

Contentment: Phil 4-13

# Respond

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This is the conclusion of the Contentment Series from Phil 4:3-13: Rejoice, Release, Respond to God. Let's read this passage again.

**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.

**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.

When I was meditating on this months ago, Rejoice (rejoice in everything) Release (present your request), Respond (act: put them into practice) came out of this. Eric talked about Rejoicing in Contentment: a deep spiritual trust in God that brings stability. He said rejoicing is to make much of Jesus and he wanted us to say the phrase over and over “Rejoice...” He gave us practical ways to rejoice: make it a habit by building it into our daily rhythm, to sing and vocalized out loud.

Then Rod gave us the sermon on releasing: sit in the hottub with God and our out your complaints before God: Contentment comes from the presence of God. Then Sue preached on Release; I listened to both of these again. The gist from Sue: stop complaining and let go of what you're holding onto: it only takes 6 weeks to need something else to fill your cup. Contentment comes from letting go: they overlapped in laying all before God, opening your heart. “You're pouring out your heart...for you, for people around you and for the world.” Sue also said contentment can feel like it leads to complacency: responding is trying to mitigate this complacency.

## Secret to Contentment

Rejoice    Release    Respond

Philippians 4:4-13

## Rejoice

Contentment - is a deep spiritual stability from trusting in God

Rejoice - To make much of Jesus

Joy is the reality, rejoicing is the expression, and through both, we learn true contentment in Christ

Habitually rejoice. Build it into your daily rhythms. Rejoice when you drink coffee, sing, speak gratitude out loud, and vocalize during trials

## Release

Rod - This side of resurrection it's not going to get better so sit in the hot tub with God, pour out your complaints because he wants to hear them and he wants to remind you of his love for you. Contentment comes from the presence of God.

Sue - Stop complaining, open your white knuckled fists, and let go of you're holding on to. Because even when we get what we thought we really wanted, 6 weeks later, you'll need the next thing. Contentment comes from letting go so God can give.

## Release

### Lay it all before God

Pour out your heart to God, open your hands because

"God has something SO good he wants to give you... Himself. And life always flows from that, for you, for the people around you, and for the world."

-Sue Cepin

## The secret to contentment

Rejoice - Look up and see the door

Release - Open the door

Respond - Walk through the door and go deeper into the Kingdom of God

If we drop any of these, we will run into problems. We could be in joy but looking down. We must look up! We could walk right into the door and get a headache: we must pour out our desires to God which leads to burnout. If we don't; respond, we only have a picture but we don't get to experience it.



Here is a silly AI generated picture of a girl walking through a doorway that is the Bible. I liked its visual which reminds me of a story of responding.

A year ago, I felt discontentment in my job, not a new experience since I had graduated in 2020 with an engineering degree. I worked as lube tech in Flagstaff and I couldn't get an engineering job during covid so I worked at my dad's auto shop. But I wanted to use my degree: I was discontent. Eventually, the job market opened back up and I got what I thought would be my dream job at a business that makes creative art. I got to

both design, build, and install projects. I was an electronics intern but 6 months in, it was apparent that the designing part of the job was a part that I dreaded and even loathed. I was discontent. In 2019, I “heard” a phrase that said to “work with people” but that didn’t line up with my degree. I ignored this. I thought maybe I’d be a manager of people in engineering...but it became clear that this was not what I longed for. During this time of discontentment, I even thought I’d be a Bible scholar but that still was not working with people. I got an opportunity to be a chaplain but I had no experience in it and I had a pregnant wife so it didn’t feel secure. I went back to the auto shop and tried to renew my desire to work with people. When I had a newborn, the phrase “work with people” came back. At this point, I was comfortable working at the auto shop: stability felt good. I started to wonder if I was selfishly wanting a “perfect” job. I didn’t know. We started to pray about this and I asked Pastor Eric to disciple me. I had vague desires to start a youth group. My meetings with Eric turned into weekly meetings and then on Easter morning, I had a dream that I wrote down:

*I got up, I knew where to go, my feet took me to the table and we sat at a wedding with lots of food and drink. There were both friends and family there: there were many tables there with a connection to the bride and groom. We were all joyous and content. Then suddenly, we got up and started running...I started skipping and leaping and others did too. I even hopped like a bunny like I did for my young daughter. We were all headed to a glowing man in the distance. As we continued, I was getting closer to him and others faded. When I finally saw his face, I recognized him and we fist bumped and said he was glad to see me. I walked past him. I saw people running towards their dream house and car, but I walked to my family’s old cabin, ready to cultivate the ground.*

Others said this dream was reminiscent of the new heavens and earth. It was a beautiful gift: it didn't answer my mixed motives but it said to me that God saw me and heard me. Catherine and Eric agreed.

Responding to God is complicated: it took me 5 years to hear and choose something that moved toward him.

Scripture that comes to mind about responding to God:

Micah 6:8  
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? **To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

I wondered HOW do all these things that I boldfaced.

Matthew 22:37-39  
Jesus said to him, “You shall **love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall **love your neighbor as yourself.**”

**By the Holy Spirit**

Like the flaming tongues over the apostles at pentecost  
God’s presence came down like fire over mount Sinai  
Like fire over the temple  
Joel 2:28-29



**by spur one another on toward love and good deeds**

by all of your heart, as **wokir**



We do these through the Holy Spirit. It is reminiscent of the fire in the temple, fulling

the prophecy in Joel: This could be inspiring but I feel more like this:

### Spirit of God in the Bible

Genesis 1 - The Ruakh of God is hovering over the waters

Joseph

Bezalel

Joshua

The judges - Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson

The kings - Saul and David

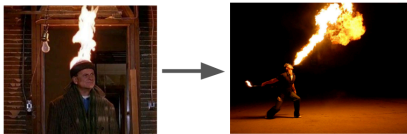
The prophets - Ezekiel

I wondered where the spirit is poured out in the Bible. The spirit hovers and then we see creation. The next example is Joseph who could interpret Pharaoh's dream. There is Bezalel who could do fine craftsmanship for the temple of God. Joshua had the spirit within him and conquered nations. Judges were filled and defended and rescued God's people. King Saul prophesied but the spirit was taken from him later. David was filled but had to wait a long time after he was anointed to become king. He defeated Goliath and was hunted by Saul. Last, the prophets were filled to speak God's truth, notably Ezekiel.

Notice these experiences manifest very differently. It will be different for us as well.



This is a picture of how I think the Spirit of God felt in the people mentioned above. But I still feel like this:



How do I get from one picture to the next?

"Be ye good money changers"



Money changers exchanged one kind of money into Roman money. You needed to tell the counterfeit from real: was it pure or brass (fake)? Was it legally minted and the correct weight? Is the money adulterated (filled with clay or inferior metals)?

### Discerning God's Voice

Be able to tell a counterfeit from the real thing quickly

Discerning the voice of God and the leading of the spirit is a lifelong process of learning to differentiate God's voice from all other competing voices

1 Thessalonians 5:21: "but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good"

This is spiritually like telling God's spirit from all the competing voices. We must quickly discern which voice is real. Often, this needs to be quick but we can slow down these moments and process through it. This reminded me of I Thes 5:21. We must examine all the voices and hold to that which is good.

#### Listen

Acts 13:2-4

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

This is a good example of how to discern God's voice. They were worshipping and fasting (listening postures) and then they heard the Holy Spirit: yet, they didn't act immediately, they prayed and fasted more.

Listen

Hear

Confirm

Act

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

**5** In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:1-5

Christ speaks words of comfort

Christ calls us near to be offered help

We are given fellowship in the spirit and tender mercy

#### Listen - Hear - Confirm - Act

Worship! Listen to and sing music that is anchored in scripture

Prayer and fasting

Leave empty space with the intention of letting God fill it

Journal

Go on prayer walks

Talk to other believers and pray with other people

Read scripture

Here are some practice ways to respond: worshipping, praying, fasting (leaving space to hear God). You could fast from food but lots of other things also leave space. You can journal, do prayer walks, talk to other believers and pray with them. Reading scripture continues on throughout all these.

## Trinitarian Prayer

A guided practice for the purpose of engaging God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Father:

- Thank him
- Ask him

Son

- Confession, try to be specific.
- Remember the cross and thank Jesus for dying for us.
- Ask what is Jesus doing?

Holy Spirit

- Engage scripture; read it or listen to songs.
- Listen for where the spirit leads
- Bring it to community

This kind of prayer is another application: it could be a journaling technique or a communal prayer.

Respond

Listen

Hear

Confirm

Act

Philippians 4:13

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

This is a simultaneously beautiful and infuriating part of this passage! Is it me or is it him?

"Humans are scandalously free. And we resent our freedom as much as our limitations."

-Blaine Eldredge 'The Paradise King'

Our freedom

We are made in the image of God and allowed to have real impact

Our limitation

We are not God so we do not control everything

**Contentment**

**A deep spiritual stability that comes from trusting Jesus**

At first glance, I didn't know if I agreed with this quote but the more I think about it, I agree with it.

I mostly resent the freedom of others to hurt me.

I resent things I can't control instead of releasing it.

Contentment is found out of our freedom within our limitations. We have to wait for God to act.

## Secret to Contentment

Rejoice Release Respond

Philippians 4:4-13