

## SESSION I — THE FOUNDATION OF CONTENTMENT: THE CHARACTER OF GOD

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A. **God is self-sufficient.** He possesses within His own life as God everything that is good.

**Acts 17:24-25** — *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.*

**Psalm 50:7-15** — *Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*

B. **God is sovereign.** God plans and carries out His perfect will, over the smallest and largest parts of creation fully, and He does so without failure or defeat.

**Daniel 4:30-37** — *“Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom He will.” Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of*

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*heaven, till his hair grew as long as eagles’ feathers, and his nails were like birds’ claws. “At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever; For his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.”*

**Isaiah 45:6b-7** — *I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.*

C. **God is all-knowing, or omniscient, and all-wise.** He knows all things; He understands all things perfectly, and He uses this complete knowledge in the best ways.

**Psalm 147:5** — *Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.*

**Isaiah 40:13-14** — *Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows Him his counsel? Whom did He consult, and who made Him understand? Who taught Him the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?*

**Psalm 131:1-2** — *O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

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### D. God is love, and He gives good gifts.

**1 John 4:10** — *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

**Romans 8:32** — *He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?*

**James 1:17** — *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

**Matthew 7:11** — *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*

**Cycle of contentment:** *we need – God provides – we thank Him – God is glorified.*

**Psalms 16:5-6** — *The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

### E. Conclusion.

*When hard times come, and they will, let's determine to judge the hard times BY the character of God and refuse to judge the character of God by the hard times.*

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“[One of the marks of Christian maturity which a believer should seek is] an acquiescence in the Lord's will founded in a persuasion of his wisdom, holiness, sovereignty, and goodness . . . So far as we attain to this, we are secure from disappointment. Our own limited views, and short-sighted purposes and desires, may be, and will be, often over-ruled; but then our main and leading desire, that the will of the Lord may be done, must be accomplished. How highly does it become us, both as creatures and as sinners, to submit to the appointments of our Maker! And how necessary is it to our peace! This great attainment is too often unthought of, and over-looked; we are prone to fix our attention upon the second causes and immediate instruments of events; forgetting that whatever befalls us is according to his purpose, and therefore must be right and seasonable in itself, and shall in the issue be productive of good. From hence arise impatience, resentment, and secret repinings [i.e., complainings] which are not only sinful, but tormenting; whereas, if all things are in his hand, if the very hairs of our head are numbered; if every event, great and small, is under the direction of his providence and purpose; and if he has a wise, holy, and gracious end in view, to which everything that happens is subordinate and subservient;--then we have nothing to do, but with patience and humility to follow as he leads, and cheerfully to expect a happy issue . . . How happy are they who can resign all to him, see his hand in every dispensation, and believe that he chooses better for them than they possibly could for themselves.”

(*Letters of John Newton* [Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960], 137.)

**Hebrews 13:5-6** — *Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

**Contentment is being satisfied in God, His character, His works, and His ways.**

## SESSION 2 — THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTENTMENT: THE URGE FOR INDEPENDENCE

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### A. The Fall of Mankind

**Genesis 3:1-7** -- *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

### B. The Desires of Mankind

**1 John 2:15-17** -- *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

#### 1. The desires of the flesh

“If you’re willing to sin to obtain your goal or if you sin when you don’t get what you want, then your desire has taken God’s place and you’re functioning as an idolater.”

(Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart*, p. 25)

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#### 2. The desires of the eyes

#### 3. Pride in possessions

**1 Corinthians 4:7** — *What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

**James 4:1-4** — *What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

### C. The Transformation of our Desires

. . . the cravings of the human heart can be changed . . . God would have us long for Him instead. To make us truly human God must change what we want, for we must learn to want the things Jesus wanted . . . The human life is a great paradox. Those who die to self, find self . . . If I crave happiness, I will receive misery. If I crave to be loved, I will receive rejection. If I crave significance, I will receive futility. If I crave control, I will receive chaos. If I crave reputation, I will receive humiliation. But if I long for God and His wisdom, I will receive God and His wisdom. Along the way, sooner or later, I will also receive happiness, love, meaning, order and glory.

(David Powlison, *Dynamics of Biblical Change*)

**Matthew 7:13-14** — *Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*

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*Intentionally cultivate dependence upon God.*

*Lord, I give up all my own plans and purposes, all my own desires and hopes, and accept Thy will for my life. I give myself, my life, my all utterly to Thee to be Thine forever. Fill me and seal me with Thy Holy Spirit. Use me as Thou wilt, send me where Thou wilt, work out Thy whole will in my life at any cost, now and forever.*

(Betty Stam, Martyred Missionary to China)

***When you cannot see His plan, when you don't see His hand at work on your behalf, return to what you do know about His character and His purposes.***

### D. Glory in The Gospel of Jesus Christ

**1 Corinthians 15:3-4** – *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*

## SESSION 3 —THE CULTIVATION OF CONTENTMENT: THE FRUIT OF THE GOSPEL

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**Specific tips for cultivating grace-wrought, God-honoring contentment:**

### 1. Monitor our minds.

**Our thought life to a significant degree determines our contentment.**

*E.B. Pusey's List for Fostering Contentment:*

- 1) *Allow thyself to complain of nothing, not even of the weather.*
- 2) *Never picture thyself under any circumstances in which thou art not.*
- 3) *Never compare thine own lot with that of another.*
- 4) *Never allow thyself to dwell on the wish that this or that had been, or were, otherwise than it was, or is. God Almighty loves thee better and more wisely than thou dost thyself.*
- 5) *Never dwell on the morrow. Remember that it is God's, not thine. The heaviest part of sorrow often is to look forward to it. "The Lord will provide."*

***Specific Areas of Temptation in Which to Monitor Our Thoughts:***

**Comparison** – John 2:21-22; Romans 12:15; Matthew 20:1-15; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

### Expectations

*"If thine eye is evil towards thy neighbor because God is good to him, it is proof that thou quarrelest with Providence . . . And if God should give to one of His children more than He gives to you, has He not a right to do what He will with His own?"*

(William Plumer)

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### Entitlement

*“If we do not have what we desire, we have more than we deserve.”*  
Thomas Watson

*“O Lord, I am astonished at the difference  
between my receivings and my deservings,  
between the state I am now in and my past gracelessness,  
between the heaven I am bound for and the hell I merit.”*  
(*Valley of Vision*, p. 12)

### 2. Guard our hearts.

Cultural consumerism / advertising / shopping, etc.

### 3. Foster gratitude.

What God gives / What God withholds.

### 4. Cultivate a God-directed worldview.

### 5. Grow in selfless giving.

*“Seldom resist a generous impulse.”*  
George Sweeting

### 6. Develop an eternal perspective.

*“Death begins a wicked man’s hell, but it puts an end to a godly man’s hell.”*

Thomas Watson

### 7. Look to Christ, our example.

## PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

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Begin by praying asking God to reveal your heart to you by His Word and by His Spirit. Read the following verses to prepare your heart:

Psalm 51:10  
Psalm 119:18  
Jeremiah 17:9-10  
Romans 8:26-27

1. In the first session, we talked about four qualities, or attributes, of God that are revealed in the Bible: self-sufficiency, sovereignty, wisdom, and love. Of these four, is there one or more particularly difficult for you to believe especially in challenging times?

Based on your answer, read the following passages that teach about this attribute. Read carefully, write out some summary statements, and pick a verse or passage to memorize and meditate on that you may be strengthened to trust God in hard times.

Self-sufficiency: Psalm 50:7-15; Isaiah 66:1-2; Acts 17:24-25;  
Romans 11:33-36

Sovereignty: Psalm 115:1-3; 147:5; Job 42:2; Daniel 4:19-37;  
Eph 1:11

Wisdom: Psalm 104:24; Isaiah 40:13-14; Daniel 2:20-23;  
Romans 11:33-36; 1 Cor 1:18-31

Love: Lamentations 3:22-24; Romans 5:8; 8:32; James 1:17;  
1 John 3:1-2; 4:10

2. Think back over your life. What have been the biggest causes of discontentment? Think through different seasons and stages. Do you see a pattern of struggle? What truths about God could you have trusted more fully during those times?

## PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

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3. In our materialistic, consumerist society, it is tempting to be discontent regarding money and possessions. Look up the following passages and write summary statements of God's perspective on money.

Proverbs 30:8-9

Ecclesiastes 5:10-12

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Hebrews 13:5

4. In the second session, we talked about "ultimate concerns." What have you allowed to be ultimate in your life? What should be ultimate? Look up the following passages and summarize what should be our ultimate concern.

Psalms 62:5-8

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Philippians 3:7-11

## PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

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5. One of the biggest challenges to cultivating contentment occurs when someone else gets an opportunity we long for, is gifted in a way we aren't, or receives something we strongly desire but haven't received. Look up the following passages and make notes of God's perspective on these challenges.

Romans 12:15

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

Galatians 5:25-26

Pray and confess to God any areas of discontentment of which you are aware. Ask Him for abundant grace to grow in contentment, to grow in trusting His sovereign and loving care in your life.