



Boiling Point: Discontentment

Adapted from "Boiling Points" series by Stephen Blandino

If we are not careful, we can find ourselves in a never-ending rat race. This is a race that deceives us into believing that **IT** will make us happy. If we can get enough of **IT** we can be content. Paul had an encounter with Jesus and realized **IT** was not needed to discover contentment but **HE** is what is needed.

The term "affluenza" hit pop culture after the infamous 2013 manslaughter trial of Ethan Couch, whose defense included a witness saying the teen was a product of "profoundly dysfunctional" parents who gave him too much and never taught him the consequences of his actions. Here's what you should know about it.

Who Popularized the Term?

It's not a recognized medical condition but still gained traction after Couch's defense team hired a psychologist named G. Dick Miller, whose testimony included the term "affluenza" during his argument that the teen should be treated at a rehab facility instead of serving a jail term.

Miller has said that Couch was raised by his parents with "no reasonable boundaries." He said the teen was taught by his parents that if he hurt someone, he could send money. Miller, though not the first to use "affluenza," said Couch's parents also taught him, "to an extent," that other people were beneath him and have no worth.

What Do Psychologists Say About the Term?

There is no medical basis for the term "affluenza," according to Frank Farley, a professor of educational psychology at Temple University and the former president of the American Psychological Association. "It's pop psychology at its worst example," Farley told ABC News. He said the term does appear to have similarities to other diagnosable conditions, including narcissism disorder, but "the science is close to zero" that would allow it to be part of a diagnostic system.

Farley did say, however, that "affluenza" suggests concepts that deserve more study, including how a social class or parental actions can influence a teen's actions.

"A kid raised in this cocoon of social class may not even have the same concepts of social responsibility that everyday folks have," Farley said, adding this does not absolve people of their actions.

Where Did the Term Originate?

The term reportedly popped up after Jessie O'Neill, a granddaughter of a former president of General Motors, wrote the book "The Golden Ghetto: The Psychology of Affluence," according to The Associated Press. The term was used to talk about children and teens who may act entitled or irresponsible and make excuses for acting out or displaying bad behavior. The term is a combination of the words affluent and influenza.¹

¹ Gillian Mohny, "What is Ethan Couch's 'Affluenza': An Explainer," ABC News, December 30, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/ethan-couchs-affluenza-explainer/story?id=36011293> (accessed July 6, 2017).

COURAGE

C1: When you hear the word “discontent”, what comes to your mind?

C2: Write or talk about a time in your life when you were walking in discontent. Talk about how you felt and what you did to get through the season of discontentment.

C3: Paul started the church at Philippi. After he started the church, the Philippians supported him as he ministered in other cities. As time passed, the church no longer had the chance to help him. We do not know why. Something had changed when Paul writes the book of Philippians. Read and answer the following.

Philippians 4:10–11 (NLT) How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn’t have the chance to help me. Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.

Philippians 4:15–18 (NLT) As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. I don’t say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness. At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God.

- In verse 10, why does Paul use the word “again”?
- What does the word “learn” mean?

STRENGTH

S1: Has there ever been a time in your life when you have been disappointed? Describe your thoughts and feelings.

S2: Paul's contentment was possibly tested the most when it came to the problems he faced. Read and answer the following.

2 Corinthians 6:4–5 (NLT)

2 Corinthians 6:8–10 (NLT)

- From these verses, what three things do you glean about problems?
- Maybe your list is as impressive as Paul's list. Take a few moments to write out a list of problems you are facing in your life right now.
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very content and 4 being not very content, rate yourself on how content you are in your circumstances. Write out a plan to improve.

S3: If you are a hard charging, fast-paced, driven personality, being content with the speed of your success can be painful. Read and answer the following.

2 Corinthians 12:7–9 (NLT)

- What difficulty was causing Paul to feel tested?
- Have you ever felt discontented with your lack of progress?

- Have you ever felt like there was something more but couldn't see it?
- Have you ever felt like every corner you turned was met with a red light?
- Have you ever felt like God lost His plan for your life while you waited patiently for Him to find it?

2 Corinthians 12:8–10 (NLT)

- From these verses, what was Paul's response to his "thorn in the flesh" when progress came to a halt?
- What was your response to your "thorn in the flesh" when progress came to a halt?
- How can you move closer to Paul's response?

ENDURANCE

E1: When Paul write about contentment to the church at Philippi, he specifically referred to being content physically. Read and answer the following.

Philippians 4:11–12 (NLT)

- How does Paul’s statement contrast with the culture we live in that says, “The more you have, the happier you’ll be.”

E2: We equate the quality of our contentment with the quantity of our consumption. Read and answer the following.

Philippians 4:11 (NLT)

- From a Bible dictionary, what does the word “content” mean?
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very content and 4 being not very content, rate yourself, rate how content you are in the midst of problems, lack of progress, or lack of possessions. Write out your plan to improve your contentment.

E3: Read and answer the following.

Philippians 4:12–13 (NLT)

Philippians 4:19–20 (NLT)

- From these verses, what were Paul’s two secrets to contented living regardless of his circumstances?
- Honestly, is Christ enough for you? Or do you need Christ PLUS: the new job, the new wife, the new car, the new win at work?