

I. PRINCIPLES

These principles explore what God says in His Word about Learning to Lean on Him in such a way that it leads to contentment:

A. CONTENTMENT

- Our friend and mentor St. Paul makes an incredible claim that is a fundamental aspect of leaning on God vs. our own understanding: Phil 4:11b-13 AMP-- Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances. ¹² I know how to get along and live humbly [in difficult times], and I also know how to enjoy abundance *and* live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret [of facing life], whether well-fed or going hungry, whether having an abundance or being in need. ¹³ I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens *and* empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]
- This mindset of contentment presents a tremendous challenge to believers throughout the ages. A 17th century writer refers to it as a “rare jewel.” (Burroughs)
- Paul's contentment can be unsettling due to its rarity and the process required to obtain it. Our passage says it twice: “I have learned.”
- Over time, as his circumstances had their ups and downs, Paul pursued contentment as a mindset and a lifestyle no matter what happened around him.
- Contentment = resting or satisfaction of mind without disquiet; internal satisfaction which does not demand changes in external circumstances (Holman Bible Dictionary)
- When we're content, we trust God and His character instead of following the natural tendencies of our old nature (to trust and lean on ourselves instead).
- LISTENING EXERCISE:

Lord, please point out the areas in life where it is most difficult for me to be content:

I invite you to work in my heart so that I may learn the rare jewel of contentment in these places.

- Insights:

B. DIFFICULTIES

- Difficult circumstances present us with the opportunity to exercise the same choice that Paul made. *Will we look to the Lord or focus on our situation?*
- Almost immediately after Paul meets Jesus for the first time, he is met with persecution and had to flee for his life. (Acts 9:29-30) That was just the beginning!

- Paul faced many difficult situations as he followed the path of God. In fact he wrote the book of Philippians from a prison in Rome.
- Jesus made it clear that we will face difficulties as well: John 16:33 NASB-- These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.
- The primary way we find this promised peace is to understand that contentment is developed in us as we know Jesus more deeply and progressively. (Philippians 3:10)
- The more we know Him, the more we will trust Him and His good purposes for us: Rom 12:2 NIV-- Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- We have a Father whose intent is to love and benefit us. As we fix our eyes on Him and the path He has set before us, we learn contentment one step at a time.
- This curriculum is not about achieving or working hard but about allowing God to work His transformation in our hearts so that we come to deeply believe His will is:
 - Good: Ps 107:8-9 ERV-- Thank the Lord for his faithful love and for the amazing things he does for people. He satisfies those who are thirsty. He fills those who are hungry with good things.
 - Pleasing: Pr 2:9-11 NASB-- Then you will discern righteousness, justice, and integrity, *and* every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be delightful to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you
 - Perfect: Ps 18:30-- *As for* God, His way *is* perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.
- Contentment is also grounded in the sovereignty of God. Paul believed that God had plans for him from his mother's womb. The same is true of us: Eph 1:11 AMP-- In Him also we have received an inheritance [a destiny—we were claimed by God as His own], having been predestined (chosen, appointed beforehand) according to the purpose of Him who works everything in agreement with the counsel *and* design of His will
- As we learn to lean on God's unchanging intentions and character, we can also learn to be content "in Him" vs. "with Him."
- Every new difficulty presents the choice to realign our hearts and minds as we surrender by faith to the path that He has chosen whether we understand or not.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
Please give me a heart that is willing to pray: "Jesus, I want to know You and love You more. I want to find my contentment in You."

Holy Spirit, I ask You to help my heart to believe that Your plans for my life are good. Enable me to be pleased with what You have chosen for me and to be fully convinced that Your way is perfect.

- Insights:

C. WEANING

- We are deceived if we think we know what is best for us! Only God has the knowledge and perspective for that: Is 46:9-10 AMP-- For I am God, and there is no one else; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end *and* the result from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which have not [yet] been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will do all that pleases Me *and* fulfills My purpose,'
- Even so, we often argue and complain against Him like rebellious children: Is 45:9 NLT-- What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you're doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be?'
- The roots of discontent may be grounded in some of these underlying issues:
 - Doubt: Heb 3:12 ERV-- Brothers and sisters, be careful that none of you has the evil thoughts that cause so much doubt that you stop following the living God.
 - Greed/Covetousness: Luke 12:15 NLT-- "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."
 - Self-pity: Pr 31:10, 27—A virtuous woman...looks well to how things go in her household, and the bread of idleness (gossip, discontent, & self-pity) she won't eat.
 - Envy/Jealousy: Pr 14:30 NASB-- A tranquil heart is life to the body, But jealousy is rottenness to the bones.
 - Bitterness: Heb 12:14-15 MSG-- Make sure no one gets left out of God's generosity. Keep a sharp eye out for weeds of bitter discontent. A thistle or two gone to seed can ruin a whole garden in no time.
 - Pride: James 4:5-7 NLT-- The Scriptures...say that God is passionate that the spirit he has placed within us should be faithful to him and he gives grace generously. As the Scriptures say, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you.
- These mindsets can be detected by observing parts of our lives where there is complaining, restlessness, or a constant hunger for more.
- Sometimes we must probe more deeply to find causes that are rooted in past events or environments that led us to believe something other than God's truth.
- LISTENING EXERCISE
Holy Spirit, search my heart so that I might see any roots of discontentment in me that I may be tolerating or unaware of:

I pray that You would lead me to a place of complete repentance as I submit to You and your curriculum for a contented heart.

- The Father wants to wean us from feeding the flesh. We can trust Him to provide for us what will best nourish and mature us: Ps 131—O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child *rests* against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever.

- May we experience deep soul satisfaction as we pursue leaning and being content in the Lord: Ps 63:5 NLT-- You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy.
- Insights:

II. PERSONAL APPLICATION

A. ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

B. PONDER THE TRUTH

- Which of the scriptures in this lesson jumped out at you? Write out them out below and review this week to take the truth more deeply into your heart.

- Practice listening to God as you spend time meditating your Scripture and your One Thing. Continue being still and expectant in His presence. Be sure to write down anything that comes to mind, both distractions and insights!

C. PRAY IT IN

Take your One Thing and the verse you have chosen to the Lord in prayer:

"Is there a particular attitude or issue that you want to bring into the light of this truth?" Write down anything that comes to mind to keep for further exploration:

"Lord, what would it look like for me to apply this truth?"

D. SING IT

- Listen to the master Learning to Lean playlist or the one for this week's lesson. (See the DDD YouTube channel.) Record anything that you received from your personal worship time:

E. PERSONALIZE IT

Read through these questions early in the week. Ask the Holy Spirit to apply the truth to your life and to reveal His pathway for growth. Write down any insights and come back ready to share!

Contentment:

- Lord, please point out the areas in life where it is most difficult for me to be content:

- Take some time to picture how it would look and feel to be “satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances.” (Phil 3:11)

- How would your inner life and relationships be impacted if this became progressively true of you? Be specific:

- Will you invite God to work in your heart in order to learn the rare jewel of contentment in these places?

Difficulties:

- What is your “normal” or default response when difficulties enter the picture?

- Holy Spirit, please help me see what I really believe about God's character. Help me know I am safe to admit it if I have unbelief in my heart:
 - The goodness of God
 - The sovereignty of God
 - His trustworthiness
 - The kind intentions of His will
 - The greatness of God's power in difficult situations

- Journal about any “hitch” you have regarding the above traits. Ask Him to show you what issues are hindering you from resting in Who He is and Who He wants to be for you:

- Pray: “Jesus, I want to know You and love You more. I want to find my contentment in You and not in my circumstances. Enable me to be pleased with what You have chosen for me and to be fully convinced that Your way is perfect.”

Weaning

- Lord, search my heart so that I might see any roots of discontentment that I may passively tolerating or that are blind spots for me:
 - Doubt
 - Greed
 - Covetousness
 - Self-pity
 - Envy
 - Jealousy
 - Comparison
 - Bitterness
 - Unforgiveness
 - Pride
- Please identify any events or environments from my past that make me less trusting and more susceptible to discontent:
- I pray that You would lead me to a place of complete repentance as I submit to You and your curriculum for a contented heart.