

PHILIPPIANS

Rejoice In
The Lord!

The Secret Of Being Content

Lesson Forty-Five

Philippians

Rejoice In The Lord!

Lesson Goal: To encourage students to be content in any situation.

Scriptures: Philippians 4:10-13

For Memory: “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”
Philippians 4:13

The Secret of Being Content

In this lesson Paul speaks of life situations that are very real to us. He gets into his discussion by expressing appreciation to the people of the church at Philippi. He assures them that he is aware that they had been concerned for him all along...their hearts had been with him. They had sent him help previously. On this occasion, as you remember in Philippians 2:25, Paul spoke of the person they sent to Rome to care for him and to bring additional gifts with him.

Paul, not to diminish the value of their generous gifts, assures them that he has found the secret of contentment. He says that whatever the circumstances of his life, he can be content. Contentment here doesn't mean without any troubles, completely happy-go-lucky all the time. It means being satisfied with who you are and able to cope with whatever the situation in which you find yourself.* Some people would call it self-sufficiency...able to take care of yourself.

Paul wasn't telling the Philippians that he didn't need them or the good things that they were doing for him. He was assuring them that, even if he was in prison and at the mercy of the Roman government, he was okay. Some very intelligent Greek scholars of that day (Stoics) said that to be content, a person must be able to say, “I don't care” when anything bad happened. They wanted to take all the emotion, all the feeling, out of life. They taught that you could create this kind of life if you just tried hard enough. They used the word, “content,” to describe a person who got to that point in life. Some might call it being numb. Love and caring for someone was out.

Paul says that he has learned to be content or satisfied anywhere, at any time, in any place and under any circumstances. However, he doesn't claim that it is because he has personally accomplished this. For Paul, it is because he has the strength of God on his side. The Greek philosophers said, “I will learn to be content by working at it and getting it done in my own strength.” Paul, on the other hand said, “I can do everything through Him (Jesus) who gives me strength.” (4:13)

It is very likely that Paul was pretty well off before he became a missionary. He was from a good family, he was the student of a leader of the Jews, and as a Pharisee most likely had a good lifestyle. Now, Paul depended on the generosity of those to whom

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personal possessions. He stayed with Christian converts wherever he went, and depended on their generosity for food and other necessities. We also know that at times, he used his tent-making ability to support himself. So, most likely he could honestly say that he knew what it was like to be wealthy, or very comfortable financially, and he knew what it was like to rely on others for food and shelter. Paul wasn't saying this just to sound humble, and he sure wasn't faking it. He really lived it.

Here Paul was, without freedom or the ability to make a living for himself, telling the Philippians that He was okay. He was grateful for their gracious gifts, and those gifts had helped him cope even better with his situation, but He was okay whatever the situation.

What then really made Paul okay? What is the secret of being truly content...satisfied? Paul told us in chapter one verse eighteen: "Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." Paul's goal in life was telling everyone the Good News of Jesus. God had sent him as a missionary to tell that Good News. Paul said he was content because he was doing his best to follow God's will for his life; and others, the Philippians specifically, were joining him. That kind of living will bring contentment to anyone!

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.



Teaching Tips:

1. For another insight into Paul's determination to preach the truth about Jesus, see Colossians 1:28, 29.
2. The Stoics were Greek philosophers. They were very popular in the time of Paul. Some of the better known were Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Epictetus who said, a content person could be "sick and yet happy, in peril and yet happy, dying and yet happy, in exile and happy, in disgrace and happy." We get our English words stoic and stoical from them.
3. Songs about joy, God's provision, thanksgiving, and the protection of God are appropriate with today's lesson. "All I need, You are all I need."
4. Pray with your students: Thank God for giving us joy and confidence in His protection. Thank God for true contentment as we follow His will for our lives. Ask Him to give us opportunities to tell others about Jesus and what He will do for them.
5. William Barclay said, "The man who walks with Christ and lives in Christ can cope with anything."

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Student Worksheet

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=Paul says that whatever the circumstances of his life, he can be _____.

Contentment here doesn't mean without any _____, completely happy-go-lucky all the time. It means being _____ with who you are and able to cope with whatever the _____ in which you find yourself.

=He was assuring them that, even if he was in _____ and at the mercy of the Roman government, he was _____.

=Paul says that he has learned to be content or satisfied _____, at any time, in any _____ and under any circumstances.

=Most likely Paul could honestly say that he knew what it was like to be very comfortable financially, and he knew what it was like to rely on others for _____ and _____.

=Paul said he was _____ because he was doing his best to follow God's will for his _____; and others, the Philippians specifically, were joining him. That kind of living will bring contentment to _____!

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that there is a God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.

Fifth, believe that He has answered your prayer, and be determined to live for him all the rest of your life.