

Philippians 4 – Contentment in all Situations

11/30/17

When I transferred to Lubbock Christian College from McLennan Community College in the Spring of 1972, I was convinced that I needed to pledge a “social club” – something similar to a fraternity. My friend who had convinced me to transfer had been at LCC for a semester and had already become a member of one of the clubs, so I agreed to pledge it. I understand now that what much of pledging consisted of would now be called “hazing,” but to us, it was a series of ridiculous things we were subjected to in order to gain membership in the desired club. It culminated with pledge night, where we were blindfolded and taken to a caliche pit outside of Lubbock where we were forced to eat some awful stuff, do exercises until we dropped and suffer a little sleep deprivation and mild mental abuse....great fun!

Throughout the entire pledging process, we were constantly told to recite our pledge verse—and I still can to this day. (By the way, one main difference between our “social clubs” at LCC and fraternities is that ours was a “Christian” orientation and initiation, complete with a verse of Scripture needed to get through it) The verse?

“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” (Philippians 4:11 – KJV)

No matter what “abuse” our pledgemaster heaped upon us, we as pledges were to be content. Maybe not completely happy, but satisfied the situation was what it was.

In the New International Version, this is how we read **Philippians 4:11-13**:

“I am not saying this because I am in need, for 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 all this through him who gives me strength.”

Paul wants us to be content in any and all circumstances. He has stressed throughout this fourth chapter to the Philippian church just how that is to be accomplished, even though we humans have a hard time understanding how to follow through with his advice.

Here are the steps to contentment, Paul style:

1. Stand firm in the faith. **(Philippians 4:1)**
2. Be unified and help each other through to tough times **(Philippians 4:2-3)**
3. Rejoice! **(Philippians 4:4)**
4. DON'T worry, but DO pray **(Philippians 4:6)**
5. Experience God's peace **(Philippians 4:7)**

6. Fill your mind with good thoughts, don't let your mind dwell on the bad things that are going on in your life (**Philippians 4:8**)
7. Utilize the strength that God has given you to overcome adversity (**Philippians 4:13**)

The opposite of contentment is greed—the striving for more. It is greed (and the inability to get what you want) that James says causes “war” in a person’s soul. (**James 4:1-3**) As children of God, we are to be “*free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*” (**Hebrews 13:5**) God will, as Paul says in Philippians 4:19, “*meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*” We must learn to be content with that.

---Johnny Stephens