

Lesson 12

BALANCE THROUGH CONTENTMENT

Introduction

“For the first time, she did want more. She did not know what she wanted, knew that it was dangerous and that she should rest content with what she had, but she knew an emptiness deep inside her, which began to ache.” —Iain Pears, *The Dream of Scipio*

Sometimes lack of contentment is ill-defined emotion. We're unsettled, longing for more, but unclear what would fill the void within. Other times we know exactly what would make us feel better. We can point to a specific circumstance that is causing our discontent.

We also experience seasons of life when our circumstances are more or less the way we want them to be. This can lead us to mistake those feelings of satisfaction for true contentment. But in the words of Dr. David Jeremiah, “If you are not content in challenging circumstances, the contentment you think you feel in other circumstances is not contentment but simply your satisfaction that things are momentarily the way you think they should be.”⁴³

Saint Paul leads the way in giving us a beautiful example of contentment. He wrote the following while imprisoned, which gives his words added weight:

Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11–13)

Note that Saint Paul did not say, “I was born with an extraordinary ability to be content in the midst of suffering.” He said, “I have learned.” This should greatly

⁴³ David Jeremiah, “Turning Point with Dr. David Jeremiah: Contentment—When Enough Is Enough,” Oneplace.com, www.oneplace.com/ministries/turning-point/read/articles/contentment--when-enough-is-enough-13954.html.

encourage us. Contentment can be learned. It doesn't depend on our circumstances. No matter where we are, regardless of our track record, we can grow in the area of contentment.

There are many things that get in the way of this pursuit. Throughout this lesson, we'll look at five barriers to contentment, and the ways we can break through them and experience the freedom that comes from being satisfied with what God has already provided.

Day One

BARRIER #1: AN OVERWHELMING DESIRE FOR MORE

1. According to Ecclesiastes 2:10–11 and CCC 2536, how much is enough? Will more possessions or money satisfy us?

“Give a man everything he wants and in that moment everything will not be everything.” —Immanuel Kant

2. Where does our material wealth come from? Who is the true owner of all we possess? See 1 Chronicles 29:11–12.

3. Read the following excerpt from Os Guinness' book *The Call*, paying attention to the difficulty we have in differentiating needs from wants:

From the Greeks and Romans down to many modern people, a simple piety has reigned: the notion that we can solve the problem of money by distinguishing between “needs” and “surplus,” between “necessities” and “luxuries.” Carnegie, for example, held that philanthropy was the business

of “administering surplus wealth.” But what if we can never settle on the balance? What if one person’s luxuries are another’s necessities? Can’t we always rationalize how much is enough?⁴⁴

Take a few moments to meditate on your spending. If you were willing to choose a simpler or less expensive option over a more luxurious one, then give away the money saved, what could that provide for someone in need? Does meditating on that thought impact your level of contentment?

This excerpt continues:

The problem is that money can assume an inordinate place in our lives until it becomes a personal, spiritual, god-like force that rules us—Mammon. Jesus’ use of *Mammon* (Aramaic for *wealth*) is unique—he gave it a strength and precision that the word never had before. He did not usually personify things, let alone deify them. And neither the Jews nor the nearby pagans knew a god by this name. But what Jesus says in speaking of Mammon is that money is a power—and not in a vague sense, as in the “force” of words. Rather, money is a power in the sense that it is an active agent with decisive spiritual power and is never neutral. It is a power before we use it, not simply as we use it or whether we use it well or badly. As such, Mammon is a genuine rival to God. . . . Either we serve God and use money or we serve money and use God.⁴⁵

Do you agree with these statements? Why or why not?

⁴⁴ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1998), 133.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 133–134.

4. In Matthew 6:19–21, Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” What are some practical ways you can treasure the things that matter most instead of feeding your appetite for more possessions?

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . . You alone will satisfy the longings of my heart.

To break down the barrier to contentment of an overwhelming desire for more, pray Psalm 63.

*O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
Because your merciful love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.*

*So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,
when I think of you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:1–8)*

Day Two

BARRIER #2: LACK OF PURPOSE

Lack of purpose is a barrier to contentment. When we don't know why we are here on earth, we often seek fulfillment and purpose in the wrong places. Sometimes we experience discontent because we don't seem to be doing anything that really matters. This can discourage us, causing us to settle for mediocrity instead of the great purpose God created us for. Other times we experience discontent because we *have* measured up and achieved our goals, but they were the wrong goals. We now realize that having achieved them doesn't satisfy us the way we expected. Contentment is intricately tied to recognizing the *true* purpose of our existence and spending our time accordingly. To discover it, we must start with the one who created us.

1. CCC 27 is a great starting point for understanding why we are here. Read it and answer the following questions.

What is written in the human heart, and why?

What does God never cease to do?

Where is the only place that we will find the truth and happiness that we never stop searching for?

What does our dignity rest on?

If a woman exists, it's because God created her through love, and through love continues to sustain her existence. What does a woman need to do to live fully according to that truth?

2. Read Paul Bradshaw's interview with Rick Warren, found in Appendix 6. What insights do you gain from his perspective on the purpose of life? In what way do his words confirm the truth found in CCC 27?

What is the purpose of your life? It's bigger than personal fulfillment, feeling an inner peace, or being happy. It's bigger than raising a family or having a career. **Your purpose here on earth is to know God and become more like Him.** Every longing, disappointment, and circumstance needs to be filtered through that truth.

3. Life is meant to be an adventure. Even though we'll experience suffering and disappointment, those circumstances give us the opportunity to fulfill our life purpose. Each day, God calls out to us through the events He allows to intersect our lives. We need to be ready to listen to Him in the midst of the circumstances, asking how He is calling us to respond. What does 2 Timothy 1:9 say regarding God's call to each of us?
4. Think of an area of your life where you are experiencing discontent. Look at that circumstance through the lens of your true purpose. How is God calling you to respond? In what way can you know God better and become more like Him in the midst of your current difficulty?

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . . You will find Him here.

Contentment comes when we know we're living right in the middle of God's will. When we are able to look at all our circumstances as a means to fulfill our true purpose—knowing God and becoming more like Him—we are able to go through life thankfully. Expressing thanks is a key to contentment. Our circumstances don't change, but our perspective does. This change in perspective equips us to "present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1)

Spend a few minutes in prayer, offering yourself to God. If you feel ready, offer Him your area of discontent. Ask Him to achieve His purpose in you through this difficulty. If you aren't at a point where you feel able to do that, you could ask Him to help you to want to know Him and become like Him more than you desire anything else.

Day Three

BARRIER #3: ANXIETY

Anxiety is a barrier to contentment. It grips our emotions, harms our health, and leads our thoughts down a path that culminates with fear. Often we feel we can't get out from under our anxious thoughts, which take on a life of their own as we imagine worst-case scenarios. These thoughts omit God from the picture. We see ourselves as alone and unable to cope. In the words of Linda Dillow, "Anxiety is that which divides and distracts the soul, that which diverts us from present duty to weary calculations of how to meet conditions that may never arrive. It's the habit of crossing bridges before we reach them."⁴⁶

Archbishop Fulton Sheen put it strongly when he said, "All worry is atheism, because it is a want of trust in God." Let's grow in our trust of God, and begin to break down this barrier to contentment.

1. Read 1 Peter 5:6–7 and answer the questions below.

What does this verse instruct us to do with our anxieties?

⁴⁶ Linda Dillow, *Calm My Anxious Heart: A Woman's Guide to Finding Contentment* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 120.

Why can we confidently do this?

What are we told to do before we cast our worries upon God?

When we are humble, we acknowledge that God is God, and we are not. True humility involves surrender and a total trust in God alone. It comes when we recognize that only God can take care of the things that are making us anxious. Our cares and concerns are safe in His hands.

2. What are you anxious about? List your worries here. When these worries fill your mind, are you thinking about God's presence in the midst of them? When they involve your loved ones, do you picture Him by their side?

The oriental shepherd always walked *ahead* of his sheep. He was always *out in front*. Any attack upon the sheep had to take him into account first. Now God is out in front. He is in our tomorrows, and it is tomorrow that fills people with fear. *Yet God is already there*. All the tomorrows of our life have to pass through Him before they can get to us.⁴⁷ —F. B. Meyer

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.”
—Corrie ten Boom

⁴⁷ L. B. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*, ed. James Reimann (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 32.

3. When we are anxious, a battle rages in our minds and hearts. Even when we want to trust God, thoughts spring up, and before we know it, we are going down the path of worry. God does not leave us alone to fight this mental battle. Describe the weapons He provides for us according to 2 Corinthians 10:4–5 and Ephesians 6:13–18.

2 Corinthians 10:4–5

Ephesians 6:13–18

4. When an anxious thought comes into your mind, you have a choice regarding how you will respond. Will you play with it? Will you travel with it into the future in your imagination? Or will you stop it in its tracks, grab hold of the thought, and offer it to Christ? This is what is meant by 2 Corinthians 10:5: “Take every thought captive to obey Christ.” Take it captive by replacing the worry with a truth that builds your trust in God. Look back on today’s verses and quotes. Record one below that helps you regain perspective in the face of anxiety. Write it on an index card to carry with you so that when anxiety hits, you can replace that thought with God’s truth.

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . . He is in your tomorrows.

Read the following words from the devotional Jesus Calling, as if they were Jesus’ words to you:

Anxiety is the result of envisioning the future without Me. So the best defense against worry is staying in communication with Me. When you turn your thoughts toward Me, you can think much more positively. Remember to listen, as well as to speak, making your thoughts a dialogue with Me.

If you must consider upcoming events, follow these rules: 1) Do not linger in the future, because anxieties sprout like mushrooms when you wander there. 2) Remember the promise of

My continual Presence, include Me in any imagery that comes to mind. This mental discipline does not come easily, because you are accustomed to being a god of your fantasies. However, the reality of My Presence with you, now and forevermore, outshines any fantasy you could ever imagine.⁴⁸

Perhaps you are a planner, and part of the way that you process what might come is by picturing the worst-case scenario and coming up with a game plan. It might feel impossible to discipline your mind not to peer into the future. If that's the case, make sure that you picture God in the midst of those imagined future circumstances instead of picturing yourself trying to cope alone.

Day Four

BARRIER #4: FEELING STUCK

Another barrier to contentment is feeling stuck in our current circumstances. We feel constraints that we perceive to be crowding out any chance at joy. The discontent may be rooted in an unsatisfying relationship, financial hardship, physical disability, illness, or intense unfulfilled longings. We can feel stuck because of grief, or stuck with bad habits that we can't seem to get rid of. These stuck places are exactly where God wants to meet us. He ushers in hope. He decimates barriers. By His grace, let's break free!

1. The book of Exodus describes the Israelites' four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. They were mistreated terribly and cried out to God. God sent them a rescuer, Moses, who led them out of Egypt and toward true freedom. The memories of God's mind-blowing miracles should have stayed fresh in their minds, but travel to the Promised Land proved to be a little tougher than they'd expected. How did they respond to their experience of feeling stuck? See Exodus 16:2–3.

2. God met the Israelites in their place of need and provided manna for them to eat as they wandered in the wilderness. The problem was, that was *all* He provided. And they got sick of manna. Manna for breakfast, lunch, and dinner got pretty old. They began thinking Egypt hadn't been so bad ("sure we were slaves, but the

⁴⁸ Sarah Young, *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 304.

variety of food was pretty great”) and started to complain again. They wanted meat, so God said He’d send them meat. What did He say about how much meat would be sent, and why was He sending it like this? See Numbers 11:18–20.

In essence, the Israelites shook their fists at God and said, “We were better off when we didn’t know you!” We might be shocked by how quickly they failed to remember God’s goodness, but aren’t we often guilty of the same forgetfulness?

When God leaves us in the stuck places, we can wrongly conclude that nothing good can happen there. We look back, or fantasize about a different life, and we see fertile ground where great things could grow. Then we look at our current place and see barrenness, loss, heaviness. When we’re in these stuck places, we have to guard our hearts, because there is something about those circumstances that can lead us to conclude that we would be better off without God. And nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is, when we are stuck, we are deep in fertile ground. This is rich soil for transformation and growth. It’s in this place that we can see God’s provision and care for us in a whole new way. He may not provide an emergency exit from our problems; He may instead give us the grace to keep walking through them, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. Regardless of how He provides, He will be faithful. And we will see Him in a whole new light, and be forever changed because of it. If we cooperate. If we trust.

3. What does Philippians 4:19 say that God promises to provide?

4. It’s important to note that Philippians 4:19 does not say that God promises to supply all of our *wants*, only our *needs*. Reflect back on your life purpose. Do you see evidence of the way that God is supplying all you need to fulfill your purpose? Do your wants ever get in the way of that pursuit? Do you find it hard to differentiate between your needs and your wants?

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . . In your presence there is fullness of joy.

Contentment comes when our focus shifts from our limitations and instead we recognize all the riches that we are given through Christ. Meditate on Psalm 103:1–5, and thank God for the gifts that cost Him everything to give.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul;
And all that is within me,
Bless his holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits,
Who forgives all your iniquity,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from the Pit,
Who crowns you with mercy and compassion,
Who satisfies you with good as long as you live
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Day Five

BARRIER #5: SETTLING FOR MUD PIES

A final barrier to contentment is our tendency to turn away from Christ and all the fullness He offers and instead settle for cheap substitutes. We may believe that we are pursuing and achieving what matters most, but then we experience discontent when the pleasures those things bring don't satisfy as we expected. In the words of C. S. Lewis:

If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mudpies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, ed. W. Hooper (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996), 25–26.

We don't know what we're missing. Let's spend our final day of study taking a look at the riches of Christ, in hopes that we'll desire Him above all else and find contentment that is not dependent on our circumstances.

1. Read Colossians 1:15–20, and record any words or phrases that describe the all-sufficiency and greatness of Christ.

He is more than enough.

2. In Colossians 1:17, we read that in Jesus “all things hold together.” This is true for creation—He owns and sustains the order and breath of all on the earth. But it is also true in our lives. Any area of our lives that is not connected to Christ is at great risk of falling apart. Is there something falling apart in your life? Have you come to the end of your resources? How can you invite Christ to hold it together for you?
3. 1 Peter 1:4 describes your heavenly inheritance. Write this verse in your own words.
4. Contrary to what we may believe, we do not *need* to be free from financial constraints, emotional heartache, physical illness, and all suffering. What we *need* is Christ. Read 1 Peter 1:6–7. What benefit can come from our trials if we cooperate?

All the things that can lead us to discontent are actually opportunities to experience freedom. We aren't promised that we'll be free of suffering and pain, but right in the middle of those difficult circumstances, God is offering us the opportunity to be freed from the desire for human approval, the attitude of entitlement that says, “I deserve,” the urge to be right, the longing to be in control, the grip of fear, the pit of self-pity.

We don't have to wait until heaven to experience true freedom. It's on offer to us today.

Quiet your heart and enjoy His presence. . . . Start enjoying your inheritance in Christ today.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul pleaded with the Church to recognize their glorious inheritance. Meditate on the following passages, letting your heart be filled with awareness of all you've been given by the One who loves you with abandon.

"In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will." (Ephesians 1:11)

Meditate on what it means to be chosen by God.

Paul prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." (Ephesians 1:17)

Meditate on what it means to be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation that helps us know Christ more intimately.

"Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints." (Ephesians 1:18)

Meditate on all the hope that's included in a call from God—a call to learn from every difficult circumstance, a call to grow and be transformed in the fertile soil of suffering.

Meditate on how glorious it will be to experience our inheritance in heaven. Imagine standing before the throne of Christ. Drink in His majesty. Soak up His mercy and goodness.

Never forget that a part of your inheritance experienced on earth is "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might, which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." (Ephesians 1:19–21)

Meditate on the resurrection power that was strong enough to raise Jesus from the dead. That's the power He offers you every day. Why would we ever settle for less?

Conclusion

“God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: ‘Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand.’” (CCC 293)

You are so dearly loved. It was God’s personal love for you that caused Him to call you into existence. You are here on earth to experience a journey that originates in His hand (opened with the key of love), reflects that love throughout a lifetime, and then returns to His embrace in heaven.

Our purpose on earth is to prepare for the place where we’ll experience the deepest contentment. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.” (Hebrews 13:14) Through the riches of Christ Jesus, we have been given everything we need to make that journey.

And what a vision is waiting for us there! What fullness we’ll experience when we come face-to-face with our Rescuer. There we’ll find “the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be [our] shepherd, and he will guide [us] to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from [our] eyes.” (Revelation 7:17)

What are our Rescuer’s words for us today, when we are in the midst of this journey? Personalize these words from the book of Revelation: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. . . . Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial. . . . I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.” (Revelation 3:8–11)

Hold fast to the All-Sufficient One. Let His fullness be yours. True contentment is found in Him.

My Resolution

In what specific way will I apply what I learned in this lesson?

Examples:

1. I will make a list of my current wants, and ask the Lord if what I consider a necessity is actually a luxury when seen from the perspective of someone in need.

Is God asking me to let go of something I'd like to have, so that I can be more generous with those less financially fortunate than I am?

2. When an anxious thought springs into my mind, I will take that thought captive to Christ, and imagine the potential future event with Him by my side.
3. Before I present my requests to God in prayer, I will meditate on Colossians 1:15–20. This will help me to recognize the greatness of Christ, and will remind me that He is more than enough for me.

My Resolution:

Catechism Clips

CCC 27 The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.

CCC 293 Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: “The world was made for the glory of God.” St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it”, for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness: “Creatures came into existence when the key of love opened his hand.” The First Vatican Council explains:

This one, true God, of his own goodness and “almighty power”, not for increasing his own beatitude, nor for attaining his perfection, but in order to

manifest this perfection through the benefits which he bestows on creatures, with absolute freedom of counsel “and from the beginning of time, made out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal. . .”

CCC 2536 The tenth commandment forbids greed and the desire to amass earthly goods without limit. It forbids avarice arising from a passion for riches and their attendant power. It also forbids the desire to commit injustice by harming our neighbor in his temporal goods:

When the Law says, “You shall not covet,” these words mean that we should banish our desires for whatever does not belong to us. Our thirst for another’s goods is immense, infinite, never quenched. Thus it is written: “He who loves money never has money enough.”

Judas' kiss would have pierced Jesus' heart with the deepest pain. He had held nothing back from Judas, but Judas responded to Jesus' love and sacrificial giving with betrayal.

3. Focusing on "the joy that was set before Him" gave Jesus the strength to endure the cross.
4. Anytime we keep our eyes on our mission, on the end result that we are hoping God will accomplish through us, we are strengthened to persevere. When we meditate on what Jesus suffered for us, and then are reminded that we haven't yet suffered to the point of shedding blood, some of our frustrations don't seem quite so intolerable.

Lesson 12, Day One

1. If we are looking for contentment by having more money, we'll find that our tastes and desires continue to grow, keeping satisfaction just out of reach. King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes 2:10–11 when he was the richest man in the world. He had it all, but found that it was meaningless. Even with great riches, contentment was as elusive as the wind. CCC 2536 says that "our thirst for another's goods is immense, infinite, never quenched. Thus it is written: 'He who loves money never has money enough.'"
2. All material wealth comes from God. Riches and glory are from Him. God owns it all, and loans it to us. In Lesson 8, we learned that we are only stewards of our time, not owners. In that same way, all that we possess is owned by God and on loan to us.
3. A. Answers will vary.
B. Answers will vary.
4. Answers will vary.

Lesson 12, Day Two

1. CCC 27
 - The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God.
 - God never ceases to draw man to Him.
 - The only place we'll find the truth and happiness that we never stop searching for is *in God*.
 - Our dignity rests on the fact that we're called to communion with God.
 - She needs to freely acknowledge that love, and entrust herself to God.
2. Both CCC 27 and Rick Warren make the point that we were created by God and for God. The only way we'll find happiness is by making our life purpose knowing God and living in such a way that we can spend eternity with Him. All other purposes, passions, and pursuits must be secondary to this primary one. Every day spent preparing for eternity is a day well spent.
3. God calls us to live a holy life. This is a key part of our life's purpose. When we live a holy life, characterized by obedience, we bring honor to God. It also benefits us, because if we ignore God's commands, we won't find the happiness and contentment that we were created for. Contentment is tied to answering God's call to be holy.
4. Answers will vary.

Lesson 12, Day Three

1. 1 Peter 5:6-7

- We're told to cast our worries upon God. The Greek word for cast is translated as "hurl." This is a powerful letting go or release.
- We can confidently cast our worries on God because He cares for us. God is not distant or uncaring. He is personal, and intimately concerned and acquainted with all the details of our lives. He wants what is best for us. When we entrust our worries to Him, we're entrusting them to the One who loves us like no other.
- We are told to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

2. Answers will vary.

3. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

The weapons are not of flesh. They are enormously powerful, capable of destroying fortresses. They can destroy the arguments and what-if scenarios that tempt us to not trust God. They help us to take every thought captive to Christ. They can break down the barriers that keep us from believing that God will take care of us.

Ephesians 6:13-18 The weapons mentioned in this passage are righteousness (verse 14), faith (verse 16), the sword of the Spirit, which is Scripture (verse 17), and prayer.

4. Answers will vary.

Lesson 12, Day Four

1. They told Moses that they felt they would have been better off in Egypt. At least there they had food to eat! Instead of focusing on all they had just been given, they focused on what they missed and what they didn't have.

2. God said He'd send so much meat that it would come out of their noses and would become loathsome to them. He sent it in this manner because their complaining had reached a new level. This time, they rejected the Lord in their midst, asking, "Why did we come forth out of Egypt?"

3. Philippians 4:19 says that God will supply all our needs.

4. Answers will vary.

Lesson 12, Day Five

1. The all-sufficiency of Christ is seen in the following phrases: the image of the invisible God (verse 15); all things were created through Him and for Him (verse 16); He is before all things (verse 17); in Him all things hold together (verse 17); He is the head of the Church (verse 18); He is the beginning (verse 18); He is to be preeminent in all things (verse 18); the fullness of God dwells in Him; He reconciled all things for God; making peace through His blood (verse 20).

2. Answers will vary.

3. Our heavenly inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It's kept in heaven for us.

4. Suffering and trials give us the unique opportunity to grow in faith. They act as a refiner's fire. As the fire heats up, impurities rise to the surface. We see what we need to deal with. God meets us there, and helps us to grow to a place of greater spiritual maturity.

Appendix 6

RICK WARREN INTERVIEW

In Paul Bradshaw's interview with Rick Warren, Rick said:

People ask me, What is the purpose of life? And I respond: In a nutshell, life is preparation for eternity. We were not made to last forever, and God wants us to be with him in heaven.

One day my heart is going to stop, and that will be the end of my body—but not the end of me. I may live sixty to a hundred years on earth, but I am going to spend trillions of years in eternity. This is the warm-up act—the dress rehearsal. God wants us to practice on earth what we will do forever in eternity.

We were made by God and for God, and until you figure that out, life isn't going to make sense.

Life is a series of problems: Either you are in one now, you're just coming out of one, or you're getting ready to go into another one. The reason for this is that God is more interested in your character than your comfort. God is more interested in making your life holy than he is in making your life happy.

We can be reasonably happy here on earth, but that's not the goal of life. The goal is to grow in character, in Christ's likeness.

This past year has been the greatest year of my life but also the toughest, with my wife, Kay, getting cancer.

I used to think that life was hills and valleys—you go through a dark time, then you go to the mountaintop, back and forth. I don't believe that anymore. Rather than life being hills and valleys, I believe that it's kind of like two rails on a railroad track, and at all times you have something good and something bad in your life. No matter how good things are in your life, there is always something bad that needs to be worked on. And no matter how bad things are in your life, there is always something good you can thank God for.

You can focus on your purposes, or you can focus on your problems. If you focus on your problems, you're going into self-centeredness, which is my problem, my issues, my pain. But one of the easiest ways to get rid of pain is to get your focus off yourself and onto God and others.

We discovered quickly that in spite of the prayers of hundreds of thousands of people, God was not going to heal Kay or make it easy for her. It has been very difficult for her, and yet God has strengthened her character, given her a ministry of helping other people, given her a testimony, drawn her closer to him and to people.

You have to learn to deal with both the good and the bad of life.

Actually, sometimes learning to deal with the good is harder. For instance, this past year, all of a sudden, when [*The Purpose Driven Life*] sold fifteen million copies, it made me instantly very wealthy. It also brought a lot of notoriety that I had never had to deal with before.

I don't think God gives you money or notoriety for your own ego or for you to live a life of ease. So I began to ask God what he wanted me to do with this money, notoriety, and influence. He gave me two different passages that helped me decide what to do, 2 Corinthians 9 and Psalm 72.

First, in spite of all the money coming in, we would not change our lifestyle one bit. We made no major purchases. Second, about midway through last year, I stopped taking a salary from the church. Third, we set up foundations to fund an initiative we call the Peace Plan to plant churches, equip leaders, assist the poor, care for the sick, and educate the next generation. Fourth, I added up all that the church had paid me in the twenty-four years since I started the church, and I gave it all back. It was liberating to be able to serve God for free.

We need to ask ourselves: Am I going to live for possessions? Popularity? Am I going to be driven by pressures? Guilt? Bitterness? Materialism? Or am I going to be driven by God's purposes [for my life]?

When I get up in the morning, I sit on the side of my bed and say, God, if I don't get anything else done today, I want to know you more and love you better. God didn't put me on earth just to fulfill a to-do list. He's more interested in what I am than what I do. That's why we're called human beings, not human doings.

Happy moments, PRAISE GOD. Difficult moments, SEEK GOD. Quiet moments, WORSHIP GOD. Painful moments, TRUST GOD. Every moment, THANK GOD.