

**Lesson Title:** Habits of Effective Disciples – Contentment

Key Concept: When we implement effective habits into our lifestyle, we become closer to God and grow to our full potential in Christ. Making contentment a way of life brings peace and satisfaction.

**Scriptures:**

Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

(1 John 2:15–17 *New Living Translation*)

Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

(1 Timothy 6:6–8 *New Living Translation*)

Context Scriptures: Philippians 4:4–13; 2 Corinthians 12:9–10; 1 Timothy 6:6–10; Hebrews 13:5–6

**Lesson Thoughts:**

Our nation's founding documents declare that "the pursuit of happiness" is a right given to each human by their Creator (US Declaration of Independence). This phrasing is interesting, because we are always pursuing, but never reaching, happiness. The Bible names "a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions" as the only things the world offers (1 John 2:16). These desires permeate our culture so much that we often become apathetic to how harmful they are.

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The “craving for physical pleasure” doesn’t only cause sexual promiscuity, pornography, and human trafficking, but it also feeds into amusement parks, spas, and even restaurants as people constantly crave more pleasure. The “craving for everything we see” is so built into our society that on Thanksgiving we give thanks for all we have, and the next day we trample people to get good deals. Buying things has never been easier as delivered packages have replaced mall shopping, and credit cards have displaced lay-away. “Pride in accomplishments and possessions” motivates us to discontentment in everything from career performance to our children’s accomplishments. Social media, with its filters and selfies, is a great way to boast of our conquests while also competing with others, which feeds our discontent.

The Biblical alternative to this discontent is to trust in the Lord, be joyful in him, and pray to him for our needs while thanking him for all he has already done (Philippians 4:4–13). What we see as need and weakness can actually become strength and power when we trust God with them (2 Corinthians 12:9–10). When our habit is to seek godliness instead of harmful things, we can be content with what we have, and we will experience a peace that only God can supply (1 Timothy 6:6–10).

Let us then make contentment something we practice every day, a habit that we embrace to complement the other parts of our godly lifestyle.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Besides the three offered in this lesson from 1 John, what is another enemy of contentment?
- 2) What is a “craving for physical pleasure” that you have trouble balancing?
What is a “craving for everything we see” that you have trouble balancing?
What is a “pride in accomplishments and possessions” that you have trouble balancing?
- 3) What habits can you implement to actively fight discontentment?
- 4) What other habits that we discussed this term fight discontentment?

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Notes and Reflections

- 1) Think back to 10, 20, and 30 years ago. What were the things you were pursuing, the things you thought would make you happy? Have you gotten any of them? Did they make you happy?
- 2) Over the next two weeks, do one of the following:
 - a. Think of three things each day that you are thankful for. Write them down or share them with a friend or family member.
 - b. Find a rock. Put it either in your pocket or in a place you'll see several times a day. Every time you see it or feel it, think of something to be thankful for.
- 3) Empower a person close to you to point out when you are complaining or being discontented. Each time they do, turn your thoughts to something positive that God has done in your life. (If you really want to empower them, commit to give them a reward every time they catch you.)