

When You're Unsatisfied

Philippians 4:10-13

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Today I want to talk with you about how you can be happier – how you can feel satisfied about your life. Does that sound good? It sounds good to most people. Everyone wants to be happier. Well, if you learn and apply the wisdom I am about to share, you can start being happier today. The life you want is right in front you, waiting for you to grab it.

Now, this may be difficult for some of you to believe and I get it. If you are like most people you have believed your whole life that happiness and satisfaction is just on the other side of something – and when you reach that place you will finally be happy.

I used to feel that way about my golf game. When I started to play golf I believed like most golfers that the Holy Grail of golf was to break 80, to shoot in the 70's. So I practiced and practiced and read everything I could get my hands on about playing better golf. One day I finally did it! I broke 80! I shot a 78! I bragged to all my friends. I told my wife and she tried to sound interested. But about three hours later I didn't feel any different. My wife still told me to take out the trash. The PGA Tour didn't call me. Titleist and Nike did not call me and ask if I would put their names on my shirts. I looked in the mirror, and I still needed to lose weight. Nothing had changed. In fact, I began to think, "What if I could shoot even par 72?" There is really no such thing as a happy golfer, so why do I play golf? I don't know. It is a disease and I am working on it!

This is the way most of us are with our lives. We spend so much of our lives thinking that happiness is on the other side of some future event. We think that once we get there we will be happy. But think about it. You have probably felt that way your whole life and you are still not happy. Something must be wrong. When you were a kid you thought that when you grew up and left home you would be happy. Then you thought once you got married you would be happy. Then you thought when you had children you would be happy and satisfied. Then many of you thought or think that once you get your children out of the house then you will be happy! Perhaps some of you think that when you get divorced you will finally be happy.

I am sure many of you have played the “if only game” – “If only I had a new car, then I would be happy...If only I got a better job, then I would be happy...If only we could be in a bigger house, then we would be happy.” And maybe you got some of these things and you experienced pleasure for a little while. But guess what happened? When the newness wore off – when the novelty wore off – when the cool factor wore off the feelings of being unsatisfied returned. Then it was on to another goal or desire.

Some of us think we will be happy once we get through some difficulty or problem. We really believe that once we survive this hardship or jump over this hurdle or get through this difficulty then life will be just like we want it. So, we fight, survive, jump and push through. And then what do we find? Another challenge staring us in the face! That’s life.

If contentment seems impossible to find how do we find it? How do we find happiness and contentment when it is always just beyond our reach? Perhaps this is a key question because you are the kind of person who is always on edge about everything. You are never at ease. You are never at peace. You are restless most of the time and feel like you are just running in circles. Maybe this feeling of discontent is affecting your job, your family, or your friendships. Maybe you have turned to food or alcohol or drugs to try to satiate your feelings of discontent but it just makes you feel worse. You really want to be happy but you don’t know how to be happy!

I want to share with you the secret to being content. It is really not a secret, but it is so simple that many people just never consider it and just pass right over it on their way to something they think will make them happy. But if you apply this simple wisdom today you will find the happiness and satisfaction you are looking for.

The wisdom I speak of comes from the Bible. I bet you guessed that. This little secret is nestled in a little book in the New Testament called Philippians. It was a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a group of people he loved dearly. He had a very close bond with them and shared from his heart. One of the things he shared was how he had found true happiness and contentment in his life.

Paul said in Philippians 4:11b – **“For I have learned to be content with whatever I have.”** Whoa! Let’s stop there! This is a big statement! Even if you are not a big Bible reader you must admit that statement grabs your attention. How could anyone be content with whatever they have? Content can be translated

“happy.” How many people do you know who are truly satisfied with their lives? What is it that Paul knew? What enabled him to be so content no matter what life gave to him? Let’s keep reading.

Paul said in Philippians 4:12a: **“I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty.”** Paul is saying, “Look. I’ve been where you are. I know the feeling of lacking something and wanting it really bad. And I know the feeling of finally getting what I want and still not feeling satisfied.”

Then Paul drops the bomb on us in Philippians 4:12b: **“In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of having plenty of being in need.”** Paul had learned the secret of being happy no matter what life presented to him. If he had a lot he was happy. If he had very little he was happy.

Let me stop here because you may think Paul was just out of touch. He didn’t know your life. He didn’t know you. Perhaps these words don’t hold much weight for you. After all, you may think Paul was just some clueless pious figure from 2,000 years ago. And I get that. But please understand. Paul did not dictate these words poolside at the Ritz Carlton sipping on a strawberry daiquiri! Paul was in a Roman prison when he dictated these words. Kind of changes things, doesn’t it?

Most of Paul’s ministry was filled with opposition and danger. Sometimes he didn’t know whether he was going to live or die from day to day. He also lived with a “thorn in the flesh.” We don’t know what that was exactly. Some think it was some kind of physical handicap. Yet despite all of this Paul was content with himself and his life. What was it that Paul knew? Was it some mental trick? What was his secret?

Paul was very clear about what made him so content in **Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”** Paul’s secret had nothing to do with him or what he knew or what he accomplished or the trouble he avoided or the success he may have attained. Paul’s happiness was found in his relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It was the depth of his relationship with God that gave him strength and contentment. You see, Paul was wise enough to know that if you rely on circumstances to make you happy you will always be disappointed because circumstances always change. But if you rely on the presence of God in your life to make you happy it doesn’t matter what you are faced with. You can always be happy because God never changes. God will always love you and He will never let you go.

Here is the message: **Contentment is not about what you have; Contentment is about WHO has you!** Contentment is not about what is “out there” or “down the road,” or on the other side of an obstacle or achievement. Contentment it is about the God who lives within you. It is about the present moment with God who is always faithful in guiding you and supporting you.

Some of you know that Brandy and I have a Jack Russell Terrier named PJ. She is a wonderful dog filled with a lot of energy. Believe or not she is 13 years old. She hasn't lost her step. But she has lost her ability to see. She has a cataract in one eye and glaucoma in the other. We call her the pinball because she just bangs her way around the house. Of course, her tail just keeps on wagging! You know why? Because she knows I am there. Even though she can't see me she knows I am there. She can hear my voice and sense my energy. She knows I am there to pick her up when she can't get around something. She knows I will guide her to safety when I take her for a walk. She knows I am there.

It is the same way with God in our lives. We can face anything and be content because God will never let us go. He will always be beside us and within us, loving us and guiding us, picking us up when we need help. He calls us each by name and we know His voice. As a result, we can stand on our own two feet and face anything and be happy – anywhere and at any time.

When we rely on the depth of our relationship with God for contentment we can live in the moment. We don't have to keep looking back about what might have been, what could have been, or what should have been. We don't have to keep looking anxiously to the future and wonder if things will be better. We can live each moment, each day, each step knowing that God is with us each moment, each day, and each step. It is the depth of our relationship with God that makes us content. Is not about what we have; it is about WHO has us.

What's the starting point? How do we begin living each moment with God, relying on his strength and presence for contentment? It is really quite simple. **Stay in touch with God.** How can we be sensitive to God's presence each day unless we stay in touch with Him? Each of us stay in touch with God in our own unique way. Some like to watch the sunrise and thank God for His creation. Some like to listen to Christian music on the radio. Others like to read devotional booklets. Some like to go online and watch sermons. Some prefer the old fashion way of sitting at the breakfast table with their Bible and pen to study God's Word.

Just find some way to stay in touch with God and make it a prayerful time to reflect on his love and strength.

The following excerpt was taken from an article on Yahoo Sports: “Mark Richt was an assistant coach under Bobby Bowden at Florida State in the 1980s and early 1990s, when season after season the Seminoles fell short of the national title. If it wasn't one thing, it was wide right.

“Finally in the 1993 season, FSU broke through and was crowned champion. Soon after, Bowden held a staff meeting. Richt, now head coach at Georgia, remembers it well. “Coach Bowden looked around the room, ‘They said we could never win the big one. And now we won it. Now that we finally won it, do you feel any different now?’” Richt recalled on Monday. “He went around the room and everybody said, no not really. We all answered no.

"And Coach Bowden said, 'You know why you don't feel any different? Because that's not really winning the big one. Winning the big one is when you accept Christ as your Lord and savior'" (Article by Dan Wetzel, November 6, 2012).

It's true. Receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior is winning the big one. Christ is the only true source of contentment and happiness. Contentment is not about what you have; Contentment is about WHO has you. Amen.