



# PHILIPPIANS:

Finding Joy  
When Life's Complicated

## Session 14: Contentment

### Read Philippians 4:8-9

1. How are these verses also quite possibly about the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche? Where are we to look or search for *“whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise?”*
2. The straightforwardness and the strength and clarity of Paul’s imperatives here remind us of how easily we set our minds on things that are contrary to God’s word and will for us and for others. Where does Paul urge the Philippians to look to be reminded?

### Read Philippians 4:10-13

3. On Paul’s second missionary journey, he first preached the gospel in Philippi. Then he went to Thessalonica, where he experienced bitter persecution. He then went to Berea, and hostile Jews from Thessalonica pursued him there. Finally, he left for Rome. On each step of this journey, the Philippians had been big supporters of Paul’s missionary efforts. But in thanking them for their generous support, Paul ultimately grounds his joy in the certainty of knowing that his true support and strength comes from \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. With Christ, Paul knows he can be content no matter the extreme. What three extremes does Paul mention? What do you think is more dangerous to our faith, having too much or too little? Why?
5. Author and former missionary Elisabeth Elliot wrote, *“The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances.”* What an incredible way to consider every circumstance in life. But how is what Elliot is saying so different from the way people often interpret and quote from Philippians 4:13 – *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*
6. Consider the story of a young woman named Kelly: *I learned the true meaning of joy when, at the age of 22, I was diagnosed with stage 3C ovarian cancer. Before surgery, the doctors said, “We may need to take all your reproductive organs.” After surgery, they told me, “You have six months to live.” My happy, smiling, and laughing self vanished with these words. Sadness, tears, and anger filled the holes. Yet in the weeks following, I felt peace deep down inside of me. I was at peace with my circumstances. . . . I realized that even though the cancer had taken over my physical body, it could not take over my spirit. My God was bigger than the cancer, and that knowledge gave me joy. Others around me could sense this peace and joy within me. They could not understand how I could*

*be joyous in my circumstances of dying, vomiting, and exhaustion. They knew joy only as the world knows it. The world's definition of joy is being happy and carefree. Cancer taught me that joy is much deeper than what the world thinks it is. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. It is being content regardless of the circumstances. I knew I could die from this disease. However, regardless of the outcome, I could live knowing that Jesus already defeated cancer and my eternal death. Even if cancer overtook my body, it could not overtake my soul. God loves me so much that He sent His Son to die for me. Cancer could take my health, my hair, even my smile, but it was not strong enough to take away the power of Jesus and the salvation I have in Him—and that is true joy.<sup>1</sup>*

In writing about contentment, Paul says, “I have learned the secret to being content...” Why do you think Paul calls this kind of contentment a “secret?”

### **Read Philippians 4:14-23**

7. Paul talks about what their generous gift means to him. As we see in verses 14 and 18, Paul sincerely appreciates their gift, but he is not ultimately dependent on it.. His joy in this gift is not for himself, but for them. Why? What does their gift reveal?
8. Paul refers to the Philippians’ generosity as a “fragrant offering.” This phrase had rich meaning in the Old Testament. Read Leviticus 1. How do the offerings and generous gifts of the Philippian Church compare to the Old Testament sacrifices of Israel?

#### *Romans 12:1*

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers,<sup>1</sup> by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

9. After penning verse 19, Paul breaks out in joy and praise! You can almost hear him shout, “*To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*” Indeed, God, by His perfect nature, is eternally and completely full of glory. What can we possibly add? Yet, we glorify Him in our lives. In Philippians 3, Paul said we “*glory in Christ Jesus*” (v. 3) but unbelievers “*glory in their shame*” (v. 19). Turn back to Philippians 1:11 and 2:11. How do believers give God glory? How is He glorified in your life today? What does “glorifying God” look like any time in any place? (Think in terms of your daily walk.)
10. It all comes back to joy. Consider verse 22—lots of special greetings. How important is the greeting one believer gives to another? Whom will you get to greet with joy this week? .

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<sup>1</sup> (Burma, Deb. Joy: A Study of Philippians (p. 155). Concordia Publishing. Kindle Edition.)