



## Content in Christ • *Philippians 4:10-13*

Pastor Kenneth Spiller • February 5, 2023

### **BIG IDEA: Jesus is always more than enough.**

➔ **Can you think of a time when someone told you something and said it was in the Bible and it caused you to ask, “Are you sure?”**

We would all agree that we can't take a few words from one verse of the Bible and combine them with a few words from another part of the Bible to create a new verse. Why? Because that's not what those Bible verses mean. Context matters. When we talk about context in terms of the Bible, we're stepping into the territory of interpretation, often referred to as hermeneutics. While we have a problem with pulling different words from various parts of the Bible and stringing them together to create a Bible verse, we don't always have the same problem with pulling out a whole Bible verse from a paragraph and ignoring its context.

This new series is called T-Shirt Theology. T-Shirt Theology is something that looks or sounds good on a t-shirt or a wall decoration, but it *might* not be what you think it means. Why? Because it's often taken out of context. When we take scripture out of context, we end up creating our own meaning, instead of looking to the original meaning of the authors and the Holy Spirit.

We're tackling this subject because **incorrect interpretation leads to incorrect understanding, which leads to incorrect application.** In other words, taking a Bible verse out of context can lead you to believe that the Bible says or promises something it doesn't.

A prime example of this comes from Philippians 4:13, a well-known and often-quoted verse which says, **“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”**

## ➔ When was the last time you heard someone quote Philippians 4:13? What was their context?

Pastor Kenneth told us that no matter how many times he quotes Philippians 4:13, he is not going to be able to dunk a basketball. It's not going to help anyone bench press an extra 100 pounds at the gym.

In order for us to use this verse correctly, we need to look at the context, the setting and circumstances surrounding it.

The context of this verse is the passage Philippians 4:10-13 and the larger context is the epistle to the Philippians. When Paul wrote this epistle, he was in prison for his faith. While imprisonment is not a typically joyful experience, Paul's joy exploded when his friend Epaphroditus came to visit him. His friend brought a gift from the Philippian church with him, which would have been a tremendous blessing as prisoners in the Roman system were not fed or clothed by the Romans. The monetary gift from the Philippian church would provide those things for Paul. Still, Paul's joy is much more profound than simply receiving a gift. Paul's joy comes because he knows giving and generosity are marks of a person's spiritual health. In other words, Paul can see that God is working in the Philippian church, and he's glad about that.

Paul then dives into a very countercultural spiritual truth. As Paul is closing his letter to the Philippians, he has one more topic that he wants to address: **contentment**. Paul says three big things about contentment in this passage.

## 1. Contentment goes beyond circumstances.

**"I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances." -Philippians 4:10-11**

The first thing we see is that contentment is not about circumstances. Paul stresses that his contentment didn't increase or decrease based on his material provisions. The philosophies of Paul's day talked about contentment as "self-sufficiency." The stoic school of philosophy taught that people should be self-sufficient or independent of external circumstances. The idea was that you shouldn't and didn't need anyone. In Paul's day a content person was a self-made Superman, who was independent and able to rise above everything that came his way.

➔ What are the similarities between this pool of thought and what people believe about contentment today?

➔ Have you ever been told, "You don't need anyone but yourself!" or "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!" or "You can manifest it."? Have you found these sentiments to be true?

Paul transforms this idea of contentment from being self-sufficient to describing someone who is content as “Christ-sufficient.” Christian contentment is about believing that Christ is enough. Paul is content not because he’s a man’s man who can rise above anything that comes his way, but because he is dependent upon Christ. **Jesus is always more than enough.**

Pastor Kenneth told a story about his pet turtle, Sherman. Sherman often wanders around in circles and isn’t quite sure of what he is looking for.

➔ **Can you relate to Sherman? Do you ever feel like you’re wandering in a circle, not quite sure of what you’re looking for?**

➔ **What can you do to find contentment? How would you teach someone else to find contentment?**

Contentment is not found in a thing, but in a person — Jesus.

## 2. Contentment can be learned.

**“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.” -Philippians 4:11-12**

Twice in this passage, Paul says he has learned to be content. Just like Paul, we have to learn contentment. It doesn’t just happen to us. Paul knew abundance and what it was like to go without. Paul went through some hard times too. Look at 1 Corinthians 4:11-12 and 2 Corinthians 11:25-27.

Paul learned contentment even in extreme deprivation, from hunger to homelessness to being in rags to beatings and exhaustion to humiliation. And don’t forget “his thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) and his internal struggles. Paul wrote these words about being content to the Philippians while he was in prison! On the other side, Paul also experienced plenty and abundance.

Paul uses the word “secret” when referring to Christian contentment because contentment remains a mystery to those outside the faith. It can only be learned from the inside, by those who are in Christ. The secret to contentment is found in Jesus. It’s found in being Christ-sufficient, not in being self-sufficient.

Things don’t have to go our way for us to be content. Why? Because Jesus never changes, and **Jesus is always more than enough.**

➔ **How do you respond when things don’t go your way?**

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.

-St. Augustine

➔ How might learning to be content in Christ change your reaction when things don't go your way?

### 3. Contentment flows from reliance on Christ.

**"I can do all things through him who gives me strength."** -*Philippians 4:13*

This passage is about being content in any and all circumstances. It's about focusing on Christ and realizing He is more than enough.

The updated version of the NIV translates this verse well: **"I can do all this through him who gives me strength."** What is the meant by "all this?" It's the need or plenty, the lack or abundance, the ups and the downs, the good times and the bad. Paul has learned to be content in every situation only through Christ, who gives Him strength.

Paul is preoccupied with Jesus. When you focus on Jesus, you can be content. This changes our weaker T-Shirt Theology to a theology that can actually make a difference when you lose a job, when faced with a bad medical report, when things are going great and when they aren't. **Jesus is always more than enough.**

In closing, Pastor Kenneth shared the story of when he wrote the song *Found In You*. [You can listen to the song here.](#)

➔ How will you think about Philippians 4:13 differently in light of this message?

➔ How can you change your focus to being on Jesus?

Pastor Kenneth challenged us to keep a daily gratitude journal to help us learn to be content in Christ.

It was spring, but it was summer I wanted,  
the warm days, and the great outdoors.

It was summer, but it was fall I wanted,  
the colorful leaves and the cool, dry air.

It was fall, but it was winter I wanted,  
the beautiful snow, and the joy of the holiday season.

It was now winter, but it was spring I wanted,  
the warmth and the blossoming of nature.

I was a child, but it was adulthood I wanted,  
the freedom, and the respect.

I was 20, but it was 30 I wanted,  
to be mature, and sophisticated.

I was middle-aged, but it was 20 I wanted,  
the youth, and the free spirit.

I was retired, but it was middle age that I wanted,  
the presence of mind, without limitations.

My life was over, but I never got what I wanted.

*-Poem quoted by David Platt*

