



Being Content in All Circumstances

Bible verses: Philippians 4:10-14

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that now at last you revived your concern for me. You were, of course, concerned about me but lacked an opportunity. Not that I say this because of need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient. I know indeed how to live in humble circumstances; I know also how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and of being in need. I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me. Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress.

Ask everyone in the group to have their Bibles with them. Ask one person to read the passage out loud. Encourage them to have their pens and to underline things that strike them, especially later in the Bible when you go through the key words and phrases. Also, encourage them to make notes.

After the reading of the passage is complete, explain the context.

Context:

St. Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in the Greek city of Philippi while he was imprisoned 400 miles away in other city named Ephesus. St. Paul traveled extensively as he went from city to city preaching the gospel and establishing churches. When he left them and went on to another location, he wrote letters to them. But among all of the cities he visited and all of the churches he wrote to, the church in Philippi seemed to have a unique bond with St. Paul.

Paul says no other church kept in touch to check up on him except for the church in Philippi. Not only were they in touch with him, they sent him gifts and they supported him financially, as well. He didn't have a way of supporting himself while he was out on his missionary travels so he was completely dependent on people supporting him. Sometimes, he had plenty. Sometimes, he had next to nothing. Sometimes, he was staying in nice homes when people would host him. Then there are the circumstances like the one he finds himself in now as he is in prison. He is taking a moment to thank the Philippians for thinking about him; yet he says that he has come to be satisfied regardless of the circumstances.

After explaining the context, ask some to read the passage to the group again. When the reader has finished, go back through and highlight the key words and phrases found below.

Key Words and Phrases:

- *Need*: Found in verse 11, the Greek word is “hysterēsín” (hoo-ster-AY-sis). It is actually a stronger word than “need”. It means being “destitute”.
- *Self-sufficient*: Found in verse 11, the Greek word is “autarkés” (ow-TARK-ace). It means to be completely content.
- *Being well fed*: Found in verse 12, the Greek word is “chortazesthai” (cort-ah-ZES-tie). “Being well fed” is polite interpretation of this word that means “to be gorged”.
- *Hungry*: Found in verse 12, the Greek word is “peinaó” (pee-NAH-oh). The word can also be translated as being “famished” and “craving”.
- *Strength*: Found in verse 13, the Greek word is “ischuó” (is-KOO-oh). It means to have the force to prevail.

Now you may provide the following interpretation.

Interpretation:

Paul is grateful to the Philippians because of their love for him. They have been supporting him while he has been traveling and they genuinely seem worried about him. Paul wants them to know that he is OK. He then uses extremes. He says that he has learned to be content when he is gorging himself on food and when he craving for anything to eat. He has learn to be OK when he is destitute and also when is content with what he has. He says that there is a secret to all of this. The secret is found in Christ who gives him the power, the force, the strength to prevail regardless of the circumstances.

Now you may lead a discussion using the following guide.

Application to Real Life:

- Who has shown real support to you during this time? Have had a chance to thank them for making this time easier? If you haven't, what would you specifically thank them for?
- What is bringing contentment to you now? What are you craving right now?
-
- How big of a battle is boredom? Do you think this passage speaks to any boredom you may feel?
- What do you think you need strength for?
- What do you need from Christ as these days continue?

Closing Prayer:

Ask someone else to read the pass for a final time and then pray the following prayer.

Lord Jesus, St. Paul found you to be the secret to living in strength regardless of our circumstances. When we are content, that contentment will go away and we will be hungry again. We ask you to be our lasting strength. We ask you to satisfy us both when we are satisfied and when we are bored, when we are laughing and when our mood turns down. Strengthen us by your power at every moment. We pray all these things from Our Father through your name and in communion with the Holy Spirit. Amen.