

# The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment

by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Study Guide

edited by Joshua Schwisow

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# Study Guide

*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

This study guide is based on the Puritan Paperback edition of Jeremiah Burrough's classic work (ISBN: 9781800400153). However, readers may also use an edition of the book produced by another publisher.

## Introduction

This study guide on *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* is a supplementary tool for the reader. It provides summaries, vocabulary definitions, key quotes to review and meditate on, and some content and application questions.

This study guide also contains a section called "Golden Nuggets." Puritans such as Jeremiah Burroughs were known for their pithy, Scriptural, illustration-rich language. For this reason, we have chosen some of the finest quotes from each chapter for the student to return to in their meditation, or to share with others for their edification. The student is encouraged to also be on the lookout for their own golden nuggets by underlining or highlighting portions of the book as they read.

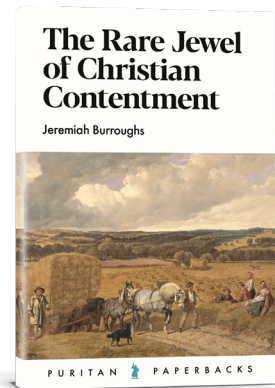
To make the best use of this study guide while reading this Puritan classic, we recommend the following approach:

1. Before reading the chapter, read the summary of the chapter and review the vocabulary words and definitions.
2. Pray that the Lord would bring applications from the chapter to your heart. Pray that God would correct you, or strengthen you, or comfort you, and lead you in the way of wisdom and righteousness.
3. Read the chapter and underline or highlight key quotes to meditate on for further application.
4. Review the "Golden Nuggets" section for each chapter in this study guide and respond to the questions.
5. Write down your own favorite "Golden Nuggets" in the space provided.
6. Respond to the review questions with written answers.

Definitions for the vocabulary terms are drawn from Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* or the modern *Oxford American English Dictionary*.

## Schedule

It is recommended that the student read 1 chapter per week for a total of 13 weeks of reading. The student may read the chapter in one day or spread the reading throughout the week.



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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 1: Christian Contentment Described

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs exposit the meaning of Philippians 4:11 and gives a doctrinal summary of what the verse teaches. Burroughs summarizes the doctrinal meaning of the verse in the following way: "That to be well skilled in the mystery of Christian contentment is the duty, glory, and excellence of a Christian."

### Words to Know

- **Abase** – To cast down; to reduce low; to depress; to humble; to degrade; applied to the passions, rank, office, and condition in life.
- **Aver** – To affirm with confidence; to declare in a positive or peremptory manner, as in confidence of asserting the truth.
- **Canker** – A virulent, corroding ulcer; or any thing that corrodes, corrupts or destroys.
- **Cordial** – In medicine, that which suddenly excites the system, and increases the action of the heart or circulation when languid; any medicine which increases strength, raises the spirits, and gives life and cheerfulness to a person when weak and depressed.
- **Experimentally** – By experience; by suffering or enjoyment.
- **Importunate** - Bearing on; pressing or urging in request or demand; urgent and pertinacious in solicitation.
- **Peevish** – Fretful; petulant; apt to mutter and complain; easily vexed or fretted; querulous; hard to please.
- **Raiment** – clothing in general
- **Repine** – To fret one's self; to be discontented; to feel inward discontent which preys on the spirits; with at or against.
- **Rifled** – Seized and carried away by violence; pillaged; channeled.
- **Shirking** – avoiding or neglecting.
- **Simile** – a comparison of two things which, however different in other respects, have some strong point or points of resemblance; by which comparison, the character or qualities of a thing are illustrated or presented in an impressive light.
- **Tenor** – Stamp; character.
- **Unbosom** – To disclose freely one's secret opinions or feelings.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- "Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."
- "He [God] often makes the fairest flowers of man's endeavors to wither and brings improbable things to pass, in order that the glory of the undertaking may be given to himself."
- "Where contentment of heart springs from grace, the heart is very quick and lively in the service of God. . . just as a contented heart is very active and busy in the work of God, so he is very active and busy in sanctifying God's name in the affliction that befalls him."
- "We must not be our own disposers for the *time* of deliverance any more than for the *kind* and *way* of deliverance."

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Choose your favorite among these quotations (previous page) and explain how it is helpful to you.

## Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

## Review Questions

1. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-8. With what two things should we be content?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does Pastor Burroughs mean when he says that contentment is a “sweet, inward, heart-thing.”
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What does Pastor Burroughs mean when he says that contentment shows itself by “sanctifying God’s name in affliction”?

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 2: The Mystery of Contentment

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs teaches that Christian contentment is both an *art* and a *mystery*. It is an art in the sense that we must grow in this gracious skill of living a contented life. It is a mystery in the sense that grace enables a Christian to bring together things otherwise incompatible such as the mingling of joy and sorrow, or to sense our afflictions, and yet experience contentment in them.

### Words to Know

- **Bungler** – A clumsy awkward workman; one who performs without skill.
- **Quintessence** – The pure essential part of a thing.
- **Strait** – Burroughs uses this word in the form “straitened” to describe difficult circumstances and conditions. Distress; difficulty; distressing necessity.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “It may be said of one who is contented in a Christian way that he is the most contented, man in the world, and yet the most unsatisfied man in the world. . . Godliness teaches us this mystery, not to be satisfied with all the world for our portion, and yet to be content with the meanest condition in which we are.”
- “Now I say that a heart that has no grace, and is not instructed in this mystery of contentment, knows of no way to get contentment, but to have his possessions raised up to his desires; but the Christian has another way to contentment, that is, he can bring his desires down to his possessions, and so he attains contentment. . . Here lies the bottom and root of all contentment, when there is an evenness and proportion between our hearts and our circumstances.”
- “It is the nature of grace to turn water into wine, that is, to turn the water of your affliction, into the wine of heavenly consolation.”
- “If you can get your heart to be more burdened with your sin, you will be less burdened with your afflictions. . . God has broken your estate; oh, seek to him for the breaking of your heart likewise.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.



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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 3: The Mystery of Contentment – cont'd

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs continues to exposit the various aspects of the mystery and art of contentment by drawing out numerous applications taught throughout the Scriptures.

### Words to Know

- **Aspersions** – The spreading of calumnious reports or charges, which tarnish reputation.
- **Earnest Penny** – A first installment which guarantees that the rest is to follow.
- **Finery** – Expensive or ostentatious clothes or decoration
- **Quintessence** – The pure essential part of a thing.
- **Repine** – To fret one's self; to be discontented; to feel inward discontent which preys on the spirits; with at or against.
- **Treble** (verb) – To become threefold.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- "A Christian finds satisfaction in every circumstance by getting strength from another, by going out of himself to Jesus Christ, by his faith acting upon Christ, and bringing the strength of Jesus Christ into his own soul, he is thereby enabled to bear whatever God lays on him, by the strength that he finds from Jesus Christ."
- "There is another thing that shows the sweetness that is in the little that the saints have, by which they come to have contentment, whereas others cannot, that is, every little that they have is but as an earnest penny for all the glory that is reserved for them; it is given them by God as the forerunner of those eternal mercies that the Lord intends for them."
- "Not only in good things does a Christian have the dew of God's blessing, and finds them very sweet to him, but in all the afflictions, all the evils that befall him, he can see love, and can enjoy sweetness of love in his afflictions as well as in his mercies. The truth is that the afflictions of God's people come from the same eternal love that Jesus Christ came from."
- "But when all is gone, there is an art and skill that godliness teaches, to make up all those losses in God."

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

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## Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

## Review Questions

1. Read Lamentations 3:1-26. List some of the ways the author (possibly the prophet Jeremiah) describes the lamentation, suffering, and difficulty God's people were going through at this time. What key description does the author give of the Lord in vs. 24?

2. Explain what Pastor Burroughs means when he says: "13. A gracious heart gets contentment from the covenant God has made with him."

3. Explain what Pastor Burroughs means when he says: "Was the creature anything to you but a conduit, a pipe, that conveyed God's goodness to you? 'The pipe is cut off,' says God, 'come to me, the fountain, and drink immediately.'"



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## Chapter 4: The Mystery of Contentment – concl.

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs concludes his exposition of the various aspects of the mystery and art of contentment by drawing out numerous applications taught throughout the Scriptures.

### Words to Know

- **Beeves** – plural of beef. Cattle: quadrupeds of the bovine genus, called in England, black cattle.
- **Fain** – Glad; pleased; rejoiced.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “What I venture at sea is not sure, but here is an insurance office indeed, a great insurance office for the saints, at which they are not charged, except in the exercising of grace, for they may go to this insurance office to insure everything they venture, either to have the thing itself, or to be paid for it. In an insurance office you cannot be sure to have the very goods that you insured, but if they are lost the insurers pledge themselves to make it good to you. And this covenant of grace that God has made with his people is God’s insurance office, and the saints in all their fears may and ought to go to the covenant to insure all things, to insure their wealth and insure their lives.”
- “Therefore, when you look into the book of God and find any promise there, you may make it your own; just as an heir who rides over a lot of fields and meadows says, ‘This meadow is my inheritance, and this corn field is my inheritance,’ and then he sees a fine house, and says, ‘this fine house is my inheritance.’ He looks at them with a different eye from a stranger who rides over those fields. A carnal heart reads the promises, and reads them merely as stories, not that he has any great interest in them. But every time a godly man reads the Scriptures and there meets with a promise, he ought to lay his hand upon it and say, ‘This is part of my inheritance, it is mine, and I am to live upon it.’”
- “A godly man has contentment by opening and letting out his heart to God. Other men and women are discontented, but how do they help themselves? By abuse, by bad language. Someone crosses them, and they have no way to help themselves in that way when they are angry. But when a godly man is crossed, how does he relieve himself? He is aware of his cross as well as you, but he goes to God in prayer, and there opens his heart to God and lets out his sorrows and fears, and then can come away with a joyful countenance.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.



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## Chapter 5: How Christ Teaches Contentment

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs explains how the Lord Jesus teaches us the way of contentment, drawing from the Gospels, but also other portions of Scripture to show that being a student in Christ's school involves many important lessons on contentment.

### Words to Know

- **Accidence** – the part of grammar dealing with inflections.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “There is a further thing in self-denial which brings contentment. Thereby the soul comes to rejoice and take satisfaction in God's ways; I beseech you to notice this. If a man is selfish and self-love prevails in his heart, he will be glad of those things that suit with his own ends, but a godly man who has denied himself will suit with and be glad of all things that shall suit with God's ends. . . . When a man is selfish, he cannot but have a great deal of trouble and vexation, for if I regard myself, my ends are so narrow that a hundred things will come and jostle me, and I cannot have room in those narrow ends of my own.”
- “When a Christian, who has been in the school of Christ, and has been instructed in the art of contentment, has some wealth, he thinks, ‘In that I have wealth above my brethren, I have an opportunity to serve God the better, and I enjoy a great deal of God's mercy conveyed to my soul through the creature, and hereby I am enabled to do a great deal of good: in this I reckon the good of my wealth.’ ”
- “Carnal men and women do not know their own spirits, and therefore they fling and vex themselves at every affliction that befalls them; they do not know what disorders are in their hearts which may be healed by their afflictions, if it pleases God to give them a sanctified use of them.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

### Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.



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## Chapter 6: How Christ Teaches Contentment – concl.

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs continues to explain how the Lord Jesus teaches us the way of contentment, drawing from the Gospels, but also other portions of Scripture to show that being a student in Christ's school involves many important lessons on contentment.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- "One who comes into Christ's school to be instructed in this art never attains to any great skill in it until he comes to understand the burden that is in a prosperous condition."
- "Christ teaches them what a great and dreadful evil it is to be given up to one's heart's desires. It is, indeed, a dreadful evil, one of the most hideous and fearful evils that can befall any man on the face of the earth, for God to give him up to his heart's desires."
- "Whether or not you are content, the providence of God will go on, it has an efficacy of power, of virtue, to carry all things before it. Can you make one hair black or white with all the stir that you are making? When you are in a ship at sea which has all its sails spread with a full gale of wind, and is swiftly sailing, can you make it stand still by running up and down in the ship? No more can you make the providence of God alter and change its course with your vexing and fretting; it will go on with power, do what you can."
- "Usually when God intends the greatest mercy to any of his people, he brings them into the lowest condition."

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

### Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.



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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 7: The Excellence of Contentment

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs explains why contentment is such an excellent, desirable, beautiful, and powerful thing in the Christian life. Contentment shows forth the power of God's grace, and it brings many blessings with it.

### Words to Know

- **Coy** – Modest; silent; reserved; not accessible; shy; not easily condescending to familiarity.
- **Dainty** – Scrupulous in manners; ceremonious.
- **Distemper** – Disease; malady; indisposition; any morbid state of an animal body, or of any part of it; a state in which the animal economy is deranged or imperfectly carried on.
- **Froward** – Perverse, that is, turning from, with aversion or reluctance; not willing to yield or comply with what is required; unyielding; ungovernable; refractory; disobedient; peevish.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “By contentment we come to give God the worship that is due to him. It is a special part of the divine worship that we owe to God, to be content in a Christian way . . . this is the soul's worship, to subject itself thus to God.”
- “In active obedience we worship God by doing what pleases God, but by passive obedience we do as well worship God by being pleased with what God does.”
- “There is a compound of grace in contentment: there is faith, and there is humility, and love, and there is patience, and there is wisdom, and there is hope, almost all graces are compounded. It is an oil which has the ingredients of every kind of grace; and therefore, though you cannot see the particular grace, yet in this oil you have it all.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

### Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.





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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 8: The Evils of a Murmuring Spirit

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs explains why murmuring or complaining is such an evil thing in God's sight. By taking seriously this sin, rather than treating it as a "light" matter, Pastor Burroughs calls us to repent of these ungodly patterns of thinking and speaking.

### Words to Know

- Boisterousness – The state or quality of being boisterous; turbulence; disorder; tumultuousness.
- Rankle – A malady that burns and rankles inward.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- "Now that we may come to grips with the practice, it is necessary that we should be humbled in our hearts because of our lack of contentment in the past. For there is no way to set about any duty with profit, till the heart is humbled for the lack of the performance of that duty previously."
- "So you see that to be a murmurer, and to be a rebel, in Scripture phrase is all one; it is a rebellion against God. Just as it is the beginning of rebellion and sedition in a kingdom when the people are discontented. When discontent comes, it grows to murmuring, and you can go into no house almost, but there is murmuring when men are discontented, so that within a little while it breaks forth into sedition or rebellion."
- "[Murmuring] is strongly contrary to the sight of the infinite excellence and glory of Jesus Christ, and of the things of the gospel. What! Am I the soul to whom the Lord has revealed the infinite excellence of Jesus Christ, and yet shall I think such a little affliction to be so grievous to me, when I have had the sight of such glory in Christ as is worth more than ten thousand worlds?"
- "So I may say to a Christian: Are you the king's son, the son, the daughter, of the king of heaven, and yet so disquieted and troubled, and vexed at every little thing that happens? As if a king's son were to cry out that he is undone for losing a toy; what an unworthy thing would this be! So do you: you cry out as if you were undone and yet are a king's son, you who stand in such relation to God, as to a father, you dishonor your father in this; as if either he had not wisdom, or mercy enough to provide for you."

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

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## Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

## Review Questions

1. What does grumbling or murmuring reveal about our hearts?
  
2. Read Numbers 16:41-50 and Numbers 17. Based on Pastor Burroughs' exposition and application of these passages, what do we learn about the sin of murmuring?
  
3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:6-11. List the sins that Paul says God's people in the Old Testament committed. In vs. 10, what sin brought about God's destruction of some of His people?
  
4. What does Pastor Burroughs mean when he says that murmuring enables afflictions to "bow us down" so that afflictions "tread upon us."

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## Chapter 9: The Evils of a Murmuring Spirit – concl.

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs concludes his teaching on why murmuring or complaining is such an evil thing in God's sight. By taking seriously this sin, rather than treating it as a "light" matter, Pastor Burroughs calls us to repent of these ungodly patterns of thinking and speaking.

### Words to Know

- **Extenuate** – To lessen; to diminish.
- **Paternoster** – a reference to the Lord's Prayer. The Latin title is called "Paternoster" because it begins "Our Father".

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- "By murmuring you undo your prayers, for it is exceedingly contrary to the prayers that you make to God. When you come to pray to God, you acknowledge his sovereignty over you, you come there to profess yourselves to be at God's disposal. What do you pray for, unless you acknowledge that you are at his disposal? Unless you will stand, as it were, at his disposal, never come to petition him."
- "The Spirit of God extenuates evils and crosses, and magnifies and amplifies all mercies; and makes all mercies seem to be great, and all afflictions seem to be little."
- "A discontented heart is a proud heart, and he out of his pride is troubled with his affliction, and is not contented with God's disposal, and so he will not pull down his spirit at all, and make it bow to God in this condition into which God has brought him."
- "So while you are murmuring in your families, the wrath of God may quickly go out against you. In a morning or evening, when you are murmuring, the wrath of God may come quickly upon your families or persons. You are never so prepared for present wrath as when you are in a murmuring, discontented fit."

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

### Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Review Questions

1. In what way is murmuring contrary to our commitment to prayer?
2. Read Numbers 16:12-13. What sinful perspective do Dathan and Abiram have about God's dealings with Israel?
3. Read Psalm 106:24-25. What do these verses say about how Israel treated God's blessings?

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## Chapter 10: Aggravations of the Sin of Murmuring

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs details ways in which we make our sin of murmuring even worse. Pastor Burroughs realizes that while all sins are deserving of God's wrath and judgment, some sins are more heinous in God's sight when "aggravated" by ignoring God's mercies, or complaining about the most minor of things, for example.

### Words to Know

- **Aggravation** – The act of making worse, used of evils, natural or moral; the act of increasing severity or heinousness; addition to that which is evil or improper.
- **Dainty** – Scrupulous in manners; ceremonious.
- **Fastidious** – Disdainful; squeamish; delicate to a fault; over nice; difficult to please.
- **Gratis** – [Latin] For nothing; freely; without recompense; as, to give a thing gratis.
- **Repine** – To fret one's self; to be discontented; to feel inward discontent which preys on the spirits; with at or against.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- "Suppose a man has a very fine house to dwell in, and he has beautiful orchards, and gardens, set about with handsome tall trees for ornament. If this man should now murmur because the wind blows a few leaves off his trees, what a most unreasonable thing it would be, for him to be weeping, and wringing his hands over the loss of a few leaves, when he has plenty of all kinds of fruit? Thus it is with many, says, Seneca, though they have a great many comforts about them, yet some little thing, the blowing off of a few leaves from them is enough to disquiet them."
- "For men and women who have such guiltiness upon them, the guilt of very many sins upon them, who have provoked God exceedingly against them, and have brought themselves in a most dreadful manner under the sentence of God's justice, and yet, God having been pleased to relieve them – for them to murmur and be discontented with God's administrations towards them is exceedingly evil. . . Consider how we have crossed God in our sins; then if God should cross us in the way of our sufferings, should not we sit down quiet without murmuring?"
- "It should be the care of a Christian to observe what are God's ways towards him: What is God about to do with me at this time? Is God about to raise me up, to comfort? Let me accept God's goodness and bless his name; let me join with the work of God, when he offers mercy to me, to take the mercy he offers. But again, is God about to humble me? Is God about to break my heart, and to bring my heart down to him? Let me join with God in this work of his; this is how a Christian should walk with God."

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

## Review Questions

1. Explain what Pastor Burroughs means when he says: “To murmur when we enjoy an abundance of mercy; the greater and the more abundant the mercy that we enjoy, the greater and the viler is the sin of murmuring.”
2. How does remembering our past or present sins help us to have a humble spirit under God’s providences?

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## Chapter 11: The Excuses of a Discontented Heart

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs reviews the many common excuses we make to either diminish or justify or discontentment. Pastor Burroughs, like a skilled spiritual physician, identifies common excuses, and then diagnoses the underlying spiritual illness behind those excuses. We must repent of our excuses rather than always manufacturing another excuse for our discontent and grumbling against God.

### Words to Know

- **Dumpish** – Dull; stupid; sad; melancholy; depressed in spirit.
- **Sullen** – Gloomily angry and silent; cross; sour; affected with ill humor.
- **Tenure** – In general, then, is the particular manner of holding real estate, as by exclusive title or ownership, by fee simple, by fee tail, by curtesy, in dower, by copyhold, by lease, at will, etc.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “When anyone is discontented with their condition, they have an envious spirit at the conditions of those who are delivered from what afflictions they bear. Certainly, then, it has turned sour when you are so sensible of your afflictions and so insensible of mercies that you are unfit for the duties of your condition, and envious of others who are not afflicted as you are.”
- “There are many people who, when God’s hand is out against them, will say they are troubled for their sin, but the truth is, it is the affliction that troubles them rather than their sin. Their heart greatly deceives them in this very thing. They were never troubled for their sin before this affliction came. But you will say, ‘It is true I was not before, for my prosperity blinded me, but now God has opened my eyes by afflictions.’ Has he? Then your great care will be rather for the removing of your sin than your affliction. Are you more solicitous about the taking away of your sin than the taking away of your affliction?”
- “Now if a sailor has skill he does not say, ‘If it were any other wind but this, if the wind blew in any direction but this, I could manage my ship, I could show skill in other directions but not in this.’ Would not sailors laugh at such a one? It would be a shame for him to say that he has skill in any other direction but this. So it should be a shame for a Christian to say that he has no skill in any other affliction but this. A Christian should be able to manage his ship, if the wind blows any way; to guide his soul any way.”
- “There may be a sullen discontentedness of heart as well as a discontentedness manifested in words, and if you do not mortify that inward sullenness, when you are afflicted a little more, it will break forth at last.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

## Review Questions

1. Why is it unwise for us to think "if God would send me an affliction different than this one, I would be content?"
  
2. Read Matthew 6:11. Based on Pastor Burroughs' exposition, why do you think our Lord Jesus said, "give us this day, our daily bread"?
  
3. Has God promised us a certain amount of possessions in this present life? Read Hebrews 13:5-6. What has God promised in this passage?



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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 12: How to Attain Contentment

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs provides specific counsel on how to grow in contentment.

### Words to Know

- **Repine** – To fret one’s self; to be discontented; to feel inward discontent which preys on the spirits; with at or against.
- **Strangury** – A condition caused by blockage or irritation at the base of the bladder, resulting in severe pain and a strong desire to urinate.
- **Vicissitude** – Regular change or succession of one thing to another; as the vicissitudes of day and night, and of winter and summer; the vicissitudes of the seasons.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “It is a saying of Luther: ‘The sea of God’s mercies should swallow up all our particular afflictions.’ Name any affliction that is upon you: there is a sea of mercy to swallow it up.”
- “Truly, sometimes it is so, yes, to who you are godly; I make no question but you find it so, that your worst voyages have proved your best. When you have met with the greatest crosses in a voyage, God has been pleased to turn them to a greater good to you, in some other way.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

### Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

# Study Guide

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Review Questions

1. Pastor Burroughs counsels us to look at the abundance of God's mercies, even while experiencing affliction. How might you go about applying this counsel and counting all your blessings? List some ideas below.

2. Application Exercise: ask your parents and/or your pastor what practical steps have been helpful to them in growing in contentment. List some of their counsel below.

3. Application Exercise: List areas of your life in which you are struggling with discontentment. Then, spend time in prayer confessing these to God, and asking for Him to give you spiritual strength to experience contentment and joy even where you sense this "lack."

# Study Guide

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 13: How to Attain Contentment – concl.

### Summary

In this chapter, Pastor Burroughs provides specific counsel on how to grow in contentment, and concludes his series of sermons on contentment with some final parting exhortations to the reader.

### Words to Know

- **Nonplus** – Puzzle; insuperable difficulty; a state in which one is unable to proceed or decide.

### Golden Nuggets

Review and meditate on these select quotations:

- “Be sure of your call to every business you go about. Though it is the least business, be sure of your call to it; then, whatever you meet with, you may quiet your heart with this: ‘I know I am where God would have me. Nothing in the world will quiet the heart as much as this: When I meet with any cross, I know I am where God would have me, in my place and calling; I am about the work that God has set me.’”
- “One who creeps low cannot fall far, but it is those who are on high whose fall bruises them most. That is a good rule: do not promise yourselves great things, neither aim at any great things in the world.”
- “Make a good interpretation of God’s ways towards you. If any good interpretation can be made of God’s ways towards you, make it. You think it much if you have a friend who always makes bad interpretations of your ways towards him; you would take that badly. If you should converse with people with whom you cannot speak a word, but they are ready to make a bad interpretation of it, and to take it in an ill sense, you would think their company very tedious to you. It is very tedious to the Spirit of God when we make such bad interpretations of his ways towards us.”
- “I have spent many sermons over this lesson of contentment, but I am afraid that you will be longer in learning it than I have been preaching of it; it is a harder thing to learn it than it is to preach or speak of it.”

Choose your favorite among these quotations and explain how it is helpful to you.

### Your Favorite Quotation

Select one of your favorite quotations from the chapter and copy it below for meditation and sharing with others.

# Study Guide

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Review Questions

1. Explain Pastor Burroughs' counsel to "exercise faith" when reason fails us in trials.
2. What was the Lord's exhortation to Baruch in Jeremiah 45?
3. Why is it unwise and unhelpful to "pore over your afflictions" over and over again?

# Answer Key

*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 1

1. Food and clothing
2. Pastor Burroughs means that true Christian contentment, as a spiritual grace worked within, is not a mere external “putting a good face on things” and appearing outwardly content, while we are fretting in our hearts. Pastor Burroughs points out that God knows our hearts. Spiritual contentment is not a mere external. It is an inward heart work.
3. Pastor Burroughs explains that we sanctify God’s name or keep God’s name holy by not complaining of the providences He brings into our lives. And by glorifying Him through patient submission, through rejoicing in trials, and by acknowledging His goodness in the affliction.

## Chapter 2

1. Pastor Burroughs explains that this verse teaches us that the heart of the godly man first and foremost desires God Himself more than anything this world has to offer us. In that sense, the godly man is unsatisfied with the offerings of this world, but the Christian instead finds true satisfaction in fellowship with the living God.
2. Pastor Burroughs explains that the heart empowered by God’s grace does not so much focus on the affliction, but asks “what is the duty of the circumstances God has put me into?” In other words, now that God has put me in this situation, what does He want me to do?
3. Pastor Burroughs explains that we don’t get contentment by “adding” those things we think we need to be happy or joyful. Rather, an important part of the mystery and art of contentment is to use the season of affliction to help us identify sin within and then purge it by the power of God’s Spirit.

## Chapter 3

1. List will vary. In vs. 24, the author describes the Lord as his “portion” and therefore he puts his hope in God.
2. By finding contentment from the covenant, Pastor Burroughs is explaining that God’s covenant made with His people, often called the covenant of grace, includes an abundance of precious promises. A Christian experiencing affliction and difficulty finds these promises to provide support and encouragement when affliction is most severe.
3. Pastor Burroughs explains that all the blessings God gives us in this present life are meant to drive us to gratitude and satisfaction in God. They are like pipes through which life-giving water flows. But if the pipes are destroyed or stopped by the loss of earthly comforts, we can still get the life-giving water by coming to God directly and finding Him to be our all-in-all.

## Chapter 4

1. Pastor Burroughs is not saying that God insures what we lose by promising to give us an exact replacement of what we lose. For example, if you lose your house to a fire, the promise doesn’t literally or automatically mean, “God will give you the same kind of house with all the same possessions.” Rather, in a spiritual sense, the idea of Burroughs illustration is this: the promises of God are so great that whatever God takes away from us in terms of temporal comforts or possessions, He makes up to us with things far better and of eternal value.
2. It is important to meditate upon the promises of heaven and eternal life, because even the best things we enjoy in this life are not worth comparing to the things that will be revealed to us in glory. There is an eternal weight of glory awaiting us.
3. Murmuring and complaining does not actually make us feel better. But gratitude expressed in prayer reminds us of just how good God has been to us, even though we may be experiencing some sense of “lack” in our present circumstances. Complaining does not change our circumstances. It only makes us feel worse in them. But grateful prayer, with petitions for God’s help, actually can change things, as God responds to our prayer according to His will and helps us in our time of need.

## Chapter 5

1. 1 — Such a person learns to know that he is nothing.  
2 — I deserve nothing.  
3 — I can do nothing.  
4 — I am so vile that I cannot of myself receive any good.  
5 — We can make use of nothing when we have it if God but withdraws himself.  
6 — We are worse than nothing.  
7 — If we perish we will be no loss.  
8 — Thereby the soul comes to rejoice and take satisfaction in all God’s ways.
2. As pilgrims and sojourners, we remember that we are passing through this present age, and that none of the things that God gives us are permanent in nature. We have a better, heavenly inheritance which cannot be taken away from us. For this reason, our hearts should not and need not be wrapped around our present possessions.
3. When we respond sinfully and discontentedly in affliction, it reveals how we have heart idols that we cling to. It may also reveal how sinful our hearts are when we give way to pride, anger, evil speech, unkind behavior, etc. in our afflictions.

# Answer Key

*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

## Chapter 6

1. Answers will vary. Those who are rich in this present life are often pierced through with many sorrows that come from covetousness which always produce discontentment (1 Tim. 6:10). Often, trouble and danger come with many riches. There is the burden of duty and faithful stewardship of those resources. We must give an account to God for how we handled our possessions. And the more possessions you have, the greater the account you must give.
2. Answers will vary. It is a terrible thing to be given up to our own desires because we then run right into the lap of idols we have long been tempted by. We become a slave to our own sinful desires which ultimately do not satisfy. Those same sinful desires we indulge in, also come with a heavy consequence: God's wrath and curse against sin.
3. Answers will vary. Pastor Burroughs teaches us that because God providentially directs all things that happen to us, it is important that we not complain against God, knowing that He is infinitely wiser than us. It will do no good to complain about God's will in our lives. Also, there is so much we do not understand about God's purposes in providence, it is prideful of us to think we could design a better plan.

## Chapter 7

1. Answers will vary. To humbly and patiently submit ourselves to God's will in all things is an act of worship because by it, we acknowledge God to be good, we acknowledge that God is in control of all things, and that He is wise. To put it another way, we declare God to be who He has revealed Himself to be, and we receive Him as He is. But when we are discontent, we are in essence saying, "God is not good. God is not wise. God is not going to work this out. God, you need to do something different." Our discontentment is a form of rebellion.
2. Answers will vary. Paul is telling us that by not grumbling and complaining, we stand apart from the crowd. The world is characterized by ingratitude, anger, frustration, and discontent. So, when we as Christians do not grumble or complain, this itself is a good work which shines as a light among a crooked and twisted generation.
3. Pastor Burroughs reminds us that God is the all-sufficient one, having no lack at all. So, when we are content with what we have, in that sense, we imitate the nature of God by being "sufficient" or "content" with what we have. We have no "lack" or "insufficiency" because God has provided us with all that we need.

## Chapter 8

1. Pastor Burroughs says that grumbling or murmuring reveals corruption in our hearts. It is a sin to grumble against God. It reveals our lack of character and our inward heart corruption

when we are discontent. It shows how our hearts need cleansing from this sin, so that we might learn to submit to God's will.

2. Murmuring or complaining is a serious sin in God's sight. It is a form of rebellion. And in Numbers 16, God sent a plague upon the people because of it.
3. Lust/Evil Desire; Idolatry; Sexual immorality; Complaining. The sin in vs. 10 that brought about God's destruction was the sin of complaining.
4. Pastor Burroughs is saying that murmuring gives afflictions a power they should not have: to subdue us under their weight making the burden much heavier than it should be.

## Chapter 9

1. Murmuring is, in effect, to contradict your prayers. By murmuring we say, "God, your will in this is not good, and you need to do something different." But in prayer, we are saying, "Your will be done, Lord." Hence, prayer and murmuring are not compatible with each other. Since we know that prayer is God's will for us, we must repent of murmuring.
2. Dathan and Abiram were calling Egypt, the land of their bondage and captivity, "the land flowing with milk and honey." They were ungrateful for God's redemption from Egypt and saw God's actions in bringing them through the wilderness as an evil thing.
3. Israel despised God's blessings of the "good land" (the Promised Land). They saw what God had done as something contemptible and of little value. Instead, they turned to complaining in their tents.

## Chapter 10

1. Our sin of murmuring is even more heinous when God's mercies are more abundant upon us. The more gifts God gives us, the more unfitting and evil it is for us to grumble and complain.
2. Answers will vary. We remember that we deserve death and hell. Even the hardest afflictions we endure, ordered by God's hand, are still much more than we deserve. We need to see God's mercies rightly in light of our sinfulness. God has been good to us and continues to be good to us.

## Chapter 11

1. It is foolish to think this because it assumes we know better than God what we need. The Bible tells us that God sovereignly directs what comes to pass in our lives, including our afflictions. It is foolish for us to question God's wisdom, goodness, mercy, and kindness in our lives.
2. As Pastor Burroughs points out, God would have us to be dependent upon Him every day, rather than having all our provisions pre-guaranteed months or years in advance. God

# Answer Key

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*The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, by Jeremiah Burroughs

teaches us to trust Him for daily provisions of grace when we are going through affliction.

3. God has not promised us a certain amount of possessions in this life. We do not have this “tenure” of “to have and hold” forever, as Pastor Burroughs points out. However, God has promised never to leave us or forsake us. God has promised to provide for our needs, according to His wisdom.

## Chapter 12

1. Answers will vary. Ideas may include: personally listing your blessings on paper, and giving thanks to God for them. Asking others to help you identify God’s mercies in your life. Keep a thanksgiving journal where you list new mercies every day.
2. Answers will vary.
3. Answers will vary.

## Chapter 13

1. Pastor Burroughs points out that often, our reason lets us down, because we cannot make sense of the trial, or fully understand God’s purposes when we are enduring affliction. For this reason, we need to exercise faith in God’s promises, which sustain us, when our reason and our understanding fail us.
2. The Lord exhorted Baruch not to seek “great things” for himself, because he was not going to receive “great things” but nevertheless, God would preserve his life through the calamities that were coming upon God’s people.
3. It does not do us any good to sit and meditate upon all the hard things and focus in on the hardships. It is the wrong focus for us. We need to redirect our thoughts to God’s promises, and to spiritual things. We will surely be more and more discontented the more we “pore over” our afflictions.