

CONVERSATION GUIDE:

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What does "ambition" mean to you? Do you consider yourself an ambitious person?
- What would you consider to be your life's ambition(s)?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever experienced disappointment that later revealed itself to be a blessing in disguise?
- What experiences in your life have taught you contentment? What areas do you still struggle?
- "What if what is best for the kingdom of God is not best for you personally?" How would you respond to this question? Can you think of Biblical examples of this principle?
- How does Philippians 4:13 (*"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"*) relate to contentment rather than achievement?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Identify one area where you feel discontent or disappointed.

1. How might you find your approval in Christ rather than in this area?
2. How does understanding God's grace change your perspective on what you "deserve"?
3. In what specific ways can you trust God's control over this situation?
4. How might God be using this disappointment or difficulty to deepen your relationship with Him?

GROUP FOCUS:

- As a group, share stories of times when disappointment or failure ultimately led to spiritual growth or new opportunities.

PRAYER FOCUS:

- Pray for the wisdom to discern between selfish and Godly ambition in your life.



WEEK 31 THE JOY OF CONTENTMENT, PART 2 (PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13)

TODAY'S VERSES:

Philippians 4:11-13

Philippians 2:3-4

John 2:17

Jeremiah 45:5

Romans 15:20

Philippians 3:8-9

Philippians 4:6-7

Philippians 1:17-18

John 3:30

Philippians 4:4

AUGUST 31, 2025

WEEK 31

THE JOY OF CONTENTMENT, PART 2

Knowing Proper Ambition – *Selfish ambition* can be understood as a "motivation to elevate or to put one's own interests before another's." Paul says, "In humility count others more significant than yourselves." There is a good type of ambition and it is the motivation to see God's glory shine and people come to know Him. It was ambition for God that led Paul to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. **Romans 15:20** *It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known...*

What Ambition Looks Like – *"...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound."* "Abound" speaks to when everything is working correctly. "Brought low" refers to when we face personal failure. Paul says the phrase, "I have learned." This did not come naturally to Paul; he had to "learn it." Paul is saying that he has found in Christ both the resources to succeed and the resources to withstand disappointment. **How we respond when our ambitions are disappointed reveals whether they are godly or selfish ones.**

Rather than becoming bitter or giving up, Paul reveals the secret to contentment "in Christ" through four principles:

1. Paul had found his approval in Christ

Paul's fulfillment came not from what he accomplished, but WHOSE he was. If he died in seeming failure, in prison, with a trashed reputation, or his work "unfinished," he could be personally content. What we need, the satisfaction and identity our soul craves, is not found by achieving a certain position or making a certain amount of money; it is given as a gift in Christ because IN CHRIST we have the approval of the only One whose opinion really matters.

2. Paul knew what he deserved

One of the problems at the heart of discontentment is not getting what we think we deserve. Puritan Thomas Watson wrote, *"If we have not what we desire, we have more than we deserve."* If we grasped what we really deserve, and were overwhelmed with how much grace was given us in the Gospel, it would change our disposition toward those who disappoint.

3. Paul trusted God's control over all things

Paul had *lived* in prison and said, "I've learned to be anxious for nothing." Paul had not given up; he had submitted to the will of God. He made his request known to God, he kept praying ambitious requests for those he loved, and then he'd rest in God's loving sovereignty. Dave Harvey writes, *"There is no peace in life until we're convinced that our place is His choice."*

4. Paul knew God sometimes allows our suffering so that we can know Him more

Paul was decreasing, but He trusted that God was doing what God said He would do: constantly magnifying His name. We all dream about God bringing glory to His name through our successes, but what about through the places that we have failed or will fail?

True contentment doesn't mean abandoning ambition, but instead redirecting it toward God's purposes. Our deepest satisfaction is found in Christ regardless of circumstances.