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"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."
Paul – Phil. 4:12-13

*"When you are humble, **nothing** can touch you. Neither praise nor disgrace, because you know who you are."* - Mother Teresa

Dear Friends,

We have spent numerous hours over the last 9 weeks pouring over many concepts and principles in God's Word. It has been my pleasure and privilege to learn and grow together!

As we finish our series on "Contentment", I'd like to leave you with the timeless reminder that Paul was "untouched" by man or circumstances because he knew who owned him, and what his mission was. He found contentment through realizing the sufficiency of God's hold on him through the love of Christ. No matter what he came up against, he was reminded of his surety in that relationship (Romans 8:37-39). *I am convinced that Paul learned and practiced constantly by remembering these truths moment to moment! We, too, can learn the ongoing process of practiced, biblical reminders which can then weave themselves into the fabric of our souls, like breathing.*

My prayer is that you will pass on what you have learned, live it like there is no tomorrow, and find great joy in knowing that Christ's love for you surpasses all circumstances.

May you find abiding contentment in His care,

Janice

Studies in Contentment Handout

Lesson #9

1. As a believer, you already have the God-given **ability** to forgive. If you haven't forgiven someone, it's because you *won't*, not because you *can't*. Have you underestimated the Holy Spirit's power in you, or simply refused to listen to Him? If so, what does this say you believe about Him?
2. **Isolate and facts** and let them stand alone as history. Forgiveness always involves sin. Make sure you understand the difference between someone who has sinned against you versus someone who has stepped on your preferences. Define the offense. How has this clearly broken God's standard?
3. Put away emotional responses. You can't change the way you *feel* about it, but you can change the way you **respond** to the feeling. How have you **responded** in the past to the way you *feel* about the offense? What did you think, do, say?
4. Forgiveness calls for us to cancel the required punishment while assuming the cost of repairs. Jesus did this for us on the cross. How will you begin to demonstrate your **thankfulness** to Him in order to begin the process of forgiveness to others? Be specific and make a plan.

The 8 “Think” Words to Paul’s Learned Secret

(Contentment....Philippians 4:8-9)

1. LEARN to remember God and don’t forget Him. (Deut. 6)
Ask yourself, “What has God already done, not what will He do?”
(Think on what is **PRAISEWORTHY**..... “Lord, help me to see your undeserved grace. Help me to remember that anything short of hell, even what I may be going through right now, is your mercy.”)
2. LEARN to appropriate the Truth (Adam and Eve didn’t do this in Genesis 3:1-6.)
Ask yourself, “What do I know to be true, regardless as to how it feels right now?”
(Think on what is **TRUE**.....”Lord, help me to compartmentalize, but not push out, my response to my emotions in order to gain clarity.”)
3. LEARN to focus on the right things (as Paul instructs in Phil. 4:8-9).
Ask yourself, “Who is the embodiment of what is true?”
(Think on what is **LOVELY**....”Lord, help me to see the wonderful face of Christ and His love.”)
4. LEARN to take on God’s perspective; ours is flawed. (Phil. 4:6-7)
Ask yourself, “What facts about this situation are more accurate, mine or God’s?”
(Think on what is **RIGHT**....”Lord, Help me to see what God sees, and help me to believe that His purpose and plan are better than mine.”)
5. LEARN to listen to what God says about this.
Ask yourself, “Do I really care about God’s honor, or am I only concerned with my safety from discomfort?”
(Think on what is **NOBLE**....”Lord, help me to see how your reputation is reflected in my attitude and actions.”)

6. LEARN to ask God to remind you of why you live. (2 Cor. 5:14-21)
 (Your “why” drives your passion for persistence.)
 Ask yourself, “What is God’s ultimate purpose for leaving me here? What does He want to see accomplished for His glory and my benefit?”
 (Think on what is **ADMIRABLE.....**”Lord, help me to see how my attitude needs to be commendable to your purposes.”)

7. LEARN to distinguish the difference between needs and desires. (Phil.4:13,19)Ask yourself, “What is it that I really need to know that I am loved, and to know that I have true value? Have those needs already been met by God? Do I need this difficult situation to turn out according to my desires in order to get other perceived needs met? (Think on what is **PURE.....**”Lord, help me to see that my *perceived* needs are extraneous to my *real* need which has already been met through the love of the Cross.”)

8. LEARN to make a decision to forgive (Eph. 4:32-5:2).
 Ask yourself, “What right do I have to refuse forgiveness, when God has forgiven me first?”
 (Think on what is **EXCELLENT.....**”Lord, help me to have a thankful heart for all you have forgiven me, and for that to lead me to having a forgiving heart toward others.”)

**The 8 previous points are NOT a checklist in order to “do it right”. We are fallen creatures, and will never be able to add *anything* to grace with our good works. This is simply a guide in order to hopefully help us develop a shorter “turn-around time”, as we learn to move from grumbling to thanksgiving. Having an attitude of contentment is a moment by moment process of asking the Holy Spirit to remind us of what is true. He is faithful.

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Holiness----Sin----Grace----Love (The diagram reads from left to right, but we explain it from right to left.)

We will never **love** others if we don’t have a true heart of thanksgiving for God’s **grace**. We won’t appreciate God’s grace without seeing the true depth of our **sin**...that Jesus didn’t just die on our behalf; He died the death we should have died. We won’t see our sin unless we look at the **holiness** of God, and not at what is relative to another person’s sin.