

Session 8

GIVING GENEROUSLY

1 Timothy 6:6-10,17-19

Memory Verse

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

– 1 TIMOTHY 6:6, CSB





Giving Generously

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God has given guidance for how His people should steward the blessings we have been given, and there is contentment and reward when we follow His plans.

While most Americans may not consider themselves wealthy, in comparison to other countries most of us are very wealthy. The culture we live in continually pushes us to accumulate more to be happy and content. But the results of such pursuits are often the opposite. Being wealthy and having possessions does not lead to contentment but typically causes a person to want more. The pursuit of more is a never-ending cycle of seeking satisfaction and continuing to be unfulfilled by the treasures of the world.

Many believe if they could just have “a little bit more” they would be happy and satisfied. If that were true, then people who win the lottery or gain abundant wealth would be the most content people. But according to an article in Harvard Business Review, making money will not inevitably lead to your happiness. According to this report, even in the secular world “how you spend, save, and think about money shapes how much joy you get from it.”¹ Sometimes the world understands the principles found in Scripture even if they don’t give God credit for it.

 How have you seen that money does not automatically equal happiness or contentment?

 Why are we still tempted by this even when experience and observation tell us otherwise?

Session Summary

Paul wrote to Timothy with encouragement to keep preaching the Word and standing firm on truth in the face of a culture of worldliness and materialism. God's people are to reject selfishness and pursue godliness. There is much to be gained from living God's way and obeying His Word. Chasing after money and wealth leads to discontentment and dissatisfaction.

True contentment is found in viewing things with an eternal perspective and seeking to steward our resources in a godly manner. We are called to live generous lives, seeking to do good for others over accumulating things for ourselves.

1. Gain of Godliness (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

Paul wrote to Timothy about the need for believers to pursue godliness. He knew the temptations of the world and the vulnerability of people to believe gaining things according to the world's standards was the best way. Timothy's culture focused on gaining material possessions and wealth to find happiness. A self-centered mindset prevailed. Not much has changed over the centuries. Paul's words to Timothy are easily applicable to our lives.

 How does our world push people toward the pursuit of material wealth? How does our society put pressure on people to “keep up” in this way?

Paul encouraged Timothy to preach God's Word accurately and help the people to see why pursuing godliness is the best pursuit. Making a connection between godliness and contentment, Paul stressed that in a world where people are continually searching for things or relationships to make them feel satisfied, true contentment is not found in accumulating things. Contentment paired with godliness brings great gain and this should be our aim.

Just as a baby comes into the world with nothing, we also will all exit the world taking no possessions with us. The things that make a person wealthy in this world mean nothing in the next. One of the first steps toward being content is seeing possessions from an eternal perspective instead of looking at them with the world's eyes. Think about how differently

you feel about your money and your things when you stop seeing them as the means to feel good about yourself or your situation but instead use them for eternal purposes. This is what Paul meant when he told Timothy to recognize the value of contentment and why it matters.

? How have you seen the need to accumulate possessions and wealth be a hindrance to finding contentment?

Paul's reference to food and clothing addressed the fact that receiving your basic needs can lead to contentment when your perspective is in the right place. It is about having a humble heart that is grateful for the provisions of the Lord and not always striving to keep gaining more. No matter the time in history, the world pushes us to be jaded and discontent. Those things we think will satisfy us leave us wanting more and feeling anything but content. You don't have to look far to see how this is true in the lives of many, possibly including your own. When we feed our selfish desires, we fall into the trap of pursuing the things the world tells us we need.

Just as the constant hunger for more or better feeds the discontentment in us, striving for godliness does the opposite. When we learn the value of becoming more like Jesus in everything, we move closer to being content with what we have. The more grateful we are for all that God has done and is doing in our lives, the more we will experience true contentment that can't be shaken by the next loss, stock market change, interest rates, or anything else that threatens our material goods.

? Application: What would it look like for you to strive for godliness with contentment?

2. Dangers of Greediness (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

Along with the encouragement to pursue godliness, Paul pointed out the dangers of doing the opposite. Note that he stated the desire for riches is harmful and dangerous, not the riches themselves. The amount of money you have or do not have does not determine your godliness, but your desires guide the state of your heart

and life. Both those without much material possessions and those with abundance struggle with the desire to gather riches over the desire to be humble, trust the Lord, and pursue contentment.

Think about your own life and the times you have felt the need to make more money, buy something more impressive, or trade up what you already have. This temptation is attractive for all people. Paul warned about what happens when accumulating wealth and riches is the driving force of our lives—it can cause you to fall into a trap that is very difficult to escape.


? When have you seen the desire for riches cause someone to fall into a trap that is difficult to escape, or was there a time you've experienced this yourself?

The dangerous desire for riches feeds a selfish tendency toward greediness and lures your heart away from Christ. One of the traps of earthly wealth is becoming dependent on your material resources over Christ. Christians are never told to store up treasures on earth to impress or one-up the neighbors. We are to set our sights on eternity and find ways to store up treasures there that are lasting. If you are constantly focused on increasing your material wealth and possessions on earth it is tough to also be focused on eternal things and generously use what you already have to invest in eternity.

? How can people store up treasures in heaven as opposed to earth?

Verse 10 is one of the more well-known, quoted, and sometimes misquoted phrases in Scripture. Even many who aren't involved in church have heard a form of these words. Sometimes people lay the blame for all kinds of evil on money itself, but Paul was clear that money is not evil. Having money is not evil. It is the desire for money that is the root of different kinds of evil.

Compare how you've heard this verse used to what Paul actually said. When we allow our flesh to rule our lives then it is easier to be motivated by the wrong kinds of desires. Chasing after money for satisfaction will never result in true contentment. Paul warned that a person who feeds greediness will be pierced with many sorrows. This is an undesirable fate that is contrary to the life God wants for His children.

 **Application: How have you been guilty of having the wrong priorities with money? What will you do to change?**

3. Blessings of Generosity (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

In these verses, Paul gave further instructions about how to handle wealth and material possessions. He specifically addressed those who are rich in this world and made it clear if they want to be rich in eternity, they must be intentional about how they steward what they have been given in the present. These are words for us today. We have all been called to steward our resources well, no matter how much or little we have.

Pride is a danger for anyone who is well-off. There is a great temptation to think if you have more you are worth more. However, the truth is that God loves all people enough that He sent Jesus to die for our sins regardless of our bank accounts or investment portfolios. He loves the rich and poor and does not place a higher value on those who have been blessed with much. Instead of being prideful about what you have, Paul warned to beware you don't start thinking of yourself higher than you should.

We must also be careful about trusting in the wrong things. When you have an abundance of material wealth it can be easy to trust in that. You have probably experienced or witnessed what happens when people place their faith and trust in something like money or material possessions. The danger of trusting in those instead of the Lord is you have nothing to stand on when the stock market dives, your job is eliminated, a tragedy strikes, or your possessions are destroyed. While no one wants these things to happen, we are all aware of how easily our circumstances can change. There is great uncertainty in trusting things of the world compared with complete certainty in trusting the Lord.

? How have you seen the danger of trusting in material possessions as the ultimate source of happiness and contentment?

One of the best ways to guard against an improper reliance on material things is to obey God's Word. We are to do good, be rich in good works, and to live generously and ready to share. This is simple, but it's not easy. As God's people we must refuse the tendency to be selfish and keep a tight fist on what we have been blessed with. Instead, the goal is to look for ways to focus on others by using our possessions, time, and money. We can use what we have been given to bless others and impact their lives with the good news of the gospel.

? How might you use earthly resources to make a kingdom impact?

Paul said when we get this right, we store up treasures and lay a strong foundation for eternity. Think about the brevity of life. Even if you live a long life by earthly standards, it is nothing compared to the amount of time you will spend in eternity. One hundred years is a drop in the bucket compared to enjoying treasures in heaven for the rest of eternity. Paul used the imagery of letting go of one thing to take hold of what really matters with all your might. Your hand is not big enough to hold onto two things, so the choice is whether you will cling to money or if you will hold onto eternity and steward what you have in the world to invest in the kingdom of God and things of eternal value. God calls His people to be generous in every area of our lives to bring Him glory.

? Application: How does this study challenge you to change your attitude and perspective on material possessions?

Conclusion

This portion of Paul's letter to Timothy is practical and applicable. These words were an encouragement to Timothy to keep preaching the Word of God and stand on truth in the face of a culture that promoted the opposite. Just as we struggle with a tendency toward selfishness and materialism, Christians in that day dealt with similar temptations.

Paul gave specifics on how we can guard against falling into the ways of the world. We are to pursue godliness instead of chasing after money and possessions. There is true contentment found in following God's ways and obeying His Word. The pursuit of "more" will always leave us dissatisfied. Pursuing God's way enables us to view everything from an eternal perspective.

As further motivation to pursue godliness, Paul warned about the dangers of greediness and the blessings of generosity. We are to refuse the temptation of selfishness and the desire to accumulate material things in hopes of finding security. The goal is to do good, share willingly, and be generous so we will store up treasures that last for eternity.

 How have you been chasing after the world instead of pursuing godliness? What needs to change?

 How can this group support one another in pursuing godliness over materialism?

 How might living in a generous way give us opportunity to share the gospel with others?

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).



FOR NEXT WEEK

What We Believe

Main Passages

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Memorize

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

- 1 Timothy 6:6, CSB

References

¹Eliabeth Dunn and Chris Courtney, “Does More Money Really Make Us More Happy?”, *Harvard Business Review*, September 14, 2020, hbr.org/2020/09/does-more-money-really-makes-us-more-happy.