

Scripture:

- Phil 4: 6 to 13: Philippians 4 New International Version (NIV) - Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity
4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! 2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Final Exhortations **4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.** Thanks for Their Gifts 10 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. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 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. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
- **Proverbs 13:12 New International Version (NIV) 12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.**
- Psalm 139: “where can I go for this spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go to the heavens you are there - and if make my bed in the depths, you are there. If rise on the wings of dawn - if I settle on the far side of the seat - even there your hand will guide me - your right hand will me hold the fast - and surely the darkness will hide me - and the light will become night around me - even the darkness will not be dark to you - the night will shine like the day - for darkness is as light to you.

Sermon notes – Chasing Contentment by Wade Joy

- Hello, my name is Wade Joy - Worship Pastor at Elevation Church is my honor and privilege to bring God's word to you this weekend.
- See Phil 4: 6 to 13.
- The title of today's sermon that God is giving today is called "Chasing Contentment."
- **Opening prayer: Lord I hope that you speak to us through your word - I pray that you give us hearts to believe - ears to hear - in the faith to obey. Jesus name we pray Amen.**
- As a retired worship leader and retired songwriter in currently your worship pastor I love music.
- While with my three kids we try to give them a history lesson the music - and specifically my evolution that led to my love for music - while listening on my favorite high school bands from the 90s – Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, Pearl Jam. Foo fighters, and others.
- My twins are different in this way - one loves pop in the other loves rock - specifically Foo Fighters.
- While growing up in Columbia South Carolina I wrote my first song in second grade.

- As a parent now I understand some of the love and protection that my parents provided me – while I was growing up.
- While in 2nd grade, I was full of angst because of certain bike riding limitations - that was against my will.
- So I did something remarkable in 2nd grade after school - and this was before the Internet and smartphones- we actually went outside - and rode our bikes – and my parents had strict rules of me not riding my bike past the stop sign at the end of our street - while frustrated with this restriction, I wrote a song – “nobody understands me - nobody understands me - nobody understands me - with a closing verse: nobody understands me.”
- **Eventually I made it past the stop sign in third grade - but I don't think I got past that feeling - whether it second-grader at 43 - thinking that there's something I'm missing out on - just beyond the stop sign - how on earth can I be happy or content in the small stretch of road - when the whole neighborhood awaits - if I could just get there - if I can just be that - or I could just achieve that - just maybe I would be happy - maybe I can find joy - and maybe I can be content.**
- Paul is writing in Philippians about contentment.
- **I often think that contentment consists of two parts: 1. My life has to be perfect - and I'm not sure about you but mine is never been that way or 2. I have to pretend like is perfect - and be fake and happy with decisions that I made that I had no control over.**
- And somehow those were the components of contentment.
- Let me first state that I think you have a very blessed life - I love my family - love my church - I'm getting to live out my dreams.
- How many of you know that struggling for contentment is not just being in the valley - and you wish were on the Mountain. Sometimes, you're on the mountain and you are satisfied and happy - until you look over - you see your friend on another mountain that is a little bit taller - a little bit sexier - than your mountain - and now you're not content.
- We all want contentment - with the relationships – with our friendships - with our finances - with our bank account - this picture-perfect image of what our life should be.
- If I could just have that, then I would be content.
- **But I did not know how to be content seven years ago when I got a call from a doctor stating my five week old child that cystic fibrosis - I was not sure how to be content with that.**
- Nor was I sure I would have the ability to tell her one day how she would be content with that.
- We all have to deal situations - for example how you be content on the loss of a spouse - how do you see contentment when your son be raised in church and is now involved in drugs – how are you content with a job that you hate - how are you content when facing things in your life that you have the power to change but you can't?
- So, why are you chasing it – we keep struggling with it – and we keep saying - if I could get my life to just be this way - then I'll finally get it - and I will be content.
- **And in chasing contentment also resulted in me making the dumbest decisions in my life.**
- Chasing this fleeting and feeling of contentment.
- And I believe God put this strongly in my heart.
- **Some of you are on the verge sabotaging your life - trying to find contentment - because you think it's in the next marriage and your about to abandon this one - because you think it's in the next career or the next job - where you pursue contentment and ruin your life in the process.**
- Somewhere along the way I think - I caught the wrong thought of what contentment really is - and maybe you have to.
- Recall Pastor Furtick sermon from last week called “I Caught a Thought.”

- I think our culture has caught the wrong thought about what contentment is - and I think Paul is trying to explain it to us right here.
- Also recall that Paul is writing this passage on contentment from a prison cell - which probably is not the ideal place in my mind to write about contentment.
- But I think this is the place for God wanted Paul to be to write this passage.
- Paul's not saying I'm content with the prison.
- He's not saying that is happy about it - he's not saying that is pleased about the lack of resources - he's not saying that he's happy being persecuted because of his faith.
- See verse 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.
- Paul is not saying that we should be content with our season.
- Honestly, I don't even think God is content with some of her seasons.
- I don't think God wants us to hurt that way - or to suffer.
- **Paul says there's a secret to being content - it's not with it - it is being content in it.**
- **And I have the wrong preposition in there the whole time.**
- **There is a secret to being content in your trial - not with your trial.**
- And I think this is what caused the first century world to take notice of these people like Paul - who claim to follow Jesus Christ - the self-proclaimed Messiah - and their facing down death and persecution - and they still have joy - and they are still rejoicing - and the first century world did not understand this - and sometimes I don't understand this either.
- How does one learn to be content in every season?
- **And this is the message I want to preach today - it is not contentment with a situation - it is contentment in a situation.**
- This sounds cute - and it is true at face value.
- However, the more I started thinking about this - and thinking about explaining to my daughter how she is to be content with her physical condition - or explaining to someone that doesn't have a job to be content in that season.
- It doesn't matter what words you put there - it doesn't matter how cute things sound - those in a difficult season still feel miserable - and frustrated - and thinking that there's something missing.
- Perhaps this is part of the secret - and not all of the secret.
- Last weekend I was sitting on my couch's looking in Philippians 4 - asking what's the secret of contentment - because I want to know.
- Here's what I love about Scripture - I read a passage for years - and in the moment the Holy Spirit speaks to you - and illuminate a truth that you needed to hear - that exact right moment - at that exact right time.
- I can't wait to share this with you because - it's has started to help me.
- And I really hope that that helps you.
- And I think the secret is in verse 9 - "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Thanks for Their Gifts"
- I think God sent me here to tell you stop chasing contentment.
- Practice this.
- **Contentment is not a chase - it's not a magical download - contentment is a practice - it takes work - and it takes repetition - it is not normal - it is a practice.**
- We are talking about practice - and I feel the spirit of Allen Iverson coming over me today.
- You can be content in your situation - but it takes practice - and this is your default setting.

- Here's an example: I love guitar - and my favorite guitarist is Stevie Ray Vaughn - and I wish I came out of the womb with a guitar in my hand - playing his version of Little Wayne.
- It took me years and years of practice in high school - to learn all cords.
- And I can't play anywhere near the level of Stevie Ray Vaughn - or I'd be playing with Joey over here - every single weekend.
- However, I know cords enough to get the job done - and playing all the cords comes naturally now - think about it - it took practice to make something that wasn't natural - to feel natural.
- **Paul is saying - we are not prone to make the choice that leads to contentment.**
- **It is not natural – but - as Paul looked at his life and applied skills that he put into practice - day after day - month after month - year after year - even if he didn't feel normal - he learned the secret of being content in any situation.**
- And Paul is telling the church at Philippi - if you practice these things - you can learn to.
- There are three skills that we can practice that I want to share with you during the rest of the time we are together:
- Here are the three skills that we can practice to cultivate a heart of contentment – so get your sweats on – and let's get ready for some training
- **#1: Practice the petition** - whenever asked my daughter where she wants to eat, her answer 100% of the time is Genghis Grill. She loves this place. However, there is not a Genghis Grill close to our house - this triggers a polite fatherly veto. While doing errands with my wife, my daughter summoned the strength to ask to eat a Genghis Grill.
- **Think about this as it relates to God: no matter how many good things God has done from me - I think that His disposition towards me is always no. Yes, God is good but I have a hard time believing that God wants always good things for me - and he might take me to McDonald's but not the Genghis Grill.**
- **It's hard for me to accept the truth that God wants something good for me.**
- If I asked for something a lot, it might be an idol - and God will say no.
- As a result, I have miss-identified contentment for no - so not to be disappointed when I get a no instead of yes – and all this does is lowers my level of expectation - lower my level of belief - lower my level of faith - I claim it's contentment but really it's just complacency.
- Where I just settle.
- **And I don't think Paul says that contentment is merely accepting the situation - I think Paul is telling us that God wants us to ask.**
- He wants us to ask God to move - he wants us to ask. See Phil 4: 5, 6, and 7: Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
- We use the word prayer a lot - and become numb to it - however I want to focus on the word petition.
- Petition is to make were present a formal request to an authority with respect to a particular cause.
- Contentment is not found in just accepting things - as they are - is found when we find there someone in our life with the power and authority to make it better.
- **That person is not us – it is appealing to a higher authority - who has the power to act but also the wisdom to know when and how to act - and sometimes knowing when not to act.**
- The first thing to recognize is that I am not the authority over my life - things that are out of your control - realizing there's nothing that we can do or I can do to fix the situation - so we have to appeal to a higher authority - in order to make petitions we have to stop hiding her emotions - hiding our desires and hiding our requests from God. We can't hide from God.
- We try to hide what we want from God - yet he still knows.

- Here's why this thinking is dangerous: When we do that, we begin to believe the lie that God doesn't listen - and God doesn't care - and when that happens, we start to lose hope - and there's no way you can have contentment without hope – Proverbs 13 tells us that Hope deferred makes the heart sick.
- We have to hope that God can and will move for us to have a heart of contentment - and so petitioning God is also cultivating hope.
- And here's what this looks like in my life - a window into my prayer life - and I wish I could say I get up at five in the morning and spend an hour in blessed communion with God - and I hear his audible voice - I get my best prayer time done in the car - this is not very churchy - and a little bit messy - it starts with me trying to be brutally honest with God – and I try to get all my feelings out - sort of like when I was in second grade mad about not being able to ride my bike past the stop sign - and then I try to get past the emotions into a realm of truth - that you are for me - that you called me - that you equipped me - I try to say this out loud in order to get it in my heart.
- Then I make the petition - and this petition doesn't have to be very big - for example one day things are stacking up against me for a little bit, I said this prayer: Lord I know that you're supposed to be the source of my encouragement - and my validation - and I'm not supposed to need other people's encouragement - however just this once - can I at least get some sense of approval from you - and I left it there - and later that night I received two unsolicited text messages from two people that are typically not prone to give me encouragement - and was very specific and very timely - almost as if God heard my prayer.
- And you might call this a coincidence - and perhaps it was - however my heart was stirred.
- And I start making bigger petitions to God.
- Here God tells me to be bold in your petition - be bold in your faith.
- And start hoping again.
- Are there things in your life - where you have given up hope?
- And God has sent 5'6" blonde worship pastor to tell you the hope again?
- But God is authority over your life - he has the power to act - and we need to bring our whole self to him - we have to stop hiding from God - and start hoping in God - and this is the only way we can cultivate a heart that is content.
- Even when the answer is no, the posture of forgiveness is submitting to our authority - and say that God I trust you - I love you - and even if the answer is no right now - God still works all things together for good.
- And so we have to practice the petition.
- **#2: practice the pivot** - this is the second skill so that we have a heart filled with contentment.
- While Paul was in prison he is not denying the reality of the situation.
- In Paul's trying to teach the church that even in the worst situation possible - you can still choose your focus - where you can focus on the thing that feature fear - or you're going to pivot your heart and focus on the thing that fuels your faith.
- I can focus on the source of my worry and obsess over that - or I can pivot my heart to the whatever - and this whatever is found in verse 8 – “8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”
- Paul says there is a whatever in any season in any circumstance - no matter how bad it is - we can find a whatever if we learn to pivot.
- Some of you might remember the sermon series called “God's will is whatever.” This is one of my favorite sermon series ever.
- I like to propose that this be a sequel to that sermon series.
- Your contentment is whatever - Whatever you feed on - whatever you focus on - whatever you gaze at - with your heart - we have to learn the art of the whatever in the pivot.

- It's not whatever feels true - or feels right - it is whatever is true - contentment is not a feeling - it is a focus.
- In this heart pivot is not natural.
- And it takes practice.
- Don't just say "this situation isn't good" - pivot your heart to say but I know God is good.
- He is saying don't obsess over the betrayal - pivot your heart to say I'm going to act on this and move on as an act of forgiveness.
- Yes you can recognize that the situation is the hardest thing you've ever been through - but we also remember to pivot your heart to know that God can do all things - through Christ who strengthens me.
- This is the art of the pivot.
- This is why what we do here in this church every weekend so important.
- Because your greatest weapon in the fight for contentment - is worship - because there's no greater thing the pivot the your eyes off yourself for the situation - and onto God - and onto Jesus - and onto a higher authority - then worship.
- In this atmosphere of faith, we have to prioritize this - because this is pivot practice or contentment practice - while in this house of God.
- On Friday I came into practice the sermon - because preaching to you is not my default setting. And I'm hoping there's no one in the building as I dry run this sermon. And somebody walked in the auditorium to fix things. And at first I was a bit bummed out - and halfway through my practice sermon - the person raised his hand and asks for me to speak louder - and then the man came down and grabbed a seat in the front row - as I'm reading the text in my sermon that says to practice the pivot - and pivot away from the frustration of not being of the practice alone.
- And then I prayed with the man that was in the auditorium - and the man confided that he watches elevation church online - and now convinced himself that he needs to get back to attending church - and we had a great conversation about the importance of surrounding yourself with the right people - because people help you pivot one way or another - and I realized that if I stay focused on my frustration I would've missed this important moment with this man.
- In so many of us are missing opportunities for contentment and missing opportunities for purpose because were so busy focusing on the frustration - and we have to practice the pivot.
- **#3: practice the present** - the final thing we are to focus on today.
- One of my greatest struggles is being present in this moment - in the season that God has been - if I'm honest I think it is one of the biggest struggles of our generation - yes or staring at her phones all day - looking at everybody else's moment - and looking at everybody else's season - and I start to sing "nobody understands me" like I did when I was in second grade - and this is my biggest stop sign.
- And if I could just get through this screen on my phone - and live their life - to their job - to their family - to their situation - then just maybe I can be content.
- **And God is telling us today that contentment is never in the next season - if we cannot cultivate it in the present one - contentment is not in the next - contentment is found in the now - and we have to practice being present - and it is very hard because there are so many legitimate situations that are hurtful and painful - and we want to escape from them - and Paul is writing from one of those places in Philippians 4.**
- **Paul is not some super Christian that was immune from struggles - and if you read his writings you can see that he occasionally struggled with depression - and was hard for him to believe some of the things that he was writing - but I have to think that as he sitting in his prison cell - and he's stops rolling and stops chasing - and quiets his mind and pivots his heart to Jesus - and be present - and as equated his heart - I wonder if Paul started to recognize that there was another presence - that was with him in this prison cell and had been with him every and in every part of his life.**
- See verse 9 - and it has a couple of words that we can miss it for not paying attention.

- See vs 9: “9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Thanks for Their Gifts.”
- And I think this is the hinge on which contentment swings on: The God of peace will be with you.
- Paul says this: As he looks back over his life - when he was being persecuted or when he was being celebrated - and every single season God was there - God never left me - his presence was there with me - and I believe that part of being present - and practicing being present - is not trying to bypass how we feel - because sometimes all you can feel his hurt - and all you can feel his pain - and there may be some horrible things that you’re walking through right now - the Bible says to mourn with those who mourn and weep with those who weep - and sometimes you just have to feel it - and there’s no other response except to cry - and cry out to God to say I do not understand this.
- The essence of contentment is when you don’t feel peace - the God the God of peace is with us - it is with you in your situation.
- And there’s no one that knew the Old Testament better than Paul. So I have to believe that he was thinking somewhere in the back of his mind - Psalm 139.
- Psalm 139: “where can I go for this spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go to the heavens you are there - and if make my bed in the depths, you are there. If rise on the wings of dawn - if I settle on the far side of the seat - even there your hand will guide me - your right hand will me hold the fast - and surely the darkness will hide me - and the light will become night around me - even the darkness will not be dark to you - the night will shine like the day - for darkness is as light to you.
- God wants to remind us - that even in the seasons we are chasing after contentment in someone else - or chasing after contentment and a new job - or a new relationship - and in every season know that God has been chasing after you.
- And you can stop chasing contentment since contentment has been chasing you - in the person of Jesus Christ - and his offering that up to you today.
- You don’t have to like your situation to recognize that Christ will never leave you in it.
- He is always there.
- You don’t have to be good with it - to recognize that there is good in it - and if you’re having trouble finding your whatever - Christ is your whatever - he is whatever is good - whatever is pure - whatever is noble - and he is there with you - and even if you are in a dark season - the word of the Lord for you today is this - he sees you - he knows you - he is for you - his grace covers you - and he is with you - and he loves you.
- Closing prayer: you are good and you are with me. Say this under your breath and in your cubicle so that others don’t hear you - you are good and you are with me.

