



# Crushing Discontentment

A 6-Day Devotional

*Susan Narjala*





## Day 1

Bible Reading: Phil 4: 10-13

Have you ever got a gift that you didn't exactly love or even need? I know I have. There's a "special" drawer in my house for gifts that will be repackaged and recycled.

In our passage today, the apostle Paul mentions a gift he received from the Philippian church. While he is thankful for the gift, he says he doesn't *exactly* need it because he has "learned to be content whatever the circumstances." (Philippians 4: 11).

What if we too experienced that sense of deep contentment no matter what our situation? How is that even possible? What was Paul's "secret of being content in any and every situation?" (Philippians 4: 12)

Well, thankfully, Paul shares his secret with us. He says: "I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

When Paul refers to "all things," he is saying he can do even the impossible thing of being content despite circumstances because he finds his satisfaction in Jesus.

Lest we assume that Paul was a superhuman who simply had a contented disposition, here's what we need to note: Paul learned to be content. Twice in our passage today Paul mentions that he "learned" contentment.

Friend, if you feel discontented, know that you're not alone.








## Day 1

Contentment is not intuitive. Even for the Bible's most famous evangelist who wrote a majority books of the New Testament, contentment didn't come easy. Like Paul we need to learn to find our contentment in Christ.

With Philippians 4: 10-13 as our backdrop, let's dive into the five causes of discontentment and five ways we can counter those seemingly valid reasons for our disappointment. Let's learn how to be content in Christ.

***Reflection: What are some ways you've let circumstances dictate your sense of satisfaction? Have you ever stopped to consider Christ as the One who can fulfill your deepest need?***

***Lean In: Father God, I am sometimes deeply disappointed and discontent when things circumstances don't align with my expectations. Would You begin to teach me and change me so I truly understand that my soul's satisfaction is found in Christ alone? Amen***





## Day 2

Bible Reading: Phil 4: 12; Romans 8: 28; Romans 8: 38

Today, we'll begin our deep dive into the 5 Causes of Discontentment and how we can counter those reasons Biblically. While the **5 C's of discontentment** that I've outlined are not a comprehensive list, they give us a peek into how the Enemy stirs up dissatisfaction in our lives. With that, let's get into the first C of discontentment: **We want to be in control.**

We often believe that we know best and we're disappointed when things don't work out the way we'd planned. Sometimes, we think we make a better, smarter 'god' than God himself.

So, when that job doesn't work out the way we thought it should, or the relationship goes south even though we'd planned otherwise, or that relocation didn't quite work out the way we'd envisioned it, I am disillusioned, even a bit shocked. We ask in frustration, "How could this happen?" because we've bought into this notion of that we're in control.

When our first parents Adam and Eve were in the garden, despite the abundance they had been provided, they were discontent because they wanted control. They wanted to be like God. Discontentment broke their fellowship with God and consequently humanity's relationship with a Holy God. Friends, discontentment is serious business. How can we counter discontentment when circumstances don't align with our expectations?

**We can learn to trust the character of God.**





## Day 2




Paul trusted God's character. He trusted **God's sovereign power**. He knew that he was in prison not because the Romans put him there but because God kept him there because his chains served to advance the gospel. Paul trusted **God's goodness**. Yes, he had been shipwrecked, beaten, flogged, and chased out of cities, but he writes in his letter to the Romans: And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them (Romans 8:28). Paul trusted **God's love**.

He writes again in Romans: And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. (Romans 8:38).

If we long for contentment then we need to surrender control to a sovereign, good, and loving God.

**Reflection:** In what areas of your life are you discontented because things have not gone the way you'd planned?

**Lean In:** Lord, I yield to You. I trust Your character. You are sovereign, You are good, and You are loving and therefore I surrender my plans to You. Help me experience Your joy and contentment. Amen.





## Day 3

Bible Reading: Phil 4: 8; Romans 12: 2

Today, let's go to the second C or Cause of Discontentment: **We have conformed to the world**

If we're being honest, we've begun to look a lot like the world. We speak, watch, scroll, listen to, read, go to, and participate in things exactly like the world. But mostly we have begun to think like the world.

Friends, how can we expect to be content when we conform to a world that is broken and discontented?

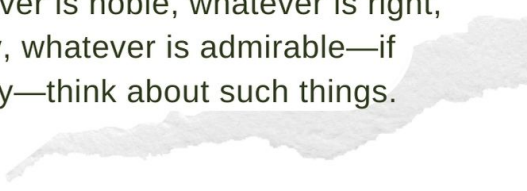
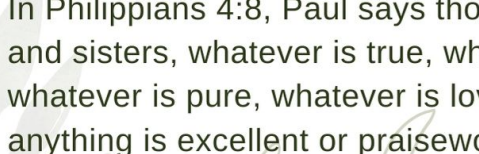
The world gets its happiness from circumstances. When things are good, people are on a high. But what happens when the new car smell starts to fade? What happens when the job you'd pinned all your hopes on turns out to be horribly toxic? What happens when that perfect relationship ends? Or, horror of horrors, what happens when you gain weight and no longer have the perfect figure? How can we challenge that discontentment when the world's ideals infringe on our freedom in Christ? Here's the second C to crush discontentment:

**We can learn to think counter-culturally.**

Scripture reminds us that we are not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

How do we renew our minds?

In Philippians 4:8, Paul says those famous words: Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.








## Day 3

Our thoughts are like the things we put in our carry-on bags at airport security. Some things are just not allowed through to the other side, no matter how crucial they seem to us. Scissors, spray bottles, knives, and forks will be discarded. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are to scan our thoughts, put them through the x-ray machine of God's Word, and throw out thoughts that are untrue, ugly, sinful, ungodly, critical, bitter, or shameful. If we want to experience contentment, we need to be radically discerning and vigilant about our thought lives.

**Reflection:** What are some ways of worldly thinking that you've let into your mind that are stealing your contentment?

**Lean In:** Lord, forgive me for conforming to the world in my thoughts. Help me replace those thoughts with things that are true from Your Word. Renew my mind. I long to experience contentment in Christ. Amen





## Day 4

Bible Reading: Phil 4: 13; Exodus 20: 17; Jer 17: 7

Today, let's dive into the third C or cause of discontentment: **we compare ourselves to others.**

This reason for discontentment needs little explanation because we've all fallen into the comparison trap.

Social media simply precipitates this "malady" as we scroll through pictures of folks on vacation in Maui or dining at a Michelin-star restaurant. But as long as we hang out in the comparison trap we'll never be content.

I'd like to tag on one more C to this one which is **we covet what others have.**




God included "Do not covet" in the Ten Commandments for a reason. Those were not rules meant to stifle us. Those were laws God gave us to live the fruitful and contented life that God intended.

How do we counter comparison so we can live with contentment? Here's the third C to crush discontentment:

**We can learn to put our confidence in Christ**

Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Do we compare ourselves to others and feel discouraged and disappointed? Or do we base our confidence in what Christ has accomplished for us, in us, and through us?










Day 4

If our security is in Jesus, if our sense of identity and significance is rooted in Him, then we won't be shaken by our circumstances.

**Reflection:** What might you be coveting in someone else's life? Who or what are you comparing yourself to?

**Lean In:** Father, you did everything by sending Jesus to the Cross so I could be your child and revel in your love. Help me to put my confidence in You and You alone. Amen.





## Day 5

Bible Reading: 2 Corinth 11: 25–27: 1 Thess 5: 16–18

The fourth cause of discontentment is that **we give in to complaining**.

If there's one thing this generation is really good at, it's complaining. We grumble about the weather, the traffic, our jobs, the husband who doesn't clean up, the kids who don't listen, the music at church which is too loud, the speaker who should have been more inspiring, the friend who should have been more caring, the mother who is too overbearing... It's a laundry list. But do you know who had incredibly legitimate reasons to complain? Yes, Paul.

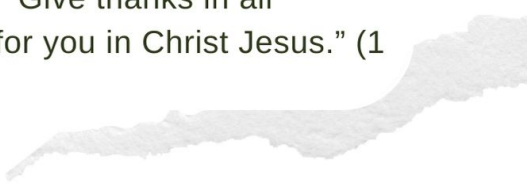

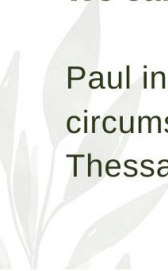
Paul was in prison as he wrote this letter. But imprisonment was only a part of what he had endured. He has been beaten with rods three times. He had been stoned, shipwrecked, robbed, spent a night adrift at sea, endured sleepless nights, went without food or water, shivered in the cold without enough clothing to keep him warm... Had Paul resorted to complaining, none of us could have actually faulted him.

Instead, Paul chose to rejoice because he learned to be content in Christ.

How do we counter this bent to complaining so we can live with contentment? Here's the fourth C to crush discontentment.

**We can learn to cultivate gratitude toward God.**

Paul instructs the church and us to, "Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18)








## Day 5

Instead of complaining can we learn to say thank you to God? No matter what the situation, He is with us, His grace is sufficient for us, His plans cannot be thwarted, He will perfect that which concerns us, He will work all things out for the good of those who love Him. Friends, His presence and promises give us reasons to praise Him through every situation. Gratitude to God re-frames our circumstances.

**Reflection:** Have we fallen into the rut of complaining? Have we forgotten to pause to praise God?

**Lean In:** Heavenly Father, today I acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from You. Forgive me for feeling entitled to the blessings You have poured into my life. Teach me to find my contentment in Jesus. Amen.





## Day 6

Bible Reading: Isaiah 43: 7: 1 Corinth 10: 31: Phil 4: 13

Today, we'll look at the fifth cause of discontentment: **we are confused about our true purpose.**

Many of us believe that our primary goal in life is to be content or happy.

Consequently, our entire life becomes a search for happiness. We constantly try to find our happiness in people, in stuff, in circumstances, and in the next best thing or experience.

We have bought into the idea that Jesus alone is not enough. We don't reject Jesus. But we also don't believe that Jesus is sufficient.

We think we need Jesus + our careers to be content.

We think we need Jesus + our social media following to be content.

We think we need Jesus + our significant other to be content.

While those things are not "bad" or "evil"—they actually may be good things, but when we, in Tim Keller's words, take a good thing and make it the ultimate thing, then that is a formula for discontentment.

So, how do we fight this type of discontent? Here's the fifth C to crush discontentment.

**We can learn to comprehend why we were created.**

Here's something that we as believers in Christ need to grasp: we were not created simply to be happy or satisfied.

God created us to be deeply satisfied in Him. And that is the key.



The Westminster Catechism poses the question, “What is the chief end of man?” And the answer provided is this: Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

When we find our contentment, our rest, and our satisfaction in Christ alone, only then are we able to live out our purpose of glorifying Him.

We are called to be satisfied in Jesus. That is our purpose. And that is how we find contentment.

And friends, that can happen only when we behold the Cross.

When we look to the Cross, how can we doubt that His love for us is enough?

How can we not find fulfillment in a God who emptied Himself so we can be full?

We've talked about how to crush discontentment through 5 Cs. But the central C in all of this is Christ. He alone can satisfy our heart's deepest longings and give us rest in all our circumstances.

**Reflection:** Have I made life about pursuing my happiness or about pursuing Jesus?

**Lean In:** Father, I understand that I have been created by You for You. Help me not make life about myself. Father, rid me of myself. I belong to you. I find my rest, my joy, and my contentment in Jesus. Amen