



## Acceptance: The Key to Contentment

Close your eyes and picture yourself contented. Describe contentment here:

Where are you? \_\_\_\_\_

What are you doing? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel? \_\_\_\_\_

What other words could you use to describe that experience? \_\_\_\_\_

If our idea of contentment is in any way dependent on outside circumstances—people, places, or things being a certain way—we will not only not have contentment most or all of the time, we will also be trying to change circumstances in order to get contentment.

1. Contentment isn't natural for us; discontentment is.

2. God wants us to be contented.

3. All of us have disappointments. Write down a few things that have turned out differently than you hoped or expected:

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4. The Israelites experienced disappointment during their journey to the Promised Land.

5. How do you react when circumstances aren't what you want? When things don't go your way, are you a--

- Doubter: Do you focus on the circumstances, doubt God, and question His purpose?
- Controller: Do you try to force change impulsively and foolishly?
- Blamer: Do you get angry and avoid responsibility?
- Complainer: Do you grumble, complain, whine and nag?
- Martyr: Do you compare your circumstances to others or how things should be and feel sorry for yourself?
- Adjuster: Do you accept the circumstances and then do what you can to make them better?

6. The Apostle Paul was an adjuster. He was under house arrest for two years, knowing that he might be martyred, and yet, he could say that he was content (Philippians 4:11).

How did he become an adjuster? He practiced. He said, *“I have **learned** to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty, I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength”* (Phil 4:11-13).

7. So, if contentment is what we are after, what is it and how do we get it?

**Contentment:** Being satisfied with what one is or has; not wanting more or anything else.

**Discontentment** is the opposite: A restless craving for what one doesn't have.

8. So if being content means that you are satisfied with what you have, how do you get that? Through acceptance.

- **Acceptance:** Taking or receiving what is offered; giving approval; believing or accepting.
- The opposite of acceptance is refusal or disapproval.

9. Acceptance isn't passive. It doesn't mean that:

- You don't have any responsibility to do your part.
- You have to tolerate everything or be a doormat.
- You don't have feelings or opinions about the circumstances.
- You don't struggle with acceptance for a while before you can do it.
- It only works for things you don't have.

10. Acceptance is active. It means that:

- You surrender to the facts of the situation and stop trying to fight them internally by simply accepting reality.
- You change the things you can.
- You do what is right and necessary, including standing up to injustice and sin.
- You continue to strive for what is best and better.
- You get acceptance through a process.
- You surrender to God not the circumstances, trusting Him no matter what and accepting His provision as sufficient.

11. Examples of active acceptance:

- Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38-42).
- Seeking medical treatment for an illness.
- The Apostle Paul when imprisoned (Acts 22:22-30).
- King David pleading for his unborn child's life until he died (2 Samuel 12:15-23).
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:16-18).

12. Examples of passive acceptance:

- Get sick and not go to the doctor or take medicine.
- Not look for a job when you are laid off.
- Not attempt to better yourself or relationships.
- Not fight your spouse for your rights in a divorce

13. Active acceptance accepts the paradox of being content with the way things are now, yet striving for what is best or better. Paul understood this paradox. He knew how to be content with himself as less than perfect (Romans 7:19-20), but yet continue to strive to be better (Philippians 3:12-14).

14. What blocks us from acceptance?

- Holding on to our own expectations.
- Stuck in the "if onlys."
- Comparing ourselves to others.
- Denial.
- Self-pity and martyrdom.
- Lack of trust in God.

15. A refusal to surrender to the reality of your circumstances results in:

- Wasted energy and time.
- Inability to change what you can.
- No peace or rest.

What does acceptance result in?

- Closer relationship with God (Exodus 6:6-8).
- Better relationships with others (Romans 12:18).
- Freedom to change the things you can (Matthew 7:3-5).
- Peace by entering into God's rest (Hebrews 3:7-4:11).

16. Peace comes as a result of trusting God's sovereign will and surrendering to it.

- *Rest* in Greek means "causing to cease; putting to rest."
- Philippians 4:6-8 tells us not to be anxious but to bring all our requests to God with thanksgiving and that the peace of God will reign in our hearts.
- You can enter that rest because you know that "*He that has begun a good work in you will be faithful to complete it*" (Philippians 1:6) and because "*God will fulfill His purpose for you*" (Psalm 57:2).
- You can surrender to the Heavenly Potter who made you as He saw fit (Romans 9:20-21). You are perfectly, fearfully, and wonderfully made and God's work in you is wonderful (Psalm 139:14). Know God delights in you becoming all He created you to be.
- You can accept others as they are (Romans 15:1) and allow God to work in their lives, as He is working in yours, knowing they are perfectly, fearfully, and wonderfully made uniquely by their Creator (Psalm 139:14) and that He will accomplish His purpose in their lives too.

### Application

Write down two circumstances that you need to accept and surrender to God:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

Write down two things that you can change:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_