

# ***Philippians 4:10-20***

## ***Discussion Guide***

### ***Background***

At the beginning of Philippians, we learned that Paul is in prison and awaiting trial for preaching the Christian Gospel. Because Paul was a Roman citizen, it is believed that his imprisonment was a little easier and more comfortable than it might have otherwise been. Many historians believe that Paul's imprisonment took the form of house arrest in Rome. It is possible that Paul was chained to a guard, at all times, or it may have been that he was free to move around his house, but was watched so that he couldn't leave.

One of the complications of Roman house arrest was that prisoners were expected to provide their own food and supplies, even though they couldn't go anywhere. Thus prisoners under house arrest depended on support from outside friends or family in order to help meet their needs. This explains why the Philippians have sent a financial gift, in order to help get Paul through this period. Their hope is that money and in-person help from a man from Epaphroditus will help sustain Paul until his trial, when he could possibly be released.

At the end of Chapter 4, Paul comes back to the topic of the collection that the Philippians have taken for him. He is grateful for the money and provision, but most importantly, Paul says he is grateful for what this offering says about the Philippian church. In the passage he highlights other times that they have been able to support him, and he views their loyalty and generosity as a sign of their maturity in Christ.

This attitude comes out of Paul's contentment "in any situation," whether he has much or little. Paul is taking the idea of contentment from Stoic philosophy, which taught that someone can develop an attitude of acceptance and maintain peace through their own internal strength and resources.

However, Paul says he is able to develop a content spirit through his relationship with Jesus. It's not that Paul assumes Jesus will fix all his problems or give him everything he wants. Instead, through faith Paul is able to experience the peace that "passes all understanding" (v. 7), and maintain his joyful faith in the midst of adversity.

**Read Philippians 4:10-20**

### ***Discussion Questions***

- 1) In your own words, how is “contentment” different than “happiness?”
- 2) Why do you think stress and anxiety are so prevalent in our culture (even before the pandemic?)
- 3) Should following Jesus make your life “easier?” Why or why not?
- 4) How does this passage change your understanding of how God answers our prayers?
- 5) What practical habits or practices help you experience contentment in God’s presence?

### ***Going Deeper***

This week, consider experimenting with one of the following practices:

- 1) Spend some time writing down struggles or worries that you are focusing on. Ask God to help give you greater peace and contentment as you work through them this week.
- 2) Read 1 Timothy 6:6-12. How does this passage reinforce what you hear Paul saying in Philippians 4?
- 3) Spend time praying for someone who does not know Jesus, that they may come to know Him in a new way.