

Study Guide

Something to Think About: Most of us know someone who acted and sounded contented even when unexpected, unplanned and unchangeable hardships came their way. But did you know it's possible to do more than simply "act and sound" contented? It's possible to actually feel contentment on the inside. The reason most of us can't get there is because this inner contentment, according to the Apostle Paul, comes by learning a secret. Paul learned it, and so can you!

Describe a specific season in your life when you were fully content. What was it about that season that made you feel that way?

Do you know anyone who seems to live in a state of constant discontentment? If so, describe your emotional relationship with this person and how discontentment impacts his/her life.

When life becomes really hard, are you able to find contentment? If not, why not? If so, how and where do you find it?

Read **Philippians 4:10-13**. Notice in verse 10 how Paul responds to those who did not reach out to him in his most difficult times. What do you think, how do you feel, and how do you respond when others fail to reach out to you in your most difficult seasons of life?

Do you know of anyone who is struggling right now with unexpected, unplanned hardships? If so, how will you respond today?

In **verse 11**, Paul says he had to "learn" contentment. What does he mean by that? Have you ever thought of contentment as something that must be learned? How might this idea change the way you look for contentment?

Notice what Paul says in **verse 12**. Describe a time in your life when you had plenty and a time when you had little. Were you equally content in either situation? Why or why not?

Verse 13 is well known...and largely misunderstood. When verse 13 is read within its intended context (that is, the idea of Paul's ability to be content no matter what life brings his way), what do you think Paul is saying? How might this idea relate to you and your life?

Verse 13 speaks of "strength". Is Paul speaking of his strength or Christ's strength, and what is the difference?

Daily Prayer: God, I am ready to learn. So teach me the secret of contentment. That is, ***I can't, you can, and you can through me.*** Amen.