

# ***THE SECRET TO DISCONTENTMENT, PHIL4:10-20***

Letters from Prison #9

◆**Intro:** [the following is a lesson, as taught by a elder demon to a demon congregation in hopes of causing increased misery among humans. One must listen carefully to discern it accurately. They are being taught how to guide their humans...]

◆Infants are easily satisfied in many ways. They don't care about cars, and phones, TV, or fashion. They cry if they are hungry. Yet they can even smile sometimes as they fill their pants. As long as they are fed and warm in their clothing, they are generally content. This does not last long, for the human soul is rife with longing. Thankfully we can we build on this and teach them to learn the ways of man, to aspire, to desire, to become driven and to consume, and to make something of themselves. If you've ever wondered how to make sure children live in discontentment all life long, you will be glad to know there are things that can be done for this. Therefore I will offer today some secrets to discontentment. If ever you want to build on natural, human dissatisfaction be sure to do get the humans to do these things!

◆**1. Surround them in their early years with as many toys and books and things as possible.** This will keep them from being able to focus for very long on any one thing. As they grow older, keep giving them the latest of everything. And a lot at a time too. The danger is that they might learn to appreciate something as special and meaningful to which leads to that

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dreaded state of contentment which we want to avoid. (btw, this is equally effective for a grownup's level of discontent.)

◆By all means, never, and I mean never, remove from the playroom certain toys to be put away for a short period of time and then taken out again. The novelty of something they went without will almost certainly give them great delight and interest in what now reappears. In the process they will learn contented delight because they will see that life went on pretty much the same with or without certain things. Much worse, if they actually learn self-denial, that is a true detriment to discontentment.

◆To take an opposite example, when you think about it, how did the Apostle Paul “learn the secret of being content” in all situations? Why, God had to let him go without, and thereby discover that things like love, friendship, hope all can remain regardless of circumstance like hunger, or prison, or shipwreck. Or how did the people of Israel learn to trust in God, (trust is another enemy of discontentment, by the way)? Deuteronomy records that God let them get hungry, and then fed them with manna so they learned that man does not live by bread alone, but by the hand of God! If you want to help your humans stay discontent, and therefore become driven, never-satisfied individuals, I suggest you never let them get very hungry.

◆**2. Second, to achieve true discontent, Surround their minds with images of whatever they do not have at the moment!**

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This will set them on the track to eventually obtain such items. Hold before them dreams, images, pictures on the wall of beautiful people, lavish estates, and unending gadgets. Talk with them about all the things they never had, but always wanted. One of the best ways to get the parents to model this is for them to spend long hours each evening on Amazon paging through at least 40 options before ever making a purchase of a simple item.

◆ A word of caution. Be very careful NOT to let them talk appreciatively about what they already have. Tell them, "Try to avoid posting pictures on your desk of events or people that have enriched your life. Instead buy magazines with stories of people that have more than you. More curves, more hair, more time to golf, more chrome, more memory on their hard drives, more mbps." You get the picture. To stay discontent, there must be a carrot just out of reach at all times.

◆ This is the genius behind the human advertising industry. The average child sees about 40,000 commercials each year! Advertisers spend about \$15 billion a year to make it happen! Isn't it wonderous that kids ask for products by name already by the age of two! I'm pleased to tell you that discontentment is on a steady rise. The secret to being truly discontent is to continually want something else.

◆ **3. Remember to compare. Constant comparison is one of the best ways to keep yourself discontent.** Hollywood

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publicist Michael Levine lives in what many consider the beauty capital of the world, surrounded on a daily basis by gorgeous women. But he isn't satisfied. "Although I'm a successful, red-blooded American male," he confesses, "it is beauty alone that is keeping me single and lonely." He subscribes wholeheartedly to what is commonly called the "contrast effect": "Men are barraged with images of extraordinarily beautiful and unobtainable women in the media, making it difficult for them to desire the ordinarily beautiful." He comments: "My exposure to extreme beauty is ruining my capacity to love the ordinarily beautiful women of the real world—women who are more likely to meet my needs for deep connection and partnership of the soul."

◆ Poor soul. He just doesn't appreciate how firmly his discontent is being cemented into his psyche.

◆4. To insure an unsatisfying life, **Make making money the main thing.** One way to do this is to get parents to avoid reading the Bible with their kids. The Bible is notorious for talking about money. Nearly half of Jesus' parables are about stewardship or money, so you'll want parents to avoid reading those to their kids. There are about 500 verses in the New Testament on prayer, but there are about 2000 on money and finances. Here's one for example:

◆ *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content*

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*with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.” 1 Timothy 6:6-9, NIV.*

◆ You see how simple it is. We can use the enemy’s truth against them! Teach the kids to love money and not only will they be assured of being discontent, but they will also be trapped by numerous harmful desires! This of course leads to a corollary principle: tell them...

◆ **5. Never think beyond this immediate life.** This life is not enough for the human soul. Therefore, if we can keep them focused on the here-and-now, we can prevent the dangerous possibility of finding contentment that transcends circumstance!! One of their own writers, CS Lewis observed...

◆ “The Christian says, ‘Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or to be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of

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copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that country and to help others to do the same."

◆He sees it! We must not let that get out! Paul is another example, though we shudder to mention him. In Phil.4, the reason that he cannot maintain a descent level of discontent is that he looks beyond his world. He sees that his friends' gifts sent through Epaphroditus are actually offerings to God, and at the same time gifts from God who is making sure his children are supplied.

◆"At the moment I have all I need--more than I need! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable to God and pleases him. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:18, 19, NLT.

◆So, keep their minds only on earthly, visible things.

◆**6. Next, to maintain a continuous state of dissatisfaction for them and their kin, be very careful NOT to celebrate, or thank God.** A one of their teachers, Brennan Manning, writes:

◆I believe that the real difference in the American church is not between conservatives and liberals, fundamentalists and charismatics, nor between Republicans and Democrats. The real difference is between the aware and the unaware. When

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somebody is aware of that love—the same love that the Father has for Jesus—that person is just spontaneously grateful. Cries of thankfulness become the dominant characteristic of the interior life, and the byproduct of gratitude is joy. We're not joyful and then become grateful—we're grateful, and that makes us joyful.

◆Do you see how dangerous thanking God can be? If they must thank God, tell them to do it only when they hear of a close call, or an almost miserable situation that didn't happen. And then to only mention him under their breath. Or maybe once a year at Thanksgiving, but by all means not to go around their table each night and name something they're thankful for with their family. This will surely deter the discontent we hope to maintain.

Whisper, "If you simply must rejoice, rejoice in the things, the stuff, the blessings, the size of your house." all the while being sure to affirm that these are total accidents, flukes of nature.

◆Now admittedly we can use religion, and God to our advantage in our quest for no satisfaction. Teach that, "If you must speak with God, be sure to ask him for a great number of things when you pray". You see, When you pray to God more as a vending machine than a person, you are more likely conclude that prayer makes little difference, and thereby that God makes little difference. Tell them to try to avoid prayers of confession, prayers with questions, or praises, and not to tell God about their feelings, or wonderings. Such prayers lead to relationship, and relationship is detrimental to discontent. One of the reasons Paul

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could not muster up good old fashioned discontent in the text for today is that he focuses on more than the mere gift the Philippians sent. He was thrilled at *them*, their *character* and what God is doing in them!

◆ *"Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. I don't say this because I want a gift from you. What I want is for you to receive a well-earned reward because of your kindness." Philippians 4:16, 17, NLT.*

◆ If only he had focused on the actual monetary value of the gifts from the Philippians, he could have easily been more dissatisfied than he was! Let me give you an example. Suppose you received a Covid-relief bonus from your place of work, one that you really didn't need in the first place. Wow! Two weeks extra pay for doing nothing! Then suppose you get sick and have to quarantine two weeks doing nothing. How can you look at that?

◆ Im sure Paul would have said something like, "God provided just what I needed. I'm two weeks off, but still got paid." But he *could* have said things like, "I'm no more ahead than I was before!" or "Rats, there goes that Apple Watch I was gonna upgrade to. Now I have to stay with series four!" See, the way you name your circumstance makes all the difference in your discontent!

◆ This being the case, make sure not to let them read the Psalms in the Bible. They are entirely too grateful, and praising. Tell people "you're not a reader", or that they don't have any spare



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time. When the store clerk leads them all the way to the aisle where the flashlight bulbs are, get them to think "It's about time you earned your pay around here." about their attendant.

◆ **Conclusion:** Of course the real danger to discontentment is to experience the unexplainable love of God through other people.

This is what was happening to Paul, and why he was such a failure at dissatisfaction. To sum it up, let me read you a quote.

◆ "We're too comfortable to be spiritual... We think we will be able to pursue God better without danger or hardship. And yet it works in just the opposite way. Nothing is more difficult than to grow spiritually when comfortable. That's why the believer Alexander Solzhenitsyn's reaction to his exile to the Soviet labor camp was to bless it, because it was there that he discovered that "the meaning of earthly existence lies not, as we have grown used to thinking, in prospering, but in the development of the soul." *Tim Bascom*, in *The Comfort Trap*.

◆ Try to keep truth like this hidden. And the following...

◆ *"Don't always be wishing for what you don't have. For real life and real living are not related to how rich we are." Luke 12:15 (TLB):*

◆ Ok friends, all facetiousness, and backwards thinking aside... Someday, our heavenly parent is going to pick each of us up off the floor of this earth, and we will leave all the balls behind. We can waste this life, or we can use it getting ready for the longer

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one coming. Jesus came so we would learn to care about the next one, and then also be content in this one. His blood paid for that possibility!

◆“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” Luke 16:9, NIV.

### *Children’s sermon.*

◆Kevin Harney tells the following story in his book, *Seismic Shifts*: A little boy sat on the floor of the church nursery with a red rubber ball in each arm and three Nerf balls clenched on the floor between his pudgy little knees. He was trying to protect all five from the other children in the nursery. The problem was, he could not hold all five at once, and the ball nearest to his feet was particularly vulnerable to being stolen. So, whenever another child showed an interest in playing with one of the balls, he snarled to make it clear these toys were not for sharing.

◆Like a hyena hunched over the last scraps of a carcass, this snarling little canine was not in the mood for sharing. The other kids circled like vultures around the kill, looking for a way to jump in and snatch a ball without being attacked and bitten.

◆Then it struck me: This little boy was not having any fun at all. There was no cheer within ten yards of this kid. Not only was he unhappy, but all the other kids seemed sad as well. His selfishness created a black hole that sucked all of the joy out of that nursery.... When church

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was over and his parents came to pick him up, he left the balls behind.”

