

A blurred, blue-tinted photograph of several people in a modern office or public space. The figures are out of focus, appearing as dark silhouettes against a bright, overexposed background. They seem to be engaged in conversation or movement. The overall mood is professional and contemporary.

CITIZENS

— PHILIPPIANS —

Philippians will

CHALLENGE

ENCOURAGE

COMFORT

TEACH

AND

INSPIRE US

to live as CITIZENS of
Heaven as residents in this world.”

- *Michael Davis*

USING THIS GUIDE:

Group Leader Instructions

In preparation for each study, take a few moments to read through the instructions below.

BEFORE THE GROUP MEETING:

1. Spend some time in prayer before your group.
2. As you prepare for the study, read over the questions and think through how answering them for yourself could help you better walk with God.
3. Then, try developing two to three practical steps that would help members of your group also walk better with God. Avoid the temptation to simply recount information, but thoughtfully arm your group members with something tangible that they can do throughout the week.
4. In the closing moments of your preparation, ask the Lord to move mightily in your home or group setting. Without the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing, and we are utterly dependent upon Him showing up!

DURING THE GROUP MEETING:

1. Begin with prayer. Ask for the Spirit to be present during the group.
2. Attempt to summarize this week's message, in a few, succinct, thoughts.
(See summary below for an example)
3. Assign readers to read various Scripture texts (When applicable).
4. Walk your group through the discussion questions. [Don't feel like you have to cover every question. Some questions will naturally be more relevant to your group than others and will naturally produce more fruitful discussion. Be sensitive to the flow of conversation and either redirect or dwell longer upon a topic when it is necessary].
5. In response to questions, share stories and personal examples of how this has played out in your life. What did you learn? How did it help you walk with God? What fresh stories of God's power, love, mercy, or grace do you now have because you trusted Him?
6. Draw others out to share their own personal stories. What did they learn? What would life look like if they were able to live out this week's truth consistently?
7. End in a time of prayer, thanking God for the truths that He has revealed, and for the people that He has brought to your group.

SERMON SUMMARY

WEEK 12: The Secret To Contentment

Series Purpose:

If you are a Christian, which simply means a follower of Jesus, then you are a CITIZEN of Heaven! This is not something you are working towards, but a REALITY of who you already are in Christ. And as CITIZENS of Heaven, we are called to promote the vision and values of Heaven, even while we are residents here on earth. In this series, we want to look at what heavenly our citizenship looks like and how we can begin living that out in the places that God has called us to reside.

This Week's Summary:

In today's sermon, Michael began with a simple question: "are you content today?... are you truly satisfied?", because we all revert back into the habit of seeking satisfaction from the things we have or from the things we can do. We dream of a million opportunities that will make us content, but sadly, none of us ever arrive at a place of true contentment. Thankfully, the apostle Paul gives us the secret to true contentment, which is: if you have Jesus then you already have **EVERYTHING!**

Now, while this may seem like an easy thing to say, Paul was actually living in prison cell when he wrote this. And, on the surface, he was the last person who should have been content. He was the last person who should have been saying things like: "I have learned the secret of contentment"! Why? Because, Paul went through some of the most challenging circumstances imaginable (See 2 Corinthians 11:24-29 for more)!

Yet, Paul's struggles did not make him bitter, because he already knew the secret. He knew that human beings would never be content if their contentment was based upon having things or doing things. He knew that people would never be content unless they had Jesus. He knew that if a person had Jesus, then they have absolutely **EVERYTHING!**

Paul also knew that this type of thinking is not easy. In fact, he tell us: "**I have learned** the secret", which means there was a time when even he did not know it. It means that as we walk with God, we will begin seeing how limited and unfulfilling everything else is compared to know that Jesus is our **EVERYTHING!**

Will that mean that we will have everything we want? No! We may want many things that we will never have. But, our contentment is actually not based upon our wants. In fact, as we begin getting more and more of our wants met, the less and less we will feel content. It is only when you have Jesus that your contentment grows. It is only when a person has Jesus that they will have absolutely **EVERYTHING!** It is only when a person has Jesus, that they can joyfully give everything to others.

QUOTES TO CONSIDER:

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” **C.S. Lewis**

“He who has God and everything has no more than he who has God alone.”
C.S. Lewis

“Our culture has conditioned us to believe that the things we don’t have are the things that will make us happy. We blindly chase whatever is newer, shinier, or faster.” **Craig Groeschel**

“We won’t be fully satisfied when we get what we want. Because God loves us and wants us to find our satisfaction in Him, He won’t allow us to be happy satisfied. To believe that we’ll finally be happy when we get what we want is a lie.” **Stephen Altrogge**

“Most of us spend most of our lives accumulating the wrong things. Start ridding yourself of those things that will depreciate over time and start investing in those things that will appreciate throughout all eternity. **Mark Batterson**

“One of the greatest impediments to generosity in the human heart is the fear that our gift to someone else means a loss of that gift’s benefit to ourselves. We fear that if we give sacrificially to someone else, we might have to go without ourselves.” **Larry Allen**

VERSES FOR REFLECTION:

Philippians 1:27: "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Philippians 4:10-14: "How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. Even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty."

2 Corinthians 11:24-29: "I have been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm."

Job 19:17-19; 25-27: "My breath is repulsive to my wife. I am rejected by my own family. Even young children despise me. When I stand to speak, they turn their backs on me. My close friends detest me. Those I loved have turned against me. I have been reduced to skin and bones and have escaped death by the skin of my teeth." "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!"

Philippians 4:15, 16: "As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once."

Philippians 4:18, 19 "At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we struggle with living like life is all about us? (i.e. like our hopes, dreams, plans, are at the center of everything). How have you struggled with this?
2. Are you content with where you are in life? What are the things that are stealing your joy and contentment?
3. Have you ever thought that having _____ or doing _____ would bring you contentment? Did it?
4. Michael asked us this question: Do you really want contentment in your life? If so are you willing to do whatever it would take to have it?
5. Do you believe that normal Christians can actually live like having Jesus gives us everything? Explain how this is possible in your life.
6. Why doesn't it always feel like we have everything with Jesus?
7. How does knowing that Jesus is EVERYTHING change everything about us today? (Michael related this to giving our time, talents, and treasures).
8. Is there an area God is asking you to lay down so that He can be your EVERYTHING?

POSSIBLE PRAYER TOPICS:

- Praise Jesus for giving us EVERYTHING we need!
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help us to learn the secret of contentment by resting in Jesus
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help us to want God more than we want anything else
- Ask God to bring contentment into our lives
- Pray for the members of the Group

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35 Olympia Ave. Woburn, MA 01801
genesisthejourney.com

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