

LEARNING TO BE MORE CONTENT

A STUDY ON HOW TO FROM THE BIBLE

By Rev. Donald F. Ginkel

*“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.”
Philippians 4:11-13*

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Opening prayer —

Father, far too often our minds can be consumed with the things that only money can buy which can also bring discontent for that which we already have. Help us focus our hearts on that which has lasting value that brings eternal dividends. As we lift our voice to You this day and turn our hearts toward Your unfailing love we find joy and satisfaction that will not be determined by the events or non-events of this day. When human love is fleeting or disappoints help us look to Your unfailing love which satisfies. We want to listen to You, eat what is good, and delight ourselves in Your abundance. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. — *Daily Encouragement*

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Lesson One

LEARNING TO BE MORE CONTENT

Content: Gratiified, pleased and satisfied
Antonym: Unhappy, dissatisfied, displeased

CONCERNING MY EXISTENCE

Existence: actuality, corporeality, reality

You can tell when it's going to be a rotten day. You call Suicide Prevention and they put you on hold. Your birthday cake collapses under the weight of the candles. Your twin sister forgot your birthday. Your horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels on the highway. The bird singing outside your window is a buzzard. You put both contact lenses in the same eye. Your wife says, "Good morning, Bill," and your name is George. Ah, but there is hope!

Philippians 4:11b I have learned (*it doesn't come automatically*) to be content whatever the circumstances.

Despite his high standing in Judaism and his impressive education, Paul confesses that he had to learn contentment and so do we.

Even Before My Creation

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you (*the foreknowledge of God*), before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Long before you were born, God knew you. What effect should this truth have on you? _____

Why should you think about this often for the rest of your life on

earth? _____

God Created Me

Rick Warren writes: “You are not an accident. Your birth was no mistake or mishap. Your parents may not have planned you, but God did. He was not at all surprised by your birth. In fact, he expected it . . . You are alive because God wanted to create you” (*The Purpose Drive Life*, p. 22).

Psalms 139:13-16 For You created my inmost being; you knit me together (*bones, sinews, and veins*) in my mother’s womb. ¹⁴I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made (*astounding*); Your works are wonderful, I know that full well (*without a doubt*). ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place (*out of our sight, but not God’s*), when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body (*embryo, when David was a shapeless mass*); all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.

In just a few words, what does King David seem to be saying in these verses? _____

Isaiah 44:2 This is what the Lord says—He who made you (*Israel—from their very beginning as people and as a nation*), who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid (*despite their many sins and disobedience*), Jacob (*a poetical name for Israel indicating affection and tenderness*), My servant (*Israel would be God’s servant in that eventually from them the Messiah would come*).”

Isaiah 64:8 **You**, Lord, are our Father. **We** are the clay, **You** are the potter; **we** are all the work of Your hand.

To what degree are you a creature and a work of God’s hand? _____

True or False: As a result of the answer given above, you have every right to complain to your Creator when you feel it is justified. (*Defend your answer*) _____

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me (*Elihu speaking to Job*); the breath (*Genesis 2:7*) of the Almighty gives me life (*suggesting that the same thing is true of Job*).

In light of the above Scriptures, can you imagine any circumstance in which you could actually wish that you were never born? _____

Are you pleased that God made you? Why? _____

I Am Unique

Russell Kelfer who was blind wrote —

*You are who you are for a reason.
You’re part of an intricate plan.
You’re a precious and perfect unique design,
Called God’s special woman or man.*

*The parents you had were the ones He chose,
And no matter how you may feel,
They were custom designed with God’s plan in mind,
And they bear the Master’s seal.*

Romans 9:20-21 But who are you, a human being, to talk back

to God (*that is real arrogance*)? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” (*this is really quarreling with God*)²¹ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use? (*What is the answer—yes or no?*)

Give an example of how you might “talk back to God”?

Have you ever wished you could be someone else? Why or why not? _____

What are the benefits of appreciating that God created you to be a unique person? _____

I Have a Purpose for Living

As a child of God, what is your purpose for living? It can be summed up in the following two points. What is the “**Great Commandment**” (Mark 12:30)? _____

What is the “**Great Commission**” (Matthew 28:19-20)? _____

Matthew 6:33 But (*continually*) seek (*desire, pursue, and aim*) first His kingdom (*in a non-synergistic sense*) and His righteousness, and all these things (*what we should eat, drink, and wear*) will be given to you as well (*a picture of contentment*).

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do (*temporal or spiritual*), whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Romans 6:13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to Him as an instrument of righteousness.

True or False: I believe that I could be more content than I am if I won the lottery and received millions of dollars. Why? _____

Psalm 37:7a Be still (*be submissive, avoid murmuring*) before the LORD and wait patiently for Him.

In *The Purpose Drive Life* Rick Warren writes: “We are often challenged to do ‘great things’ for God. Actually, God is more pleased when we do small things for Him out of loving obedience. They may go unnoticed by others, but God notices them and considers them acts of worship. Great opportunities may come once in a lifetime, but small opportunities surround us every day. Even such simple acts as telling the truth, being kind, and encouraging others, we bring a smile to God’s face (1 Samuel 15:22, p. 96).

Does it bother you to do the “small things” in life? _____

Should you be pleased that you can do them? Why? _____

One restaurant has this sign on a wall: “Life is short—eat desert first.” Briefly discuss how this could be true in daily living.

Do you actually consider your life worth living? Why? _____

Have you ever gone after something in life that you thought would bring you contentment and it didn’t? Care to share? _____

If asked, what would my friends and family say is the purpose of my life? _____

How could spending a few weeks in Maui each year with all expenses paid by someone else help you be more content?

Don't keep wishing for life to get better; rather, enjoy what you can now. Work at trying to practice this on a daily basis.

I Am Created for God's Pleasure

1 Samuel 12:22 For the sake of His great name the LORD will not reject His people, because the Lord was pleased to make you His own.

How does the LORD feel about making you His own?

How should you feel? _____

Israel became God's people not because of their worthiness but only because of His free grace and favor. This is true for every child of God.

Luke 12:18-22 "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.'¹⁹ And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

²⁰"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with whoever stores

up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

This man was not created for self-indulgence and neither are you.

I Am Created to Live Forever

Ecclesiastes 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart (*This suggests dignity. Your neighbor's cat does not think about eternity, but you should because God has put it in your heart and that should please you.*)

True or False: The consciousness of the eternal is a natural part of you.

True or False: Your afterlife will be much more important than this life. Why? _____

C. S. Lewis once wrote: "If I find in myself a desire that this world cannot fulfill, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know (*this is not a guess*) that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have (*notice the present tense of the verb*) a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands (*It is yours now. You just haven't moved in yet*).

R. C. H. Lenski writes: "Our tent here on earth may be taken down at any time . . . Its opposite is 'a building from God,' a house or home not made with human hands, eternal in the heavens with God and Christ: a permanent, glorious, infinitely blessed existence in heaven. Let the form of existence or life come to an end, be folded up and put away like a tent; we have the other awaiting us, an existence and a life like an everlasting, great building, which were created for us by God Himself in heaven" (*Interpretation of 2 Corinthians*, pp. 996-997).

What is the “tent” compared to the “building” meant to convey to us? _____

How should this verse be comforting to us? _____

In Hebrews 11:23-28 we see that Moses was a man who did not just live for the here and now, but for eternity. In Colossians 3:2 we’re told not to set our affections on the things of this earth (*things which often disappoint us*), but on the things of heaven.

Closing

Years ago a missionary led a worship service at a leper colony. During the service he asked if anyone had a special song they would like to sing. A woman whose face was disfigured, with no ears or nose or lips or fingers, raised her hand and asked, “Can we sing ‘Count Your Many Blessings?’” He began singing it with them, but he couldn’t finish. Let’s say or sing verse 1:

*When upon life’s billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*

Let’s pray: Almighty and most gracious God, we want to learn how to be more content. You knew us even before we were born. You made each of us unique. You have placed eternity in our hearts. Remind us daily that we have a purpose for living. Give us grace to practice the art of contentment each day. Our hearts are open to Your instruction. We pray in the name of Jesus, our dear Lord and Savior. Amen.