arise through laments about being unable to change one’s situation—whether health, job, finances, or relationships—but true contentment comes by depending upon the Lord. Richard Melick says it well, “One mark of maturity in Christ is that the mature know how to depend on the Lord in every situation of life, not only in those for which they assume they need help.”

In Reference



Richard R. Melick, Jr., Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991), p. 155.

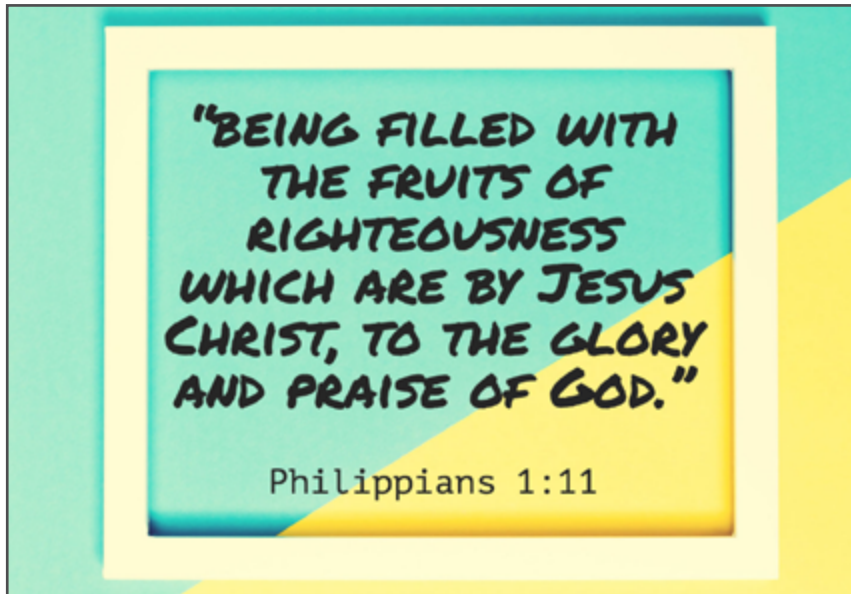
In what ways does Christ empower us to be content? How do we see the contentment through Jesus’ earthly ministry in the Gospels?

Question
5

Philippians 4:14-18

CONTENTMENT PRODUCES COOPERATION:

After reminding them that their strength comes from Christ, Paul thanks the Philippians for their cooperation and participation in his ministry. Over the course of these verses,



he mentions three ways that they have joined him in ministry:

- 1) in the offering to the Jerusalem church affected by a famine (v. 15),
- 2) in aid to Thessalonica (v. 16),
- and 3) by sending Epaphroditus to help him while in prison (v. 18).

Although Paul appreciates that they shared in his **distress** (see [Phil 1:7](#) also), he did not actively **seek** a **gift** from them, but rather

they responded to his need out of genuine love and concern for him by investing in his ministry (Phil 4:17); therefore, he wants them to know that their investment has paid off by bearing **fruit**. In other words, he desires the Philippians to see the bigger picture of their cooperation—they not only helped a distressed Paul, but they helped him to minister to countless others by extension.

In what way can you help others to bear fruit in advancing the gospel? Does this relieve you of your responsibility to advance the gospel yourself through personal evangelism?

Question
6

When we have contentment in Christ and a proper perspective of our role in ministry, we will gladly use the resources that God has graciously given us to help others advance the gospel. Perhaps the most-telling avenue of the Philippians' cooperation was through their offering to the Jerusalem church where Paul writes this about them: "That in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor 8:2). The Philippians could have protested Paul asking them to help the Jerusalem church; they could have looked at what they didn't have in terms of resources and refused to help, but instead they

gave generously. So many of us may express discontentment in our lives by focusing on our lack of resources, a lack of time, a lack of training, or even a lack of skill or ability; whatever our perceived lack may be, it should never be a valid reason for not cooperating with others to produce **fruit** in ministry. On the contrary, when our contentment focuses on Christ and His strength and not our own lives, we will be fruitful partners in ministry working together to advance the gospel.

How has discontentment ever hindered your participation in a fruitful ministry? How can we overcome discontentment to become fruitful and invest in a productive ministry (not just financially, but in other ways)?

Question
7

Philippians 4:19-20

CONTENTMENT FOUND IN CHRIST ALONE:

Paul ends this section by demonstrating in whom true contentment is found. He exclaims that all their **needs** will be met by God through **His riches in glory by Christ Jesus** (v. 19). When we first glance at this verse apart from the previous context, we may tend to focus on God's meeting of our physical or material needs only; however, this misses the predominate point of the entire passage: our contentment doesn't depend upon having our physical needs met only—for if that were the case then we would never be satisfied. Certainly, God does **supply** our physical needs, but He alone is the source of our satisfaction.

When Paul notes that God **will supply** their **need**, he uses a word which is often translated "fulfill" and can sometimes be used to mean "satisfy"; thus, in a way, Paul demonstrates that God satisfies or gives the Philippians contentment in every circumstance just as He has for the apostle—whether they have much or little. Consequently, the **riches** to which Paul refers come through the sacrificial death of Jesus and do not primarily refer to wealth here on earth. While here on earth, we can only have contentment when we look past material possessions and focus on what awaits us in heaven. Therefore, our greatest possession that produces contentment is our salvation in Christ Jesus!

Jesus' advice in His Sermon on the Mount rings true here: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and

Instruct

where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” ([Matt 6:19-21](#); see also [Psalm 20:4](#)). True contentment comes not only when we trust God to meet our needs, but when we accept that all our needs have already been met on Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. We can find contentment in what Jesus has already done for us through His death and resurrection which reassures us that He will be faithful to all His promises. Consequently, we can look forward to the assurance that He will meet our needs, caring for us in a way that best fulfills His plan in our lives.

Why can we only be content when we focus on God’s riches offered through the cross?

Question
8

Inspire

People, like this middle-aged Japanese man, often seek to find contentment in relationships—even a dysfunctional, disturbing one with an inanimate computer program. Only one relationship, however, has the ability to produce contentment—a relationship with Christ. Our situations and circumstances constantly change. If we attempt to find contentment in them, we will be on a never-ending pursuit which leads us nowhere. Life will become a series of reactions to our circumstances. On our own, we don’t have the ability to resolve or overcome them. We will always want more than we have, to be somewhere else than where we currently are, or even to be someone else other than whom God created us as defined biblically. Because we live in a fallen world affected by sin, life will merely be a series of disappointments unless we are in right standing and have the proper perspective. We must look to Christ, not our circumstances or relationships, to find contentment—for He alone does not change and only He has the power to fulfill all that He has promised. Therefore, let us follow Him and be content in every area and with everything that He has graciously given us.

Incorporate

How would you evaluate the contentedness in your life? Where do you find discontentment? How should you change your perspective or way of thinking to reflect the teaching in this passage?

How has Christ given you the strength to be content even in the most troublesome times in your life?

How does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross bring you contentment and peace? How has this allowed you to endure any circumstance or situation in your life?

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