

DEMOLISHING DISCONTENT

Introduction

What is *Demolishing Discontent*?

Demolishing Discontent provides a 'homework' or further study option that works with the Good Book Guide on Contentment – healing the hunger of our hearts. The Good Book Guide shows the Bible's explanation for discontent and the remedy found in Jesus Christ, as well as highlighting some common areas that Christians struggle with. *Demolishing Discontent* focuses on the practical issue of cultivating a Christian character, which will give us antidotes to discontent that we can use in our daily lives. Each section highlights one antidote to discontent—each week there are 5 Bible passages and 5 questions to tackle, including one or two 'projects' aimed at getting us to put the teaching of the Bible into practice.

You could run these suggestions at the same time as studying Contentment in your weekly study group, or use it after you have finished. However you decide to use this material, it will always be more effective if it is discussed with others, either with a prayer partner, or as part of the group as you help and encourage each other..

What is behind our discontent?

Discontent has lethal consequences. Right back at the beginning of history, the Bible tells us that God provided a paradise home for the first humans in the Garden of Eden. All human needs were lavishly provided for and contentment was possible because no need was left unfulfilled. But Adam and Eve became discontent with their situation—they wanted to eat the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So they made the decision to break God's command, and set in train the fearful consequences for humanity and for all of creation that we still suffer today. Their discontent with God's command was the fuse that detonated the nuclear blast of sin and judgment.

In Genesis 1 and 2 we discover that Adam and Eve ignored God's Word, and listened instead to **the devil** (God's enemy), **the flesh** (their own senses and desires) and **the world** (for them—each other; for us—the people and culture around us). These lying voices fuelled their discontent and set them on the path of sin, death and judgment. Today discontent continues to fan the flames of rebellion against God. And the voices of the flesh, the world and the devil are just as active today in feeding our discontent as they were in Eden.

What do these studies involve?

Over 6 weeks, *Demolishing Discontent* looks at:

- fear of the Lord and thankfulness
- faith
- hope
- love
- Christian ministry
- Christian mission.

At the end you will find a table, which you may find helpful in tackling specific areas of discontent in your life. By filling in the table you will expose the lies of the flesh, the world and the devil, which are fuelling your discontent; you will be able to reflect on what fear of the Lord, thankfulness, faith and hope say about your situation; and you will have an opportunity to think of how to show love, serve others and witness to the gospel in the situation that is making you discontent.

The importance of prayer

We need to recognise that human understanding, good habits and resolutions alone, even when shaped by God's Word, will not change our sinful ways of living—that takes supernatural power. Throughout our battle with discontent, it is vital to continually come to God in prayer and seek the help of His Holy Spirit, as we strive to grow a Christian character that will produce the wonderful fruit of contentment.

WEEK 1

Fear of the Lord

- **Psalm 33;**
- **1 Peter 1 v 17 – 2 v 2;**
- **Romans 1 v 18-25;**
- **Ephesians 5 v 15-21**
- **Proverbs 19 v 23;**

1. **Read Psalm 33.** Make a list of reasons *why* we should fear the Lord, and put it where you will often see it—on your desk, fridge, wall etc.
2. **Read 1 Peter 1 v 17 – 2 v 2.** Make a list of things that show *how* we should fear the Lord and display it with the first list.
3. Think of an area of your life in which you feel discontent. How are you going to make sure that you fear the Lord in that situation during the coming week? Find a prayer partner—a mature Christian of the same gender in whom you can confide, and with whom you can pray regularly (over the phone if necessary). You can ask your group leader to help you organise this. Get your prayer partner to ask you each week about your obedience to the Lord's commands in the specific situation that you have identified. Your prayer partner can ask you questions similar to these...
eg: *'When have you grumbled about your husband/children/boss this week? When have you felt like grumbling, but decided not to out of your obedience to Lord?'*
eg: *'When, out of envy, have you said this week: 'I wish...', 'If only...' or 'I'd love...' about things that you don't have? When did you feel like saying this, but decided not to out of obedience to the Lord?'*
 - Confess the times you have failed to fear the Lord, thank God for the times you have chosen to fear the Lord, and ask for the power of God's Spirit to help you grow in fearing the Lord. **Read Ephesians 5 v 15-21**
4. **Read Romans 1 v 18-25.** Notice how those who do not fear God fail to glorify Him or thank Him. As a Christian, what things can you thank God for—past, future and present, including the area of your life about which you feel discontent. (If you can't think of anything, pray that God will show you something. Why not ask your prayer partner for suggestions?)
5. To cultivate the habit of glorifying and thanking God, how about beginning and ending the day with thanks to Him? Each day you could focus your thanksgiving on one particular area of your life eg: family, work, church, friends, growth as a Christian. Make yourself a reminder to thank God whenever you begin to feel discontent. **Read Proverbs 19 v 23.** Try to memorise this verse. Write it out and display it somewhere you will see it.

WEEK 2

Faith (Trust)

- **Proverbs 3 v 5-6**
- **Psalm 136**
- **Philippians 4 v 6-7**
- **Romans 8 v 28-39**
- **Hebrews 11 v 1 – 12 v 3**

1. If God is good, loving and sovereign (in control of everything), and if you are a loved child of God (a Christian), what can you say about your current situation? **Meditate on Proverbs 3 v 5-6.**
2. **Read Psalm 136.** Notice how the writer reminds himself of how God has shown His love and power in the history of Israel. What evidence do you have that God is good, loving and sovereign? Whenever you read the Bible, or hear Bible teaching, note down any promises that God has made and fulfilled. Make a list of these on a poster or in a notebook—use it to remind yourself how trustworthy God is, whenever you feel worried, frustrated or afraid.
3. **Read Philippians 4 v 6-7.** How about starting a diary in which you can write down answers to prayer (your own prayers or those of others)? In this way you can build your own personal record of God's faithfulness.
4. **Read Romans 8 v 28-39.** Notice that God works for our good in all things, and that His plan for us is to make us like Jesus. Think of an area of your life in which you feel discontent. What can you trust God to be doing in that situation right now?
5. When and how are you going to trust God in difficult situations in the coming week?
 - If you catch yourself worrying, what will you tell yourself?
 - If you feel frustration, what will you tell yourself?
 - If you find yourself afraid, what will you tell yourself?Why not talk about this with your prayer partner and together work out what you will tell yourselves? **Read Hebrews 11 v 1 – 12 v 3** for your encouragement!

WEEK 3

Hope

- **Revelation 21 v 1-8**
- **Philippians 3 v 17-21**
- **2 Corinthians 4 v 16-18**
- **Romans 8 v 18-24**
- **1 Thessalonians 4 v 13-18**

1. **Read Revelation 21 v 1-8.** If you are a Christian, what is your ultimate future going to be like?
2. In Ephesians 1 v 18 Paul prays for Christians, that our eyes may be opened to understand the hope to which God has called us. How can we keep this hope before our eyes? Whenever you read your Bible, or hear Bible teaching, highlight or note down anything that is said about the ultimate future of a Christian. You could use a notebook or poster to make a store of truths about a Christian's ultimate future.
3. **Read 2 Corinthians 4 v 16-18.** Now that you know what your ultimate future will be, what difference does that make to those situations where you feel discontent?
4. **Read 2 Corinthians 4 v 16-18.** ,You could make a visual aid of 2 Corinthians 4 v 17 to encourage yourself and others. If you have a set of old-fashioned balancing scales, write down on pieces of paper the various troubles you are going through and place them on one side of your scales. In the dish on the other side, place a heavy weight, labelled 'eternal glory'.
5. In 1 Peter 3 v 15 we are told to be ready to answer the questions of those who are curious about our Christian faith because they have seen the hope that we have. How can you become a person who is full of the Christian hope? Set yourself the aim of speaking to someone (Christian or not) each week about the Christian hope—in conversations, in prayers, in texts, cards or emails.

WEEK 4

Love

- **1 John 4 v 7-12**
- **1 Corinthians 13 v 1-7**
- **Galatians 5 v 13-26**
- **Philippians 2 v 1-11**
- **Luke 6 v 27-36**

1. **Read 1 John 4 v 7-12.** Why can (and must) Christians be people of love?
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 13 v 1-7.** What is involved in loving others? And what must we give up in order to love others? When you read the Bible, or hear Bible teaching, look out for passages that tell us practically how to show love and to avoid selfishness. You could make two lists in a notebook or on a poster, and build up a store of Bible teaching about love.
3. **Read Galatians 5 v 13-26.** Most people believe that serving others limits your freedom, because freedom is doing whatever you please. But in Galatians 5 v 13 Paul tells Christians that they are set free to serve one another in love. How can this help you to ignore selfish desires and go out of your way to serve others?
4. **Read Philippians 2 v 1-11.** Think about an area of your life in which you feel discontent. Resolve to stop thinking about your own desires during the next week, and instead, think of ways in which you can serve the interests of others, as Christ served you in dying for you.

Eg: You are discontent with the way in which your family looks after the home—you are the only person who tidies up and puts things away. Pray for your partner and children to grow in service and love for others. Pray that you will be a good example. Watch out for good signs and give praise and encouragement. Remember to thank God for the family which you look after. When you are left to sort out the mess yet again, remember what Jesus did in sorting out the mess of your sin. At the end of the week, share with your family (or with a Christian friend/prayer partner) what you have been trying to do, get feedback and pray together.

5. To get into the habit of making love a priority, work out one thing each week that you can do, specifically to show love to someone—family, friend or someone you don't know very well; Christian or non-Christian; someone you like or dislike—it doesn't matter. You could work out this 'love project' with your prayer partner, who can check up on how things go.

WEEK 5

Ministry (Serving in the church)

- **Romans 12 v 1-8**
- **1 Peter 4 v 7-11**
- **Ephesians 4 v 25-29**
- **1 Corinthians 12 v 4-26**
- **Hebrews 10 v 19-25**

1. **Read Romans 12 v 1-8.** What attitudes should we have when we serve one another in church? What attitudes must we get rid of?
2. What kind of things can people do as they serve in Christ's church? Can anybody do all of these things? Can everybody do one of these things? What can you do?
3. You could make a visual aid **of Romans 12 v 4-7** to remind yourself of what church should be about. Take a doll or an outline of a human figure. Think of all the different things that people can do in a church to serve each other, write these on labels or Post It notes and stick them to the different parts of the body.
4. **Read 1 Corinthians 12 v 4-26.** Think about an area of your life in which you feel discontent. What difference does it make to the way you feel about your life to know that you have an essential part to play in the body of Christ, the church?
5. How are you going to make sure that you serve in your church in this coming week? 1 Corinthians 12 v 4-7 tells us that the Spirit gives each Christian a gift or gifts 'for the common good'. When you go to a church meeting this week, make sure that, instead of looking for what you can get out of it, you are aiming to do good to others. Pray that God will give you an opportunity to help the common good—thanking or encouraging someone, giving money to a needy cause, speaking God's truth to someone, showing compassion, offering hospitality, praying for someone or something that comes to your attention, acting as a peace-maker, doing a job that needs doing etc.

WEEK 6

Mission (Telling others the good news of Jesus)

- **Titus 2 v 1-10**
 - **Matthew 28 v 18-20**
 - **Philippians 1 v 12-18**
 - **1 Peter 3 v 8-16**
 - **Philippians 2 v 14-16**
1. **Read Titus 2 v 1-10.** How does God use the everyday lives and experiences of His people to bring the gospel to non-Christians?
 2. **Read Matthew 28 v 18-20.** Jesus tells us that, with His help, the mission of His disciples is to take the good news to the whole world. How can understanding our part in that mission transform our view of those situations in which we feel discontent?
 3. **Read Philippians 1 v 12-18.** When you read the Bible, or hear Bible teaching, look out for passages that tell us how Christians brought God's truth to non-believers. Make a note of these and build up a store of stories about how God uses His people to bring eternal life to condemned sinners, so that you too can be encouraged to be part of God's mission.
 4. **Read 1 Peter 3 v 8-16.** Think of an area of your life in which you feel discontent. How could God use this situation to bring the gospel to other people through you? Is your response to this situation clearly that of a Christian? Pray that people will ask you the reason for the hope you have. Could your difficult experience enable you to help more effectively those who are experiencing similar difficulties? Pray that you can show insight and compassion to others, and speak to them about Jesus Christ as a result of what you are going through. Talk these things through with your prayer partner.
 5. How are you going to make sure that you are ready to get involved in telling others about the good news of Jesus Christ this week? Start praying for people you know, and also for opportunities with people you don't yet know. Share names and answers to prayer with your prayer partner. Get hold of a couple of Christian leaflets or a Gospel, and carry them round with you, ready to give to anyone as the opportunity arises. Note down up-and-coming events or evangelistic courses and start thinking about and praying about who you could invite. Look out for newcomers at church—don't assume that they are Christian—and be ready to help them understand the good news.

Dealing with discontent: a practical tool

The table on the following page is a very practical way of helping us to apply everything that we have learned over these six sessions to the things in our lives that make us discontent.

When we feel discontent, we are listening to the lies of the flesh, the world and the devil. We need to listen instead to God's truth from His Word, the Bible, and put into practice the remedies that we have discovered—fear of the Lord and thankfulness, faith/trust, hope, love, ministry (serving in the church), and mission (telling others the good news of Jesus).

When you need to tackle an area of discontent, you can fill in the table (an example of how to do this is given below). It will help you identify the lies that you are hearing all the time. And it will remind you of the truths of God that are the antidote to those lies. You can do this alone, or with a prayer partner, who can check up on you later and encourage you with God's truth. When you have completed the table, pray for the Holy Spirit to help you listen to and obey God's truth, and to ignore the lies. Pray that your discontent will be transformed to contentment and joy, so that you will truly be a living example of the words of Jesus: 'He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'

Example:

<p>Why am I discontent? <i>I'm stuck in a boring job and I don't think I get paid enough.</i></p>			
<p>What does the flesh say? <i>I want to be wealthy and successful. If only I had a well-paid, interesting job, I would be a much happier person and a better Christian. Other Christians have good jobs—why can't I? It's not fair.</i></p>	<p>What does the world say? <i>If you don't have a well-paid, interesting job, you are a failure and you are wasting your life.</i></p>	<p>What does the devil say? <i>If God really loved you, He would give you a better job. He doesn't seem to care about how you feel. He hasn't listened to your prayers, perhaps because of something sinful in your life.</i></p>	
<p>What does fear of the Lord say? <i>God is my all-powerful creator; His plans cannot be stopped; He sees everything; no one can escape from Him. He will destroy those who are against Him. But He helps those who fear Him, who make His Son Jesus Christ their Lord and take refuge in Him. Conclusion: My priority must be to obey the Lord, however unhappy I feel about my job.</i></p>	<p>What does thankfulness say? <i>I know God loves me because He sent His only Son to die for me. God has forgiven all my sins; He has made me His child; He has sent His Holy Spirit to live in me; He has promised me eternal glory; He has given me a loving family, a faithful church, enough money for all our needs, etc. Conclusion: I have so many good things from God, that I can be joyful, even in this job.</i></p>	<p>What does trust in God say? <i>God has always kept His promises and nothing has stopped His plans. God is working in this situation to make me more like Jesus. God hears my prayers and the Spirit works to help me carry out God's will. Conclusion: I can trust that God is working for my good even by keeping me stuck in this job.</i></p>	<p>What does Christian hope say? <i>This job and its difficulties will only last a few years. I am looking forward to a fantastic future that is far better than any job I could get in this world. By persevering as a Christian in this difficult situation, I am storing up treasure in heaven. Conclusion: My discontent with my job is a light and momentary trouble compared with my glorious future.</i></p>
<p>How can I show love? <i>I need to stop thinking about what I want, and start thinking about others. My family need me to have a secure livelihood; my children are benefiting from the local church youth groups; my parents are getting old and need me to stay in this area etc. Conclusion: I can put up with this job for the good of others.</i></p>	<p>How can I serve others? <i>I have a part to play in my local church. My job gives me time to organise the men's events and help out with Sunday school. My work is vital for building up others in their faith. Conclusion: Despite being stuck in this job, I am not wasting my life.</i></p>	<p>How can I witness to others? <i>There are people I meet through this job who do not know the good news of Jesus Christ. I may be the only Christian who knows them, who can pray for them, show them Christian love and share the gospel with them. Or I may be the next link in a chain of people and events leading them to Christ. Conclusion: Even in this job, I can be a fellow worker with God and help others come to Christ.</i></p>	

Note: dealing with the discontent in your current situation doesn't mean that you shouldn't look for a way to change your job. But you should want to change for the right (godly) reasons... Just changing your job may not deal with the central problem – which may be your heart!

Now use the table below to help you tackle your own areas of discontent.

Why am I discontent?			
What does the flesh say?	What does the world say?	What does the devil say?	
What does fear of the Lord say?	What does thankfulness say?	What does trust in God say?	What does Christian hope say?
How can I show love ?	How can I serve others?	How can I witness to others?	