

CONTENTMENT

Do you find yourself frustrated by the same types of occurrences in your life—over and over again?

Is it the aggressive people in the traffic you endure daily during your commute?

Maybe it is the behavior of someone you deal with who does not behave as you think they should.

Or you do not like where you live, your job, your looks or some other aspect of your daily life.

Your happiness doesn't have to be based on what happens around you or to you.

You won't become happy if someone else changes or if the world around you changes. You become happy when you change.

From a Greek prison cell, the apostle Paul wrote, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation," **Philippians 4:12**.

It is not what happens to you or what goes on around you that shapes your character and state of being. It is how you choose to respond to it. Things or people around you may be frustrating, but is your response to it making it more stressful or less stressful for you?

Here are a few of the ways that you can make frustrating circumstances more stressful:

ONLY IF YOU WANT TO

Constantly complaining about your circumstances. Some people complain to anyone who will listen. Others complain repeatedly to themselves or the person closest to them. Make a decision to stop complaining. Find a solution or accept the situation as is but stop complaining about it to yourself or others.

Always expecting the worst in people. Do you feel like the world is against you? If so, you'll react to every situation in fear rather than love, thereby amplifying the intensity of any potential conflict and its impact on your emotional state of being.

Taking it personally when family, friends, or strangers are rude or inconsiderate. Have you noticed lately that people in general seem to be stressed and less considerate of others than they used to be? It has nothing to

do with you. People have issues. So choose not to react as though you are being personally attacked. If you do, you'll find yourself in **victim mode** nearly every time you leave your house!

Blaming others for your unhappiness. "If only my spouse/kids/boss/friends would change, I would be happy." Do you ever find yourself saying something like this to yourself? Blaming others gives us an excuse not to take responsibility for our own happiness. Don't give your power to be content away to others.

Feeling sorry for yourself. "Why me?" Why am I the one who has to deal with this? Everybody else's life is better." The truth is everyone has to deal with something. Ask, "What's the lesson here? How can I come out of this a better person?" Choose to allow challenges to strengthen your faith rather than diminish it.

So how can you change when the world around you remains the same?

You make a decision to do so. A commitment to be so.

The key is to respond rather than react.

A **reaction** is automatic. It doesn't require thought and is generated by external happenings. Fight or flight mode – adrenaline chemically reacts to your emotions.

A **response** is inspired, generated internally through thought, contemplation and prayer. It means that despite the external happenings, you choose to answer button-pushing situations in a way that honors your desire for peace and happiness in your life.

Your decision to change does not mean that rude people are right or that frustrating friends or family members are not to be accountable for their words and actions.

It simply means that your happiness and peace are not determined by what they do or say.

Don't wait in vain for others to change or the world around you to change.

You make the change.

PRACTICE DAILY: change one reaction at a time, not all at once.

Identify one change you can make that will allow you to experience contentment in a situation that upsets you. Let go of your attachment to the idea that someone

or something must change in order for you to be happy. You make a decision to change.

Happiness is based on external influences that we believe will meet our physical and emotional needs

There are happy people in the world who are happy because they consider themselves blessed. The reason they consider themselves blessed is they have learned to be content with what they have and not frustrate themselves with what they don't have.

Matthew 5. Blessed is uses nine times of people who did not have the things that the world considers necessary to be happy.

Contentment is different from being happy. Contentment is internal, independent of outside issues.

Content is to be to be possessed of unfailing strength

to be strong, to be sufficient, to be enough

to defend, ward off

to be satisfied,

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.