

When the apostle Paul wrote this verse in his letter to the Philippians, he was being imprisoned in Rome. He was thanking them for the contribution he had received from them through Epaphroditus, who had brought it from Philippi, and whom Paul was sending back to them. He was not hinting for another gift since he had somehow resolved his financial problems, not with resources but with a new attitude. What is this contentment that Paul was writing about?

The word 'content', I understand, is a term from the Stoic philosophers describing an inner spirit of freedom and discipline, it is this ability to conquer circumstances and situations rather than be conquered by them. In Christian terms, it involves an inner change of perspective in

perceiving circumstances and situations with a peace that stabilises us in Christ Jesus. This attitude is the exact opposite of worry and anxiety.

Being content in today's world can be particularly elusive when we are spoilt for choices and satisfied by instant gratification. It is easy to get swept up in the maelstrom of getting things done quickly and efficiently, especially in organised Singapore. Anything less is unacceptable.

Now with Covid-19, suddenly, we are all forced to slow down, take time to reflect, and to be content with what we have at hand and to make the best of our current situation. In short, it's to accept things for less than what we usually expect and have. For e.g. for my family, we have to make the best use of our space and staying home during the circuit breaker.

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.” Philippians 4:11

BE CONTENT



Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
help us to be content
with what You have
created and given us.
Help us to give up our
old ways to become
more Christ-like in our
attitudes and actions.
Thank you for gifting
us, a resilient human
spirit with an amazing
ability to adapt to all
circumstances if we
will only allow you
to change us little by
little, step by step.
In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Our apartment is not luxurious but neither is it small, yet for all five of us, including my mother-in-law, who are either WFH or having HBL, somehow the space feels cramped as we have to find five different corners of the home to attend online classes, have Zoom meetings or watch TV. Suddenly, the space is especially small when movements are curbed or we have to stay quiet for much of the day.

Yet, I am grateful that I have a home to stay comfortably in during this circuit breaker. I am grateful that my family does not get on one another's nerves more than usual although we are confined. My daughters are not grumbling about the situation but have accepted it. For these reasons, I am content. We are all adjusting to Covid-19. With adjustments, there may be an uncomfortable period trying to settle into a new routine and constraints.

I find that being content requires a deliberate decision to choose to shift our mindsets. When things aren't ideal or we get pushed out of our comfort zone, it is easy to see the negative first rather than the positive. It takes effort to intentionally look for things to be thankful and choose to be thankful. Being thankful is also part of being content. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

I believe God is using Covid-19 to teach us many things and He is working His purposes out in many ways and levels in each of us and in the world. First, it is a time of self-reflection and self-refining. It is a giving up of my old ways of looking at things and embracing the new. It is learning about myself and developing qualities such as patience for others, different from me, and accommodating these differences whilst living closely together.

This takes time and effort. I struggle to choose to change, to accept. It is a work-in-progress. I am a work-in-progress.

Perhaps when we give up ourselves, then we can be one step closer to being content; at peace and happy with the world around us.

It can be a stormy journey at first but God gave us a resilient human spirit with an amazing ability to adapt.

I AM GRATEFUL.



Angeline Leong (far right)
with her family