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Bible Study | Faith in Action

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Prepare

- Bible
- Journal
- Pen/pencil

Get Started

How do you react when things don't go your way in life? Do you become angry, frustrated, or anxious?

This month, let's focus on Philippians 4:11-13. What if you had to live on much less than you do now? Would you trust God with it?

Study and Learn

Read **Philippians 4:11**.

As Paul sat in his Roman prison cell, he wrote this letter to the believers in Philippi telling them he had "*learned to be content*" (emphasis added).

Being content with whatever we have is not easy. We live in a culture where we are constantly bombarded with news reports, social media posts, and app notifications. The list goes on. It's appealing to want to earn more money and accumulate more things. Often, we think the new house, job, clothing item, or gadget will make life better, easier, or more enjoyable. But more stuff never fulfills—you will always want more; the new gadget becomes old; and the house simply isn't in style anymore.

Read **2 Corinthians 11:23-27**.

Paul suffered more than most of us. He was imprisoned, shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, mugged, and went hungry. Yet through all these struggles, God drew Paul near and gave him comfort and strength to continue.

The Bible Project puts it this way: "Paul's imprisonment and hardships haven't meant his ruin; rather, they are the very way God has blessed him (and others through him) and through which he has experienced God's strengthening in any circumstance."

Read Philippians 4:12.

Paul said he had learned to be content “whether living in plenty or in want.”

Typically, we would think of living with almost nothing as the more difficult task. However, learning to live with everything at our fingertips is hard too.

Paul leaves us on a cliff-hanger at the end of verse 12, saying, “I have learned *the secret* of being content in any and every situation” (emphasis added).

Read Philippians 4:13.

Paul’s secret was this: “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

In a daily devotion video from Our Daily Bread titled “The Secret to Contentment,” Samer Massad discusses how we often miss the point of Philippians 4:13 and think we will succeed in anything because Jesus will give us the strength to win the game, get the job, or raise our children well. But what happens when life doesn’t go our way? Massad says, “Paul’s joy wasn’t connected to the external circumstances around him but rather the eternal promises of God in Christ Jesus.”

Apply

Learning to depend on Christ for our strength through all circumstances in life is complicated and takes time.

- Which do you think is more difficult: living with almost nothing or everything at your fingertips? Why is it also necessary to learn to live with everything?
- What practices do you need to integrate into your life to learn how to live in any situation?

Follow Up

Pray for opportunities to grow your dependence on God.

Commit to Memory

Verse: **Philippians 4:13**

Challenge: **Philippians 4:11–13**

When people experience a crisis, some of the basics of life get neglected. Eating becomes a chore. Laundry doesn't get done. Maintaining normalcy is nearly impossible. Friends who provide unasked assistance are angels who carry hurting people through the darkest days. The greatest thing you can provide a friend in crisis is the willingness to be inconvenienced. Your willingness to be inconvenienced will convey to him or her "I am in this with you."

Here are some commonly offered words and actions to **avoid**:

- Don't say anything that begins with "At least . . ." Nothing comforting is going to be on the other end of that statement during the initial phase of grief. While the statement may be true, now is not the time to help refocus on the positive.
- Don't say, "It will all be OK" or "Everything happens for a reason." Simply stated, you do not know what consequences lie ahead. And while God can redeem all circumstances, we can't presume to know what role He plays in the cause of any event. Earthly pain is often the result of a fallen world, free will, and original sin. In his or her time, the hurting person will begin to recognize God's hand at work in the situation—whether that is a hand of healing or a hand of comfort through continued brokenness.
- Don't invite others into the situation—even as prayer partners—without permission. Some people in crisis want to grieve privately. Others appreciate being spared having to retell the story themselves but do want their larger circle of friends to know. If in doubt, say nothing. Otherwise, ask for your friend's guidance on what to say and to whom before speaking to anyone about anything related to the friend's crisis.

- Don't hand the hurting person contact information for someone with a similar story with the advice to call him or her. If you do know someone with a remarkably similar story, call him or her yourself. Often that person may give you the greatest insight on how you can assist your hurting friend.
- Don't judge your friend for how he or she is handling loss. Each person processes emotional trauma differently. Some people avoid environments and even people that remind them of the loss. Some may stop attending church and may even avoid you for a period. Keep in mind your friend's greatest goal is coping, especially if he or she has children. Reserve judgment related to other areas of life that may be suffering while he or she is grieving. It is usually safe to assume more difficulty is going on behind the scenes than is readily obvious. For the first year after the grief-causing event, survival is the goal, and anything better is a bonus.
- Don't linger after a meal drop-off. You don't know what hard, emotional conversations have occurred prior to your arrival. In the meantime, your friend may be trying to maintain normalcy for his or her children. The most appreciated meals are often the ones left on the doorstep.

To carry each other's burdens is biblical (Gal. 6:2). Share what you have with those who are in need (Rom. 12:13). The healing process is laborious, because there are no easy answers. The people who get their hands dirty in the cleanup are the ones who hold the greatest opportunity for real impact in their hurting friends' lives. A harvest is waiting for you who do not grow weary in doing good (Gal. 6:9).