

Read: Philippians 4:4-13

God Gives Us Strength in All Things

Philippians 4:12

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.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amos liked his bike. He didn't *love* it—it was a hand-me-down from his sister, and so it was pink and a little too small for him—but he liked it. It was good enough for riding up and down his street and having fun with his friends. Good enough, that is, until his friend Silas got a new bike for his birthday. Silas' bike was perfect: just the right size, just the right color, and not a hand-me-down from anyone. Suddenly, Amos wasn't so content with his hand-me-down bike anymore.

Sometimes it's hard to be content—to be happy or satisfied with what we have—isn't it? Oh, it might be easy for a while. Even though that toy or game is getting older, it still works perfectly well and you still enjoy playing with it. But that toy or game can quickly lose its appeal when the newest toy or game is released, and then you aren't content anymore.

In today's reading, the apostle Paul says that he has learned to be content whatever the circumstances. That's a pretty bold statement for him to make! When we read about Paul's life in other parts of the New Testament, we discover that he experienced some difficult situations. There were times when Paul was hungry, when he was in prison, and when he was being mistreated and beaten. But Paul says he learned the secret of being content in any and every situation—even the toughest ones.

So what *is* the secret? He says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." What does that mean? What does being given strength have to do with being content? Who is this "him" that Paul mentions?

If you answered "Jesus," you're absolutely right! *Jesus* is the secret to being content in any and every situation! Jesus gives us the strength to remember that the situations we face here on this earth won't last forever. Someday, we'll be in heaven with Jesus. And until that day, we can be content in any situation, just like Paul.

Paul's secret didn't mean that he could do everything on his own. It didn't even mean that he could do everything with Jesus' help. But Jesus did give Paul the strength to do everything that was pleasing to God, and he gives us the strength to do the same—no matter what situation we are in.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- What does it mean to be “content”?
- The next time you feel unhappy, what can you remember to be content?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why does Paul call his way of being content a “secret”? Why isn’t it obvious to everyone?
- Talk about ways you can live in a way that shows others you are content in any and every circumstance.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- TRUE or FALSE: Contentment is about your attitude, not your circumstances.
- Paul says that Jesus is the secret to being content. But sometimes it seems like unbelievers are happier and more content than believers. Discuss the source of their happiness. Compare it to the source of a Christian’s happiness.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, help me to be content in whatever circumstance I am in. Give me the strength to always trust that you love me and are working for my good. Amen.

Hymn: CW 213:1,4 – Forever With the Lord

Forever with the Lord!
Amen! So let it be.
Life from the dead is in that word,
My immortality.

Lord, be at my right hand,
Then can I never fail.
If you uphold me, I shall stand;
With you I shall prevail.