



What is it (What is contentment)?

- Contentment is about whether or not you will rest and rejoice in the sufficiency of (GOD) or will fall for the deceptive marketing of this fallen world. Will you fasten your heart supremely upon created things (people, stuff, etc.), or will you be content in God? ¹

The key item that I see in the quote above is CHOICE. If we have the Spirit of God living in us, the ONLY reason for discontentment is choosing to think, dwell on, believe, and be moved by lies. What are the things in your life right now that are trying to pull you to discontentment?

Definition of Discontentment: Inordinate desire to have more than what God has seen fit to give us (covetousness).

^{ESV} **Luke 12:15** And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

We are not simply told to "not covet" but to be ON GUARD for it. In what areas of life do you find yourself desiring other things or another circumstance that God has not yet given you to an extent that is affecting you negatively?

¹ <https://www.9marks.org/article/pursuing-contentment-through-your-ordinary-local-church/>

The list of points below are taken from a very extensive list to be found in the excellent booklet "Discontentment" by Lou Priolo²

1. Realizing God has already provided everything that a person needs to glorify and enjoy Him (pg. 10)

- ^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 9:8** And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

- ^{ESV} **2 Peter 1:3** His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to¹ his own glory and excellence,

If we are to accept this definition, then we must TRUST that we have everything God intends us to have right now. Thus, if we are wrongly desiring what we don't have, what are we in essence saying about God or more so ... TO God?

2. Realizing that true satisfaction can come only from building ones life around those things that cannot be taken away or destroyed (pg. 13)

- ^{ESV} **Matthew 6:19** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,²⁰ ^abut lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Make a small list below of the things you "love" that CAN be taken away. Then make a list of those things that truly matter in God's eyes that cannot be taken away ...

² Lou Priolo, *Discontentment: Why Am I So Unhappy?* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2012).

When you look at the things that have eternal value ... do you really place the greatest value on those things? How can you grow to pursue what has eternal value and lessen your love of temporary things?

3. Delighting in God more than anything else (p 15)

- ^{ESV} **Psalm 37:4** Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Its interesting to note that we are commanded to DELIGHT in God. It's something we are expected to do. How can you grow to be a person who really finds God as their greatest delight on a daily basis? Do you find this hard to do? Why?

4. Being able to adjust the level of one's desires to the condition and purpose chosen for him by God (p. 21)

- ^{ESV} **Philippians 4:11** Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

Paul does not say that he is somehow "super spiritual" and just super content by accident. He has LEARNED to be content. Learning comes from being taught and being a learner.

1. What are things God has brought into your life right now that are hard to be content with? How do you think God may be TEACHING you contentment?

2. Are you TEACHABLE in your current circumstances? _____ Are you LOOKING to see what you don't like or looking to see what God is trying to teach you? _____ What SPECIFICALLY (one or two areas you know you are failing in) can you be doing to be a LEARNER of contentment in your current circumstances?

5. Willingly submitting to and delighting in God's wise and loving disposal in every condition of life (p 23)

- ^{ESV} **Job 1:20** Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; ***blessed be the name of the LORD.***" ²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

This verse has a LOT to teach us. The main lesson of course is the amazing submission to God's will (especially when it is SO OPPOSITE ours). On a scale of 1-10 how submissive do you think you really are to the will of God in your life? _____ What reactions are you having to your current circumstances that show submission and show lack of submission?

What do you see in the words Job speaks that shows how his thinking is helping him be content?

Look at the last phrase of the verse. Why do you think that "discontent" thoughts and reactions are actually "charging God with wrong"?

6. Thanking God even in circumstances in which one used to murmur and complain (p 27)

- ^{ESV} **Philippians 2:14** Do all things without grumbling or disputing,

- ^{ESV} **1 Thessalonians 5:18** give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

This is an easy word to pass over ... but ... DON'T. The word is "all". Sure, we can be content in traffic or our favorite restaurant being out of a dish we like (maybe?), but are we really content THANKFUL in ALL our circumstances. Well, frankly, if it IS the will of GOD ... we better be. What can you do to truly be thankful for all the HARD circumstances you are facing in life right now?

When you are NOT content and NOT truly thankful it is VERY clear in your reactions and attitudes. What do those look like in your life?

What can you do to become truly thankful for all the HARD things God brings your way?

How do we avoid it / How do we reverse it? (pgs. 19-21)

1. Understand the nature and scope of your own covetousness

- ^{ESV} **James 4:2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.
- ^{ESV} **Psalm 139:23** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

We need to be honest with our self and stop sugar coating the desires we have and how they affect our attitude and our reactions to life. IT IS SIN. It's telling God He is foolish and doing things wrong. Stop and really be honest with your thinking. What are the things you WANT right now? You want them BAD. You want them SO badly that your heart and mind and feelings are affected by them ... what are they?

Do you want them so BAD you are willing to sin to get them ... or, more likely, to sin in your heart by not being content? List the things you are NOT willing to be truly thankful and content WITHOUT...

2. Pray daily God would help you to “deny self” (THEN WORK HARD daily to do this as you are commanded to)

- ^{ESV} **Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.
- ^{ESV} **2 Thessalonians 3:5** May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

We dearly love Philippians 2:12-13:

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12 ESV)

YES ... God does change you inside and give you new desires. HOWEVER, at the same time, He EXPECTS you to WORK out the reality of your salvation because He IS doing His part by giving you the desire and the ABILITY to do what pleases Him. So ... what are you doing TODAY, and each day, to truly love ONLY Christ and “die to self”?

What does it look like to die to self?

3. Train yourself to thank and praise the Lord when FIRST tempted to murmur and complain

- ^{ESV} **Job 1:20** Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; **blessed be the name of the LORD.**" ²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong. (Job 1:20 ESV)

- ^{ESV} **Job 2:10** But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (Job 2:10 ESV)

Job is an amazing model of one who has such a high view and love of God that even when the most tragic circumstances beat him down he is able to honestly PRAISE and THANK God. Start a list below of the many IMPORTANT things you should be thankful for no matter how hard life may SEEM. (maybe, also, develop a more thorough list on your phone that you can access at all times)

4. Make good interpretations of God’s dealings with you

- a. ^{ESV} **Romans 8:28** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Rom. 8:28 ESV)

- b. JOSEPH
 - ^{NKJ} **Genesis 45:8** "So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

 - ^{ESV} **Genesis 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Gen. 50:20 ESV)

The theme in these verses is that GOD is doing this to you ... to your life ... to your circumstances. We must STOP blaming everyone or circumstances for our pain. We need to recognize that GOD is working. What are tough things you are going through that you have never seen as DIRECTLY from God?

When you see them from God’s hands ... how does this help you respond better to them? What does that look like in your situation to respond better? Be specific:

5. Recognize that your REAL NEEDS are very few

- a. ^{ESV} **1 Timothy 6:6** But godliness with contentment is great gain,⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. (1 Tim. 6:6 ESV)

- b. ^{ESV} **Matthew 6:26** Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the

field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** (Matt. 6:26 ESV)

Hopefully this homework sheet has helped you see that we are NOT content because we feel we deserve and “should have” so much. What do you REALLY need to be TRULY content and have JOY (a clear evidence that you ARE content)?

If your answer above is truthful ... why are things “stealing” your contentment?

...and if that answer is truthful ... how does your THINKING and BELIEVING need to be “renovated” so that you truly are content and godly?

“SEEK FIRST” ... meaning ABOVE everything else ... make God your ONE pursuit. How do you think you can make God your PASSIONATE pursuit more than you already do? How would passion for God help contentment?

6. Consider yourself a soldier in battle

- ^{ESV} **2 Timothy 2:3** Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (2 Tim. 2:3 ESV)

This passage has MUCH to teach us. FIRST, we are to share in suffering like a good soldier. Do you even consider yourself a “soldier”? What can you do to remember that we are called to suffer and we should not be shocked or SHAKEN when we do?

We are warned that as good soldiers we are not to ENTANGLE ourselves in pursuits that are not God’s and His glory. WOW. What are the things you have chosen to entangle your life with that fight contentment?

The final phrase is amazing. We have been ENLISTED by God. Maybe we need to remind ourselves who we were and where we were heading and how greatly we hated God before he came and rescued our rebel hearts? How badly do you wish to PLEASE God? How does contentment and FIGHTING sin please God?

7. Don't “set your heart” on temporal pleasures that God allows you to enjoy

- ^{ESV} **Psalm 62:10** Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them. (Ps. 62:10 ESV)
- ^{ESV} **Colossians 3:1** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Col. 3:1 ESV)

“Renewing / renovating” the mind is so critical. YOU MUST SET YOUR MIND ON THE RIGHT THINGS ... and in converse ... you must STOP setting your mind on the WRONG thinking. THAT IS THE BATTLE. You must do this all day, ever day, one hundred times a day.

What are discontent thoughts that you need to harshly put a stop to as soon as you realize you are thinking them? Be specific and list out as many as you can:

What are CONTENT thoughts that you need to work hard ... over and over ... to have in your mind so you will honor God in your thinking and fight the sin of DIScontentment?
