

PHILIPPIANS

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH

STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, April 6, 2025

Teaching Title: Unshakeable Contentment

Key Scripture: Philippians 4:10–20

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Philippians 1:1–30 & Psalm 23

Tuesday: Philippians 2:1–11 & 1 Timothy 6:6–10

Wednesday: Philippians 2:12–30 & 2 Corinthians 12:10

Thursday: Philippians 3:1–4:1 & Hebrews 13:5

Friday: Philippians 4:2–23 & Proverbs 19:23

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY TOPIC:

Contentment

MEMORY VERSE:

Philippians 4:11 NLT

Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

Do you ever feel like contentment is just out of reach? Like if you could just have one more thing, then you'd finally feel happy and satisfied? The truth is, no matter how much or how little we have, we often struggle to feel content. This seems to be part of our sinful human nature. In Philippians 4, Paul ends his letter to the church in Philippi by thanking them for their generous gift and sharing how he has learned to be content in any situation. Despite being under house arrest, he has found contentment whether he has plenty or is in need. This contentment comes from relying on Christ's strength, which gives him peace and joy. We must be careful not to fall into the traps of entitlement, envy, and excess, which rob us of contentment. Wealth, power, and success don't bring lasting satisfaction—only dependence on Jesus can. True contentment is found in the Who, not the what.

Questions:

Icebreaker—What is your favorite time of day and why?

1. Read Philippians 4:10–20 together as a group. How would you explain to someone what it means to be content? (See Notes for the Greek meaning)
2. In Phil. 4:11, Paul says he has "learned how to be content with whatever I have." What do you think it means to "learn" contentment? How can we, like Paul, learn to be content in every circumstance?
3. Phil. 4:13 has been a very popular verse to memorize, but it has also been widely misunderstood. From the context of this passage, how would you explain what Paul means by "I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength"?
4. In Phil. 4:17, Paul shifts his focus from "having" to "helping" others receive what God has for them. How can we shift our focus in our lives?

5. In Phil. 4:18, Paul shows us how we need to move from “greed” to “gratitude.” How does gratitude change your perspective? How does it help us be content?
6. In Phil. 4:19, we see a shift from “stuff” to the “Source” of all we need. Do you ever find yourself relying too much on material things instead of trusting God to meet your needs? How can you grow in trusting God more?
7. Which of the “3 E-nemies of Contentment” (Entitlement, Envy, Excess) do you struggle with the most, and why? How can you combat this enemy with God’s help?
8. In what areas are you struggling to be content? In your job, at home, financially, or in friendships? What concrete steps can you take this week to rely on Christ’s strength for contentment?

Notes

Question #1—Contentment

The Greek word for contentment used here is αὐτάρκης (*autarkēs*) (ow-TAR-kace). In the New Testament, it’s used to describe a state of contentment and sufficiency that is not dependent on external circumstances.

- It means contentment or sufficiency as in, no matter what, *I’m good!* It’s the attitude of saying, “I’m good no matter what my external circumstances are.”
- The Christian virtue of contentment is when believers find their sufficiency in Christ rather than in material possessions or worldly status.
- Remember, Paul is experiencing contentment even though his external circumstances are far from ideal.
- Also note, Paul says that he has *learned* this. In other words, this is anything but natural! It’s not inherited, and it’s not acquired; it is learned!

Digging Deeper

In Philippians 4:10–20, Paul thanks the Philippian church three times for their gift—in verses 10, 14, and 18. However, two times in this same passage, he also says he didn’t need their gift, nor did he seek it out (vv. 11–13, 17). Why does he do this?

Here is New Testament Scholar, Frank Thielman’s, explanation:

“Paul was always [cautious] about money matters. Although he recognized the principle that those primarily responsible for the spiritual nurture of a Christian community could ask for the community’s financial support (1 Cor. 9:3–14, 2 Thess. 3:9, 1 Tim. 5:17–18), he usually refused such support to avoid even a hint of an unfair scandal over his proclamation of the gospel. ‘We did not use this right,’ he explains to the Corinthians. ‘On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.’ (1 Cor. 9:12b). In addition, Paul took precautions with his collection for the needy believers in Jerusalem to be sure that everyone understood his intentions and to make certain that no cause for scandal could develop. In Philippians 4:10–12, Paul faces the difficult task of showing the Philippians his genuine appreciation for their financial support, both past and present, but of also showing that his work is neither dependent on nor motivated by this support. He does this through combining expressions of gratitude with qualifications designed to prevent misunderstanding.”

—Frank Thielman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*. Pgs. 234-235