



## 1 TIMOTHY 6

### 1 TIMOTHY 6:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. <sup>2</sup>And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

1 Timothy 6:1-2 deals with what it means to be God-honoring employee in the workplace. Now, in some ways this should be very easy to address, but I am not sure that it really is that easy. The American culture is consumed with comfort and convenience, and if you did a survey (which many have been done), what you would find is that the majority of people are NOT content with their jobs. They may feel underpaid and overworked, they may not like the routine, they may not like their management, or they may not like their benefits. It could be any number of things. To make it worse, we are a very materialistic society. There are simply a lot of people who do not really want to do the work, but they want to be fully paid. So, we live in a culture where many people want more money for less work.

It is my firm belief that Christians need a very strong work ethic, and that ethic needs to come from Scripture. What we need is a biblical theology of work. In v1, Paul says that to not work honorably is something that brings reproach and blasphemy on the doctrine of God. That is not something that we can just casually dismiss. Put it in practical terms, why would anyone want to go to your church if you were a lazy employee in the workplace? It would actually be the believer who was blaspheming the doctrine of God – not others.

Now, I am not going to over teach on what it means to be a slave or a master. In the Old and New Testament, slavery was NOT what we know it as from the civil war. It was much different and was a very accepted way of life. So, in our vernacular, it simply means the employee / employer relationship. You work for someone else, for a company, for the government, and that job has certain defined expectations and duties. Someone is paying you to do a job at a certain level of skill and proficiency, and normally your pay is commensurate with your skill, your proficiency, and your education.

Now, the simple problem that we have is that we have a tendency to break things down between what we would call the sacred and the secular. We clearly seem to make that kind of distinction. However, in reality, that is not biblical. Everything that we do is sacred. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says,

<sup>31</sup>**Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

Our jobs may be very different, but the issue is not what kind of work that we do, but how we do it. Your work, no matter what it is, has a profound spiritual value. When you integrate your work into your life, that work becomes the place in which you actually live out your spiritual convictions. You could be an executive, a housewife, a student, anything. Whatever it is that you are doing is the testing ground for your Christian life and convictions. We cannot separate the sacred and the secular. That



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produces nominal Christians at best. Life is where believers live out the Christian life. Some people only try to live it out at church.

People work to accomplish their personal goals, their own ends and to finance their lifestyles, but a Christian thinks eschatologically. A Christian thinks in terms of the Kingdom of God. We work for the glory of God. We work with a view to eternal reward and with the view to see people saved. So everything we do and every response we make should fall under that kind of understanding. The workplace is really where the world is watching believers the most. They do not see believers at church because they are not in church. However, they do see believers at work and they know whether or not they have a valid Christian work ethic. They see if we goof off like everyone else, if we complain all of the time about our jobs, if we get there late and leave early to make up for it. They see all of that. They know if we work hard or if we are slack in different areas. They know if we give a full day's work or if we spend half our time talking on the phone. They know if we do our work with meticulous excellence, or if we just do enough to get by. You simply cannot fool people in the workplace over an extended period of time. They see what you really are.

In [1 Timothy 6:1-2](#) there are two scenarios. The first is that the Christian has an unbelieving employer, and the second is that he has a believing employer. However, the principles for both are identical – you honor both. Now the problem that many Christians have is that they may have an employer who is not at all sympathetic to their Christian values. They may curse or use the Lord's name in vain. They may not have much compassion or they may be unkind in their words. However, needs to be remembered is that how a believer relates to them may be the only picture of Christ that they ever see. [1 Peter 2:18-23](#) gives another picture of the same thing,

**<sup>18</sup>Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. <sup>19</sup>For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. <sup>20</sup>For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. <sup>21</sup>For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: <sup>22</sup>“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His truth”; <sup>23</sup>who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;**

In neither of these “work” passages does God say that believers only honor “good” employers. In fact, He actually says the opposite. Now, what is the reason for all of this? Someone is going to immediately say “*It is not fair.*” However, God is not interested in fairness. Look at [1 Timothy 6:1](#) again – “...so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed”. “Blaspheme” means to speak evil of. I.e., the way a believer works relates to how people will perceive God and the gospel. The word “**doctrine**” obviously refers to the gospel. So, if a believer works in such a way as to dishonor their employer, then they will bring reproach upon the name of God and the gospel. People will say, “*You say that you love and serve God, but look at the way you work. What kind of transforming message do you have because you do not look too transformed to me.*” [Titus 2:9-10](#) says the same thing,



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**<sup>9</sup>Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, <sup>10</sup>not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.**

The phrase “**not answering back**” is translated in other versions as not being argumentative, or not talking back. Many Christians have completely missed it at this point. They argue and complain and grumble and criticize and constantly find fault and just have to express their opinion about things – and all the while, the testimony of Christ is being lost.

It is the believability of the believer’s life in the workplace that is able to speak in a way that no preacher will ever be allowed to speak. **The reputation of God is at stake. The reputation of the gospel is at stake.** The attitude that a believer projects and the way they work and the quality of their work is the place in which they are living out their Christianity. In a very real sense the people at a believer’s workplace who do not know God are probably better judges of that person’s Christianity than we might be.

**Ephesians 6:5-8** says the same thing,

**<sup>5</sup>Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup>not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup>with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup>knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.**

A believer’s work should always be the best and should always be excellent so that the name of God is honored. A believer’s work is a sacred service offered to God, and their eternal reward will be related to their attitude and performance on their job.

### **1 TIMOTHY 6:3-5,**

**<sup>3</sup>If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, <sup>4</sup>he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup>useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**

In this section of **1 Timothy 6**, Paul dissects and examines the characteristics of false teachers. False teaching is like a disease, like a cancer. If anyone has cancer, what has happened is that the body has created abnormal cells that threaten the entire body – and that is exactly the effect that false teaching has on the Body of Christ. False teaching could be defined as a deadly spiritual disease. From a biblical perspective, **error always begets more error.** It is a spiritual domino effect. In fact, the errors of the false teachers is simply being perpetuated by their disciples. False teaching and false teachers are as deadly and as prevalent within the church as they have ever been simply because of mass media like television. They have the medium to spread their false teaching. Unfortunately, false teaching will always destroy a person’s appetite for the truth.



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Now, what are some of the characteristics of false teachers? Well, the first characteristic is in v3 when it speaks of them teaching “**otherwise**”. I.e., they teach things that are different from the truth. However, someone will ask, “*Different from what?*” Well, v2 says, “**Teach and exhort these things.**” It is everything that Paul has taught up to this point in this epistle. This is a very comprehensive epistle and has much to say at a very practical level. So, what Paul says is that if anyone teaches “**otherwise**”, if anyone teaches differently than what God’s Word says, they are deviating from God’s revealed truth, and are misleading the people of God. There are many false and bizarre teachings being perpetuated today that are being fully embraced and accepted. These false teachers twist texts to new heights of their imagination that it is almost horrifying what they will say. In [1 Timothy 4](#), Paul called these doctrines as “**doctrines of demons**” being perpetuated by “**deceiving spirits**”. It is like a spiritual virus within the church that infects many people. The words in this passage simply refer to teaching that is different, to teaching that is “**otherwise**” than what the Bible has to say on a subject.

Let me give you just one example of their “positive confession” teaching. Joel Osteen, in trying to explain why the angel of the Lord rendered John the Baptist’s father Zechariah speechless – and I quote, “*It is because God knew that Zechariah’s negative words would cancel out His (God’s) plan. God knows the power of our words. He knows that we prophesy our future. And He knew that Zechariah’s negative words would stop His plan.*” This is part of their false teaching that words create reality.

In many cases, these false teachers may actually state, and often do, that they have been given some kind of vision, or that God has spoken to them directly, or that they have been given a revelation by God. If you hear someone make the statement that “God has told them such and such”, quickly remove yourself. There is no new truth and there is no new revelation. If it is true, it is not new, and if it is new, it is not true. The Scriptures are the beginning and the ending of God’s revelation to man, and everything that believer’s teach is to come from the Word of God exclusively.

In researching some of the false teachers, I read this about Benny Hinn and some of the false prophecies that he has spoken in the past. For instance, he prophesied that Fidel Castro would die in the 1990s, that the homosexual community would be destroyed by fire sometime around 1994 to 1995. On March 29, 2000, he predicted that Christ would physically appear on the platform with him in one of his crusades. He has claimed that there are nine persons of the Godhead because God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all have their own personal spirit, soul, and body. These things should be ludicrous to a Christian, but millions flock to his healing crusades and purchase and read his books by the millions.

However, he is just one of many. The father of the so-called Faith Movement was a man named E.W. Kenyon, and his primary disciple was Kenneth Hagin who begat Kenneth Copeland. The primary emphasis of their teaching is what is known as “positive confession”. I.e., what happens – either positively or negatively – is a result of the words that a person speaks. For them, words create reality. They actually state that God is obligated to honor your positive confessions. The following is a statement by Joel Osteen in which he said,



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*“The moment you speak something out, you give birth to it. This is a spiritual principle, and it works whether what you are saying is good or bad, positive or negative.”*

This is spiritual and theological nonsense, but it is prevalent both in America and around the world.

These individuals are all on TV and are known as “prosperity preachers”. The following is a small list of false teachers that believers - Joel Osteen, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, John Hagee, Creflo Dollar, T.D. Jakes, Rod Parsley, Fredrick Price, Marilyn Hickey, Miles Munroe, Juanita Bynum, Jerry Savelle, Morris Cerullo, Paul Crouch (founder of the Trinity Broadcasting Network – TBN), Paula White, Todd Bentley – and the list just goes on and on. It is frightening, and they are reaching millions and millions of people all over the world through television. What I am describing to you is spiritually cultic. It is a modern day movement that claims to be Christian, but compromises, confuses, distorts, and contradicts essential Christian doctrine.

If I do nothing else in this part of the course, I at least want to make you aware of some of the spiritual nonsense that is being promoted and accepted every day. Much of what I have already quoted and will quote for you has been authenticated and substantiated by the Christian Research Institute founded by Walter Martin. Benny Hinn, for instance, has openly and verbally threatened those people who have attacked his ministry. This is quoted from a TBN program where he said,

*“If you care for your kids, stop attacking Benny Hinn.... You will pay, and your children will. Hear this from the lips of God’s servant. You are in danger.”*

Paul Crouch publically stated on one of his programs that if God did not kill what he called the “heresy hunters” that he would. Benny Hinn, speaking about those who criticize him made this statement.

*“I am from Israel. Sometimes I wish that God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun. I’d blow your head off.”*

Anything that is different from the sound true teaching of Scripture reveals a false teacher. And any deviation from the truth can have deadly results in the lives of those who listen to these things. So, what is the believer’s responsibility in this area? Well, it is simple. Believers must know what Scripture teaches. Paul told Timothy in [1 Timothy 4:6](#),

**“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.**

I.e., if false teaching is to be recognized, it will be recognized by those who are well grounded in the Word and doctrine. The way that believers are able to discern false teaching is to be strong in the Word – all of it. [1 John 2:14](#) says,

**I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.**

The problem with most Christians is that they are not strong in the Word and the Word of God simply does not abide in them. They lack real spiritual content within their life, and have lost a grave sense of spiritual discernment when it comes to false teaching. The more that I teach, the more that I am drawn





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to the passage in [Acts 20:27](#) where Paul was speaking to the elders at Ephesus and to Timothy and he spoke these words to them.

**<sup>27</sup>For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**

Paul was constantly teaching the Word, teaching the Word, teaching the Word. The only way that any of us can be protected against error is to know the truth – that is the only way. One of the foundational trademarks of false teaching is that generally it is very appealing to the flesh. It panders to the flesh and it appeals to the flesh. In [2 Timothy 1:13](#), Paul gave these words to Timothy,

**<sup>13</sup>Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

Hold them fast, do not let go of sound words, of sound doctrine. Cling to them.

Another characteristic of false teachers is that they actually deny the truth. They teach things that are not true, and then they deny things that are true. V3 says,

**<sup>3</sup>If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,**

The word for “**wholesome**” is the Greek word “*hygiano*” from where we get the English word “hygiene”. It simply means to be healthy, to be in good health. Spiritually it carries the idea of not being corrupt and of being true to doctrine. So, to “**not consent**” to wholesome words means that they are not committed to the Word of God. Literally, it means that they are not in agreement with the Word of God.

Now, here is the way that it works out practically. First of all, false teachers deny things in Scripture, and secondly, they add things to Scripture. So, they simply subtract things from the Word of God that they do not like, and then they add things to the Word of God that they do like. They may talk about Scripture, they may use spiritual words, and they may quote Scripture - but they simply are not committed to it.

The issues and consequences are really very simple. What they teach as v3 states is “**not according to godliness**”. It could actually be translated as “**not being linked**” to godliness. So, from a very practical standpoint, the issue for discerning whether a teaching is godly or ungodly is in what it produces in a person’s life. Does it produce godliness – that is the question? When properly taught and embraced, the Word of God will always produce godly and spiritual behavior in a person. When a believer hears godly teaching, when they embrace godly teaching, what it does is that it brings the truth to bear on their life. Biblical error and false teaching have no power whatsoever to produce godliness in an individual’s life. It simply is **NOT** the Word of God and cannot produce godliness. It can produce a false spirituality, a false Christianity, a false understanding, and a false godliness – but never godliness. The term “**godliness**” is the Greek word “*eusebia*” and means to be devoted to God and to have a reverence for God in your life. It means that the person is living a life that is fully honoring of God and His Word. In [Matthew 7:15-20](#), Jesus emphasized twice that a believer would know and be able to discern false teachers by their fruit.



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<sup>15</sup>“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup>You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

If you listen to these people on television, you never hear them calling for repentance, for holiness, or for Christ-likeness. There is never a message about brokenness over sin.

So, three things that we have seen in v3 is that false teachers may use spiritual words, but they do not consent or agree with the sound doctrine of Scripture. Secondly, they add their own teachings to Scripture, and thirdly, what they teach does not produce a life of godliness in those who listen to their teaching. One of the problems with false teachers is that they simply set their ideas above Scripture. That has to be most arrogant thing in the universe – for someone to place their ideas above the Word of God and to think that what they know is more important and crucial for our understanding than Scripture. That is exactly what v4 states – “**he is proud, knowing nothing**”. There is an air of arrogance and self-importance surrounding their teaching. The Greek verb means properly to smoke, to fume; and then to be inflated, to be conceited. The idea is, that the false teacher does not have a proper knowledge of the nature of the gospel, and yet he values himself in having what he considers to be a superior understanding of its principles.

2 Peter 2:1, which is another major section of Scripture on false teachers, states that the result is that they “**secretly bring in destructive heresies**”. The problem with false teaching is that it propagates more false teaching. The principle is that error begets error. It has a compounding effect. The more error that someone teaches, the more error it produces. Error produces error – always. 2 Peter 2:18 says that,

<sup>18</sup>For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.

Jude 16 says that “**they mouth great swelling words**”. I.e., false teachers are tremendously articulate and persuasive. They are excellent communicators. People do not just sit and around and listen to people who cannot verbalize and enunciate things clearly. Joel Osteen, for instance, is very articulate and has a very charismatic personality. If you have ever watched his program, the place is packed – thousands of people are there, and it does not appear that anyone is asleep or nodding out. In fact, most of them have Bibles and many are taking notes, and they are all very attentive. Why? It is because false teachers are very persuasive and very charismatic, almost to the point of mesmerizing. However, they simply minimize the word of God and maximize their personal teaching above Scripture. They tend to put their own personal “spin” on essential Christian doctrine. Even in this epistle of 1 Timothy, the word “**doctrine**” is used eight times. It undergirds all of what this book is about – “**doctrine**”. The problem is that the gospel is rendered meaningless if it does not rest on the firm foundation of essential Christian doctrine. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:16,



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**<sup>16</sup>Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**

The Mormons, for instance, proclaim a gospel and say they believe in Jesus as Lord. However, the problem is that their Jesus is far different than the Jesus of Scripture. What all false teaching does is to generally use biblical words, but redefine essential Christian doctrine. At a personal level, I am absolutely amazed at the incredibly distorted view that millions of so-called professing Christians have of what it means to be a Christian. There is so much false teaching pervading the Christian culture that the church no longer seems to have a grasp of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Now, once again, here is the essential problem with false teaching. It uses Christian terminology that everyone is familiar with, but the meaning that it gives to the words are decidedly unbiblical. For instance, the so-called faith teachers of our day have redefined “**faith**”. For them, faith is a force, a power to accomplish what they want. Kenneth Copeland calls it the “*force of faith*”. They all promote the doctrine that words are containers for power that are energized by positive confessions. In fact, Copeland says, and I quote, that “*God cannot do anything for you apart or separate from faith.*” Now, just think about that statement for a minute. God cannot do anything for you apart from your faith. God has no power towards you and cannot do anything for you apart from your faith. What about the cross? We are talking about the “omnipotent” God of the universe who spoke the worlds into existence with just a word! And now, He is impotent? I do not think so.

The last days church seems to simply lack discernment. Fredrick Price says, and I quote,

*“Do you think that the punishment for our sin was to die on a cross? If that were the case, the two thieves could have paid your price. No, the punishment was for Jesus to go to hell itself and to serve time in hell separated from God.”*

Obviously, Mr. Price does not understand anything about the nature of the blood of the sinless Son of God, the eternal Son of God versus the sin-stained blood of the two thieves. He has blatantly mocked the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement, and has made a lost man’s blood equal to the blood of Christ. This is really so blatantly wrong that it just defies even talking about it. We simply cannot overstate the importance of foundational Christian doctrine. It is the line of demarcation between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of the cults, and false teachers always compromise, confuse, and distort these essential doctrines.

In [1 Timothy 6:4](#) it says that the false teacher “**is proud, knowing nothing**”. The false teachers parade all of their deep insight and superior understanding, but in reality they do not know anything at all. Jude calls them “**clouds without water**”. They could not teach doctrine if their life depended on it. They do not have truth and they do not have spiritual insight into God’s truth. They are no different than Brigham Young, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Judge Rutherford, or any of these people who espoused all of these great new things to people, but the fact of the matter is that they were absolutely ignorant of God’s truth and led thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people into that same error. Error begets error begets error. Never lose sight of that. Never be naïve to what is really happening and how the enemy is really working. We simply cannot know anything apart from the revelation of God as given in His Word.





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The disease of the false teacher is that he refuses to affirm the Word of God as the sole source of spiritually healthy teaching. He actually places his word above God's Word. Once you lose the Word of God in your teaching, you inevitably lose the godliness that goes along with that Word. Godly teaching is something that always humbles our pride. False teaching, on the other hand trifles with God and builds up man. In my mind, the aim of all godly preaching should, as a minimum, be threefold: to exalt Christ, to humble the sinner, and to promote holiness in believer's lives. Anything less is not biblical preaching. All of this false teaching today does the exact opposite. It demotes Christ, exalts the saint, and creates a false religion.

Some of the consequences of false teaching as given here by Paul in v4 says **“from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions”**. In my mind, it is just complete chaos. That is the legacy of false teaching. It does never produces anything good. It is all about the show, all about what they are promoting. V5 continues,

**<sup>5</sup>useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**

What they say is **“useless”**, they have **“corrupt minds”**, and they are **“destitute of the truth”**. That is as serious as it gets – **“useless”**, **“corrupt”**, and **“destitute”**. These are minds that are at enmity with God. The word **“destitute”** means to be deprived of the truth. They simply do not react in a normal way to truth. You can be assured that if a person is destitute of the truth that their minds are alienated from God and they cannot and will not teach the truth. For whatever reason, they do not have it.

It seems that at some point in time that most of these false teachers had to be in close proximity to the truth. However, whatever they had, they rejected. It was not satisfying to them, so they began to develop their own teachings and their own doctrines. [2 Timothy 2:15](#) gives one of the fundamental qualities of a good teacher. He must be able to rightly divide the truth, rightly handle it, and rightly teach it.

**<sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

[2 Timothy 2:18](#) says that they not only have strayed concerning the truth, but that they actually **“overthrow”** the faith of others. There is something in them that is fundamentally wrong, something that at the root level and at the core of who they are that is wrong. On the outside they may seem to be nice people and easy to listen to, but something is wrong at the core. If you had children in a public school, and you knew that their teacher was a lesbian or a homosexual or a Marxist or a Communist, would you want them in their class? I do not think so. Why? It is because their core values are so different from yours, and it is their core values that will ultimately rise to the top.

Then lastly, in [1 Timothy 6:5](#) Paul says that they **“suppose that godliness is a means of gain”**. This is really the underlying issue. The motive is always money, the prestige. They are in it for the money, for the lifestyle, for the notoriety. Religious false teachers down through the centuries have known something in common, namely, that religion can be fun and profitable — for them, at least. They have proved that you can make a good living in the religion business. Some, like Reverend Ike, openly



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flaunted their materialistic greed. His creed was, *“I do not want pie in the sky when I die; I want cash in the stash here and now!”* False teachers live for material values above spiritual values. They treasure the temporal above the eternal, and instead of being prophets of God, they make a profit on God. They live well off of their “ministries”.

In today’s religious culture, the primary false teaching is the one that promotes the so-called “Word of Faith” teaching or “Health and Wealth Gospel”. It claims that it is God’s will for all His people to be financially successful and to be physically healthy. It is hard to believe how much they distort the teachings by Christ to reach this point in their teachings. They quote verses like scholars to back up their teaching and flaunt their own wealth as proof positive. The main message goes like this: God wills your prosperity and health. All poverty and sickness come from the devil. If you are not wealthy or if you are sick, it is because you have not made a positive confession of faith. When we speak a word in faith, it must come to pass. Why? It is because God has promised to answer the prayer of faith. Therefore, we can speak in faith and He will do it, especially with regard to physical healing or material prosperity, which are His will for every believer.

Ultimately, they deny what the Bible plainly teaches, that God uses sickness, suffering, and poverty in the lives of some of His most faithful saints. They make everything dependent on man, because faith, not the sovereign God, is the key. So, in our day when false teachers abound perhaps more than at any other time in history, and when, due to the mass media, they have greater access to more people than ever before, believer’s need to be very discerning so as not to be led astray. Paul Crouch, who is the founder of the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), made this statement, and I quote: *“God has, indeed, given us the most powerful voice in the history of the world.”* In fact, Paul and Jan Crouch’s TBN net worth is a half billion dollars, and they bring in over 190 million dollars annually. Joel Osteen lives in a \$10M dollar home. Fredrick Price, for instance, (who has a 17,000 member church) refers to his immense wealth, and says that the reason that he drives a Rolls Royce is because he is *“following in the footsteps of Jesus”*. He claims that Jesus had a whole lot of money. Listen to this direct quote:

*“The Bible says that Jesus had a treasurer named Judas Iscariot, and the rascal was stealing out of the bag for 3 ½ years and nobody knew that he was stealing. You know why? Because there was so much in it. If Jesus had three oranges in the bottom of the bag and Judas stole two of them, do not tell me He would not know that something was missing. Besides that, if Jesus did not have anything, what do you need a treasury for?”*

As Paul points out in this section, sound doctrine - spiritually healthy doctrine - is not focused on personal gain, either for the teacher or the pupil, but on personal godliness within the individual’s life. Satan always begins his attacks through wrong thinking simply because wrong theology leads to wrong living. The problem that we have in our church age is that we live in an anti-theological age. Churches tend to emphasize management, methodology, and technique over the substance of Scripture. The large church movers analyze their target audience and design church programs to attract them demographically. The Purpose Driven Church by Rick Warren is a good example.



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Today's prevailing theology is man-centered, and is heavily subjective and relative. By man-centered, I mean that people conceive of God as their servant. He is not the sovereign, omnipotent, Creator-God who fashioned man for His purpose. Rather, He is a kind of cosmic genie who exists to make man happy. *"Do you have problems in your life? Try God! He will meet all your needs and give you a happy life!"* The emphasis is on man's needs rather than on God's glory. This kind of false theology just abounds in many churches.

This cultural theology is not only man centered, but it is also subjective and relative. I.e., one's experience of God takes precedence over the objective truth about God. God is not seen as an objective, absolute Being with certain unchangeable attributes and with absolute moral laws which stem from His nature. Instead, God is however you experience Him, whatever you want Him to be like. So professing Christians say things like, *"If you are into a God who judges sin, that is okay for you. However, my God is a God of grace and love."* Personal feelings and experience are central, not objective revealed truth.

Paul says, **"From such withdraw thyself"**. That is, have no fellowship with them and do not recognize them as religious teachers; do not tolerate or allow their views. Timothy was, in no way, to show that he regarded them as either understanding or embracing the truth, and was to withdraw himself from them – and so should we.

### 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10

**<sup>6</sup>Now godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup>For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. <sup>8</sup>And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

Throughout all of this epistle Paul is addressing specific problems that had surfaced within the local church at Ephesus, and most of them are issues often common to churches today. It seems abundantly clear that there were some people in the church at Ephesus who had become overly absorbed with making money. Scripture never states that it is wrong to have money, but it does state that when you have it that you become accountable for it. Believers are simply stewards of what God has provided to them. One of the most revealing statements regarding resources is found in [Matthew 6:21](#) in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said these revealing words. He said,

**<sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

It seems that the heart simply follows the treasure. Our treasure and our hearts are inseparable. They will both be either earthly or heavenly. It is impossible to have one on the earth and the other in heaven. The word **"treasure"** refers to a deposit that is consigned to someone for faithful keeping. The idea was fully understood in Jesus' day for they simply did not have banks like we do. So, very often someone would consign something that they had that was very precious to someone else for safekeeping. It was a "trust agreement" and a "legal" device whereby something could be entrusted to



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another's keeping for a specific period. It was to be kept free, unused, and undamaged until the owner wanted it back. So, the trustworthiness of the person that it had been committed to was of great importance. People simply do not trust their valuables to someone who is not worthy of that trust.

In [Luke 16:10-12](#) is the association that Jesus makes between how believers manage money and what He calls the "true riches".

**<sup>10</sup>He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. <sup>11</sup>Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? <sup>12</sup>And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?**

So, how believers manage their resources is an indication as to whether or not God will entrust them with His spiritual riches. The word "mammon" (which literally could be translated as "riches") is not limited to just money. It would be silly to think that someone who handled money properly, but then misused all of their other resources and assets was someone who could expect to be given "true riches". For instance, if someone made a lot of money but was always demeaning and insulting their wife, I do not think they could expect "true riches" from God. In fact, in the Greek text, the word "riches" is not actually in the text. It is the Greek word "*alethinos*" and means that which is true, real, and genuine. There are so many people who think they have the truth, but it is not the real truth and not the genuine truth that comes from God – it is not spiritual reality. It is a fabricated truth, a fictitious reality. They are greatly deceived spiritually, but are not willing to recognize that fact.

Now, the watershed statement in these verses in [1 Timothy 6](#), however, is v10 which makes the statement,

**<sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil....**

So, from a biblical perspective, it is certainly okay to have money. That is certainly not the issue here. Being poor does not make someone spiritual any more than being rich makes someone spiritual. However, if a believer does have money, they are just not to love it. That is the principle here. There is nothing inherently wrong with money per se, but it is like a gun. You can use it to kill an animal for food, or to kill someone when you are committing a crime. However, there is nothing inherently wrong with the gun. Rather, it is how the person uses the gun and what they use it for that is important. With money, a person can do good things or bad things. So, the issue in this passage is not the money itself, but the love for that money. We would simply call it being greedy.

When remembering the story of the rich young ruler, it is important to keep in mind that he is the only person that Jesus ever made this particular statement to when he told him in [Matthew 19:21](#),

**<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**

In that particular case, the great wealth that this young man had was his idol, it was the one thing that was keeping him from yielding his life to the Lordship of Christ – and Christ knew that. It was a spiritual barrier. When Jesus called Matthew, who was very rich because he was a tax collector, he



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immediately left behind what he had. Zaccheus, who also was very rich, repaid what he had defrauded people four-fold. Money was not their idol – and Jesus never talked to them about money. So, from these three simple cases, one can easily understand that money can certainly provide a test as to whether or not an individual is willing to turn the control of their life over to Christ or not.

Both the Old and New Testaments recognize the right to have things, including money, land, houses, clothing, and anything that is honestly acquired. Having these kinds of things is not the issue, but whether these things have the believer. In fact, there is great counsel given throughout all of Scripture to be good stewards of what we have and to work hard. The laborer, Scripture says, is worthy of his hire.

We know from Scripture that it is right to provide for our families, to make reasonable plans for the future, to make wise investments, to have money to carry on a business or enterprise, to save money in contrast to hoarding it, to give to the poor, to support biblical ministries, to support the church, etc. The list could go on and on. It is being dishonest, greedy, covetous, stingy, or miserly in what we have that is wrong. To just have money to hoard and selfishly spend on ourselves is sinful and unwise on our part.

It would not take long to establish that men will do almost anything for money. In fact, I would go so far as to say that men have committed every conceivable type of sin because of their desire to have money - murder, stealing, lying, taking advantage of the poor, cheating, extorting, fornication, teaching false doctrines. You name it, and every conceivable kind of sin has been committed for money.

Another clear principle in Scripture is that we cannot have two masters. We cannot serve God and money. [Matthew 6:24](#) says,

**<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**

Our treasure is either on earth or in heaven, our spiritual life is either full of light or full of darkness, and our master is either God or something else. Believers cannot have it both ways.

So, if the love of money is “**a root of all sorts of evil**”, it seems that the question that we have to ask is really very simple – how do I know if I am in love with money? Someone once said, “*It is not money that I love, but all the things that it can buy me.*” That kind of sums it up I think.

Now, the following are some simple questions to help any one take a spiritual inventory on this issue as to whether they really love money that much or not. First, do you think that you never have enough money? You could ask the question this way, “*Am I never satisfied with what I have and always want more?*” In fact, in v6, Paul said these words,

**<sup>6</sup>Now godliness with contentment is great gain.**

I.e., are we content, are we satisfied with what we have, or do we always have to have more? Do I have to purchase new clothes every year, or do I need a new pair of shoes for every outfit I wear? If I cannot have something, am I content with what I do have?





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Secondly, do I resent giving money away? For some people, it almost kills them to give money to someone else. They always want to get something for their money, and giving it away to someone else who has a legitimate need does not seem to warrant the effort. Is it just difficult for you to part with money? We are not talking about being a bad steward, about mishandling money, and about not being wise in who you give things to. We are not talking about that at all. That is all a part of being a good steward, a faithful steward. The last thing that I want to do is to foolishly give money to someone else – family, friend, or foe – who really does not deserve the gift.

Thirdly, are you willing to do something sinful to obtain or keep money? For instance, would you lie on your income taxes, or would you overstate your expense account at work, or would you be willing to compromise your convictions in some way to make more money? We could ask the question like this – *“Am I going to be honest no matter what it costs me?”*

I am sure there are a hundred tests that we could give to ourselves, so I will not belabor the point here. However, somewhere along the line, every believer needs to take a spiritual inventory of where they really are in this matter of handling money simply because it impacts what God is willing to reveal to them spiritually.

It is easy to think about how this relates to v3-5 relative to false teachers and how they thought that godliness was a means of gain. The false teachers saw in the ministry an opportunity to become wealthy. The one characteristic of so many false teachers today is that they have become very rich at the expense of the church – very wealthy. As much as I may not personally agree with Rick Warren’s overall theology, I deeply admire his views on money. He tithes 90% of all that he makes, lives on 10%, and has paid back his church all of the salary that they have paid him over the years. He made an incredible amount of money on his books, and continues to do so. However, obviously he does not love money – and that is demonstrated in a very tangible way.

In 1 Timothy 4:6 Paul provides what every believer should desire when he says,

**<sup>6</sup>Now godliness with contentment is great gain.**

What is it that believers really should desire the most? It is **“godliness”**. The word actually implies God-likeness. This is where a believer really has the most – living a godly life. [Proverbs 13:15](#) says that **“the way of the transgressor is hard”**. In the NKJV it says but **“the way of the unfaithful is hard”**. Sin just makes life hard, hard to bear, difficult, troublesome, harsh, depressing. Just think about people who take drugs or habitually drink, who steal, or who are always angry. Life just keeps getting harder for them. I have often thought what people will say to God at the Great White Throne Judgment who did not want to come to Christ so they could drink beer every night. I have actually had people tell me that.

Paul described contentment in [Philippians 4:11-13](#) with these words,

**<sup>11</sup>Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: <sup>12</sup>I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things**



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**I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

It did not matter what he had – he was content. There were times when he had a lot and other times when he had nothing. There were times when he had a lot to eat and times when he had nothing to eat. There were times when he had all he needed, and times when he did not have anything that he needed. However, in each case, he was content and satisfied, and he knew that Christ would both strengthen and teach him in his times of blessing and in his times of adversity. This is in such contrast to the false teaching so prevalent today that unless you are living in luxury, something is wrong in your life, some sin has overtaken you, and you just do not have enough faith. You are the richest when you are content with what you have.

If God has richly blessed your life – great. If He has not blessed you with much – great. That is what Paul is saying in Philippians. He calls it “**in whatever state I am**”. Whatever state, whatever condition he found himself in, in that state he was content. He is not being irresponsible here, and that is the way that some people would use this verse. They would go out, be irresponsible with their possessions, spend foolishly, not make wise investments or decisions, and then casually say when they have lost it all that they are content. In reality, that is being dishonest and just magnifies their foolishness. There is no spiritual value awarded for being a poor steward of what God has given to us – no value at all. Every believer is a steward of what God has given them whether they want to be or not. True riches and true godliness is not related to how much someone has, but rather to how much they want. If a believer can be content with what God gives them and be good stewards of it, then they are rich. [Hebrews 13:5](#) says,

**<sup>5</sup>Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

Godliness with contentment is great gain. It is a spiritual treasure to not always be wanting things.

Now, at this point, I feel like I have to deviate a little and say a few things that honestly make me uncomfortable. Most likely they will make you uncomfortable. I have never liked talking about money, but in realit, this passage in [1 Timothy 6](#) is not just about money. Contentment is not money, and godliness is not money, but in his own unique way Paul kind of joins them together. Obviously, there is no spiritual virtue in just being poor. However, by the same token there is no spiritual virtue in being wealthy either. To the contrary, there is probably much greater spiritual liability in having more than not having much. In fact, Paul teaches in [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) about just the “**desire**” to be wealthy,

**<sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

The more that I read the Scriptures, and especially the gospels where Jesus is doing the majority of the teaching, I find that He is constantly saying things that make me very uncomfortable. It seems to me, and I think this is accurate, that for the most part He was always driving people away. For instance,



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He would have a large crowd gathered and begin saying to them that unless they drank of His blood and ate of His flesh that they could not be His disciples. To the rich young ruler He told him that if He wanted to be saved that he had to sell everything he had and come follow Christ. The picture provided in Scripture is not of people embracing these words, but of people leaving, turning away, and going in another direction.

Just think for a moment about what Jesus said when the rich young ruler walked away from Him. In [Luke 18:24](#) Jesus spoke these penetrating words,

**<sup>24</sup>And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God.**

One of the problems that we have in America is that we love our lifestyles more than we love the Lordship of Christ. Christ will not and does not ask everyone to sell everything they have and give it to the poor. Surely that probably brings a sigh of relief to most. However, if the story of the rich young ruler teaches anything, it teaches that there are some to whom Jesus would issue that call. Jesus is not just a respectable teacher that believers come to and listen to. Not at all. To the contrary, He is the sovereign Lord of the universe, and He is not in the business of giving options for believers to choose to follow, but rather He gives commands to obey. The problem with wealth is that it can be spiritually deadly, and in most cases something that causes believers to adjust Scripture so that they are not uncomfortable with what Jesus says. To put it another way, too often our material blessings have become our spiritual barriers.

In [1 Timothy 6: 8](#) how does Jesus define contentment? It is described as having food and clothing – the basic necessities of life. All of this begs the question as to what are we willing to be content with? How much do we really want, or really have to have? How many more luxuries do we need? What else do we just have to have or do? John Wesley reached a place in his life where he felt like he wanted to live on only what he absolutely needed. At that particular time in his life he was making equivalent to \$20,000 in today’s economy. So, he made a decision to cap his lifestyle at \$20,000. Over the years he gradually made much more, up to \$160,000 per year, but he chose to only live on the \$20,000. He literally gave the rest of it to the poor, to the needy, to those who had never heard the gospel, and to those who were starving and dying of malnutrition. He made a conscious decision to leave his security and money and convenience – and just abandon it for the gospel.

So, where do we think John Wesley was putting his treasure, and what do we think will be his reward? Unfortunately, it seems that the war against materialism in us is just that – a war. It is a constant battle to resist the temptation to have more luxuries, to acquire more stuff, and to live more comfortably. How much is enough, how many clothes should I have, what luxuries would God afford me to have, how much should I have in savings, and how many investments should I have? I do not have all the answers, and I have no intention of imposing on you something that I would not do myself. However, by the same token, I believe that if we are honest that many of these kinds of questions will drive us to Christ and help us to see if we have true Christianity or just a pseudo-resemblance of true Christianity. It is a journey, and honestly, I do not want to be or discover in the end that in reality I was the rich young ruler. I do not want to leave Christ behind, to just turn away from His words and walk away as



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if they did not apply to me. I do not want to just always be pursuing “stuff” while all the time missing Christ. Jesus said that where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

So, where is our treasure – here on earth or in heaven? Are we going to really believe Jesus and His words, and will we be willing to obey those words? I have to honestly say to you that my biggest fear is that I may do just like those people in the first century did when they heard Jesus’ words – they just walked away. You see, our problem is that somewhere along the way we have missed what is radical about the gospel and replaced it with what is comfortable. Too often we are settling for a Christianity that caters to ourselves and meeting our needs, when in reality, the real message of the Scriptures is one of abandoning ourselves and living wholeheartedly for the glory of God.

I think I can accurately state that for most Christians in America, there is not much at stake. If we do not like this brand of Christianity, well we have a lot of other options and will probably exercise our right to enjoy those options. What we have done in the American church is to redefine Christianity. We have systematically manipulated the gospel to fit our personal and cultural preferences of how we want to define Christianity. We are giving in to the dangerous temptation of taking the Jesus of the Bible, of taking His words, and twisting both Him and His words into a Jesus that we are much more comfortable with. We have made Him to look like us, rather than us looking like Him. It seems that the goal of the American dream is to make much of ourselves, whereas the goal of the gospel has always been for us to make much of God.

Let me ask some hard questions. I am not doing this to make you uncomfortable, but I believe the questions are very appropriate. If materialism in our culture is a war that can draw us away from Christ – and it is, then how do we fight against it? Obviously, it is not by just getting more things. That is certainly not the answer. It is important to start by at least identifying that there are two categories here – necessities and luxuries. in [1 Timothy 6:8](#) Paul stated that believers need to be content with necessities.

**<sup>8</sup>And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.**

Now, to add to this, [Matthew 6:24-34](#) says,

**<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.**

The context of what Jesus is saying is the contrast between serving God or serving money. That is the issue here. Now look at v25 and stop at the first word – “**therefore**”. I.e., Jesus is saying that because He did not want money, wealth, luxuries, convenience, comfort, and all the other things in an affluent culture to take a believer’s mind, heart, and focus off of Him, He wanted them to know that their heavenly Father would take care of them. He will provide the necessities if you will just trust Him.

**<sup>25</sup>“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than**



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they? <sup>27</sup>Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? <sup>28</sup>“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup>and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup>Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Now, here is the issue. Are we going to believe God when He speaks words like this to us, or are we going to redefine the Christian life to fit our affluence? That is the question we have to wrestle to the ground. There are legitimate questions that I know I cannot answer for you. I will just have to answer them for myself and you will have to make your own choices. For instance, where do we draw the line between responsible saving and irresponsible hoarding? How do we approach investments, or retirement accounts, or life insurance? What do these verses really mean?

If one-half the world is dying of starvation and malnutrition, what does Jesus want me to do? I cannot avoid the question. Do I just sit idly by and keep getting more and more and keeping more and more for myself? Is that what being a disciple means, or is that just what my affluent culture has taught me to believe? Is some large monetary nest egg what Jesus really wants me to have? Are we going to trust the words of Christ and the security of His words, or are we going to trust the security of our wealth? Once again, at a personal level I just do not want to be the rich young ruler who walked away from Jesus when Jesus gave him some tough words to swallow.

We have to go back to what Jesus said in [Matthew 6:19-21](#),

<sup>19</sup>“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What Jesus is clearly saying here is that the way that we use and handle money is a barometer of our current spiritual condition. The way that we use money may be a good indicator of our eternal destination. I admit that caring for the poor or undernourished or the starving is not the basis for salvation, but it still may be a good evidence of it. Anytime that a man or woman gets saved, that saving faith always involves an internal transformation that has external implications. A person does not get saved for nothing. Salvation has an eternal purpose to it, and that purpose is for the believer’s life to bring as much glory to God as is possible. However, the believer will never do that if he is the only person that they live for, if everything in their life is for them, for their pleasure, for their satisfaction, and for their personal gain. That is not the Christian life and that is not Christian. To the very contrary, that is the non-Christian life – living for self rather than for the glory of God.





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In the Parable of the Soils in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the following shows how each of the gospels defined what happened to the seed that fell among the thorns. These should be very convicting words in a materially affluent and spiritually bankrupt culture. [Matthew 13:22](#) says,

<sup>22</sup>Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

### [Mark 4:18-19](#),

<sup>18</sup>Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, <sup>19</sup>and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

### [Luke 8:14](#),

<sup>14</sup>Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

The words in those passages that capture my attention are the words “hear” or “heard”, “choke”, and “unfruitful”. I.e., we hear the words of Christ, but riches get in the way and choke out their true meaning, and the result is that we just become unfruitful.

Do we realize that Jesus never told the church to build big buildings? He never told the church to have Sunday School or programs for every age group. He never told the church to have big state and national conventions. What He told the church to do was to go into all the world and make disciples. It seems that the richest church in the history of mankind is really very fruitless and barren. We have all the big things for ourselves and give our crumbs to the poor and needy.

Too often we have the mentality that says “*The needs are so great and I cannot do everything, so I will just do nothing.*” Well, that is not biblical, that is not right, that is not any kind of personal sacrifice, and that is not living for God’s glory. [1 Timothy 6:17-19](#) gives these instructions,

<sup>17</sup>Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup>Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, <sup>19</sup>storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

What Paul encourages believers to do is to give generously and to give sacrificially – that is what he is saying to those who are rich in this present age. Give to those who need it, who do not have anything, those who are starving, who are orphans, who are undernourished, those who will die before they are five, and to those who are helpless and hopeless. All believers have to make spiritual choices. They can choose to be like the rich young ruler who walked away from Jesus’ words and continued to lay up treasures on earth, or they can choose to embrace Jesus’ words and begin to lay up treasures in heaven.

Unfortunately, our Christian culture has redefined Christianity to be something that we are comfortable with, something that suits our preferences, and something that too often fits our desired lifestyle. However, we need to appreciate that God has clear expectations for those who choose to follow Him.



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David Platt states that the problem is that we are **stuffed with stuff**. I was thinking about all of the “stuff” that I possess. It is almost frightening. It is not that anything that we have is inherently evil, because for the most part it is not. So we are just left with “stuff” – and not bad stuff at that. A nice car or a tractor or a nice home or a swimming pool or good tools or golf clubs – none of that is inherently evil in any way. However, I do have to admit that having “stuff” can easily consume me in either taking care of them or having to make enough money to pay for and maintain them. It just takes money to have and maintain things – no matter what it is. It is a constant battle of having to strain to maintain.

I was reading some information about what the Southern Baptists entitled the Great Commission Resurgence. It was a denominational effort and I believe one with excellent intentions that is seeking to help re-focus attention on eternal issues that we are aware of, but have a tendency to neglect. And that neglect is seen in how we prioritize our money as local churches. For instance, in 2008, Southern Baptist Churches, all together for all causes and all intents, took in \$11.1 billion dollars. However, out of that staggering figure, less than \$.03 cents of every dollar made its way to the International Mission Board for support of missionaries. So, what that says is that for every dollar that Southern Baptists spend, less than \$.03 cents goes for missions – less than 3% of the total income into all of the Southern Baptist churches. Baptists consider themselves to be the evangelical model – right? The obstacle here is not Baptist theology, but rather an indulgence and infatuation with spending our lives on ourselves, on our buildings, on our programs, and somehow just neglecting **the greater vision** of reaching people for Christ all over the world. What good does it do if we have wonderful facilities and great programs, but never have an impact on a lost and dying world? What good does that accomplish other than making us comfortable in the little Christian cocoons we call church. The problem that we have is that we have gone from being fishers of men to keepers of the aquarium.

I do not think that American churches will ever really do their part to fulfill the Great Commission until they get over their love affair with the American Dream – of having all of this stuff. Until that happens, all that churches are really doing is just giving lip service to the real work that needs to be done. The real goal is to understand what it means for a Christian to be a steward of God’s resources – that is the goal. [Matthew 6:3-4](#) says,

**<sup>3</sup>But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.**

Giving should be personal, private, and systematic. It should not be done begrudgingly. However, by the same token, there are times when it should be sacrificial. Part of that is properly defining what it means to be “sacrificial”. For instance, if someone makes \$5000/month and they decide that they are now going to live on \$4900/month and give an extra \$100 to God’s work, I am not sure in the big picture that that is really what should be called a sacrifice. There is a big difference between giving some extra and sacrificing.

If you only make \$10,000/year, you are still wealthier than 84% of the world’s population. When you realize that 93% of the world’s population do not own a car, your old clunker looks pretty good. The



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total income of American Christians is \$5.2 trillion (5000 billion dollars). If we only gave 1% of that to world missions, we could lift over 1 billion people out of extreme poverty. Less than 10% of all Christian families actually tithe.

Now, I believe in the New Testament principle of what I call “cheerful giving”, but a tithe is a good place to start and has a biblical foundation. In looking at what are called “evangelical” Christians, the number of tithers is still only 24 percent. The average giving of an American church member is just 2.58% of their income. So, the reality is that Christians’ incomes have increased, but their giving has significantly decreased. Based on the figures that the average Christian gives just a little more than 2% of his income to Christ’s work, and then that the Baptist denomination only gives a little more than 2% to the advancement of the gospel, what that means is simple. We are only giving about 2% of 2% of our actual incomes to advancing God’s kingdom. That is about .0004% of our incomes. That amounts to about 6 cents a day per person that we give through our churches to the rest of the world to make Christ known – 6 pennies. Malachi 3:8-12 seems to place some of this in perspective when it says,

**<sup>8</sup>“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup>You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. <sup>10</sup>Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. <sup>11</sup>“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the Lord of hosts; <sup>12</sup> And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land,” says the Lord of hosts.**

We are an affluent people living in an impoverished world. In reality, we ought to get down on our knees every day and just thank God for all of the blessings that He is given to us. That is the right and grateful thing to do. We are the most blessed nation in the world, and have so many freedoms that others just do not enjoy. However, once again, that does not negate the fact that we are stewards. In the midst of all of our blessings, we still have to appreciate that several billion people live in abject poverty with no water, no clothing, no shelter, no medical care, and worst of all **no gospel**. Their children are starving and dying of AIDS and malnutrition. I just cringe every time I see one of those little babies with big heads and emaciated little bodies – their bones sticking through their skin. They have already suffered severe brain damage and health issues that they will never overcome. **Proverbs 21:13** says,

**<sup>13</sup>Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.**

**James 5:1-5** has a scathing indictment,

**<sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! <sup>2</sup>Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields,**



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**which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.**

The Old Testament prophets railed tirelessly against God's people for not showing compassion to the poor, and even for exploiting them. Ezekiel spoke about Sodom's over-indulgence in their wealth and their corresponding lack of concern for the poor, but please notice that he says NOTHING about their immorality. [Ezekiel 16:49](#),

**<sup>49</sup>Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.**

The problem for the poor in the world is that they are trapped within social, cultural, political, and economic systems that do not reward their hard work.

So, when talking about sacrifice, we are not talking about just giving away all of our excess "stuff" that we do not need any more. That is not sacrifice. Sacrifice is giving when it hurts to give. It is when you give beyond your ability to give. John MacArthur said one time that the problem with American Christians is that they want the words of Christ's salvation to be easy.

The following are some verses that help to make sure that we have not redefined this part of Christianity to suit our monetary and cultural preferences. [2 Corinthians 8:13-15](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; <sup>14</sup>but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality. <sup>15</sup>As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."**

Now, being perfectly honest and open in our "interpretation" of that verse, what do you think it means for our abundance to supply their lack? [2 Corinthians 9:6-11](#) says,

**<sup>6</sup>But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup>Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, <sup>11</sup>while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.**

When reading His words, it has to be appreciated that Jesus was very counter-cultural. He defined the problem in [Matthew 6:19-20](#),

**<sup>19</sup>"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup>but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth**



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**nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Those three verses are diametrically opposed to what the culture would say. Jesus is clearly saying that Christians are either investing what they have in heaven, or they are investing what they have on the earth. They are investing what they have on themselves or in His kingdom. We simply cannot lose sight of the fact that we are stewards. We have no choice in being stewards, and one day we will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of what we have done with what He has given to us.

In [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) and [1 Corinthians 3:12-15](#), Paul gives a picture of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**<sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

**<sup>12</sup>Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. <sup>14</sup>If anyone is work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone is work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

Christians need to be spiritually honest about the realities of the Christian life and walk. Based on [Revelation 3](#) and the picture of the Laodicean church, probably 95% of all that many believers do today could easily be classified as “**wood, hay**”, and “**straw**”. It may not be that big of a percentage for some, and I would praise God for that, but I am personally afraid that it easily could be. Obviously, there are those who are giving their lives to advance God's kingdom, but they are not the norm and they are not the mainstream. Christians are so involved in themselves and in making their lives comfortable and more affluent. Just because many believers live in this culture, they spend money on so many things that have absolutely no eternal value whatsoever. They waste their time on things that will never impact the kingdom of God, and pray so little for eternal things that will make an impact.

### **1 TIMOTHY 6:8-10**

**<sup>8</sup>And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. <sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

It is clear that material possessions have spiritual boundaries. We can either be storing up treasures on earth or storing them up in heaven. If we store them up on earth, they will never leave the earth. They are bound by this world and have no eternal value. **What we invest in this world will stay in this world.** It never leaves this world. In more biblical terms, it has no eternal value. In reality, what believers are doing every day is preparing for eternity. [Luke 12:15](#) says,





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**<sup>15</sup>And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”**

Now, here is the problem with always pursuing money and with always making possessions and things the focus. The problem is that they become tremendous distractions and hindrances to those things that are eternally significant. I am becoming more and more convinced that the more that I have, the more complex my life becomes. I simply have more to take care of, and it requires much more energy and resources and time on my part to take care of those things. In and of themselves, none of the things that we may have are inherently evil, but they do become parasites of our time, our efforts, and our resources. If we did a study of great Christians throughout history, one of the things that we would discover is that they all lived a very simple life. They were more than willing to do without temporal things to gain spiritual treasures. It is almost frightening how many things I have that are totally useless. They serve no real purpose in my life other than costing me money and causing me to try and find a place in my garage to store them out of sight.

Once again, we want to be clear that “things” are not inherently evil. So, the issue is not “things”. The issue is always the believer’s heart – what am they spending their life pursuing and why? What am they really doing with their life? Are we like the guy in [Luke 12:16-21](#) that Jesus gave?

**<sup>16</sup>Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup>And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup>So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”” <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ <sup>21</sup>“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

Here was a man who was always laying up treasures for himself and was not rich towards God. I.e., he was not that interested in eternal things. If we read v19 a little loosely, it seems that all that he wanted to do was “retire” - just get enough money so that you do not have to do anything else but just eat, drink, and be merry. Just live the good life. Is not that what many cultures embrace? Is not that what people spend their entire life doing?

We have to come back to the simple question – what are we spending our life on, what am we really investing our life in? Is it our own personal pursuits and goals, or is it God’s? How sacrificial are we really willing to live? 1 John 2:6 is very convicting and says,

**<sup>6</sup>He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**

What does that mean in a practical sense for the believer’s life? [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) really puts all of this in perspective,

**<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**



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That verse just flies in the face of what is called the “health and wealth gospel.” However, if we are not careful, we will miss the point that it also flies in the face of our cultural Christianity that breeds comfort and convenience and very little sacrifice on our parts. What [1 Timothy 6:9](#) says is so sobering,

**<sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.**

When the words “**destruction and perdition**” are used, please understand that they are not referring to just a difficult time on planet earth. Rather, they are words that describe eternal consequences. The word for “**perdition**” refers to spiritual and eternal ruin or loss. It is clearly talking about people going into eternal destruction, into hell. I.e., the more that people want to be rich, the more spiritual barriers they will face that will literally “**drown**” them spiritually, and for many it will be the very thing that keeps them out of God’s kingdom. They become so blinded by material things that they have no sight and no appetite for spiritual things. V10 says that even for Christians, pursuing earthly treasures can cause them to wander, to digress from the faith, and to lose their concentration on eternal matters,

**<sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

The word for “**strayed**” means to lead away from, to cause to roam from the truth. It actually carries the idea of seducing – which is really the essence of what we are talking about.

The question that has to be addressed is really very simple – how do we become content with the simple things in life? That is what [1 Timothy 6:8](#) says,

**<sup>8</sup>And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.**

I.e., we want to learn how to be content with the simple things in life. In our affluent American culture, this is very difficult. Why? It is because we have so much more than we really need. We have all of the frills, all of the luxuries, and all of the non-necessities. To be quite honest, most American believers would not know how to live if most of the things that they have were removed. It is okay to have things, but it is not okay for things to have us – and that is the rub. So, how do we become content?

First, we have to realize that everything that we have is actually God’s. If we understand Scripture properly, it will teach us that we are simply stewards of God’s possessions. So, we have to begin asking some critical questions. How is what we have helping us to serve God better? How will our possessing this “thing” help us to honor God in our life? Now, the one thing that we do not want to do is to make what we are asking ridiculous. I.e., do not say, “Well, I had to buy some blades for my lawnmower. How in the world is that going to bring glory to God?” Having a blade for the lawnmower is not the issue. The issue is whether or not we are investing our life in the things of God, rather than things on the earth. We understand that we have to cut the grass, and we should. However, by the same token, we need to appreciate that the majority of the people in the world do not own a lawnmower – that is the difference.



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Our problem is not that we buy something, but that we keep on buying things, we keep on spending, we keep on acquiring, and we keep on building – and it never seems to stop. When do we just say Enough! Our problem is that in always acquiring things for ourselves, we seem to lose sight of the incredible needs that others have. We will always say, “*Well, I just do not have the money to help*”, when in reality, we did have the resources, but we felt much more compelled to spend those things on ourselves rather than on others. What if in reality other people are suffering simply because we are selfish and self-indulging? The true gospel of the New Testament is a call to self-denial, not a call to self-fulfillment. Unfortunately, we have gotten the whole things backwards, and have found a way to be comfortable in our error.

The problem that we read into our verses in [1 Timothy 6](#) is that hell will be full of people who thought very highly of the Sermon on the Mount and all of its benevolent words. We cannot deny the spiritual reality that God has very clear expectations for those who say they are His followers. If He who was rich became poor that we might become spiritually rich, then what does that imply for us who are also rich? It is obvious that Jesus did not spend every waking moment of His life caring for the poor. He dined with the wealthy, celebrated at weddings and various feasts, He went fishing with His disciples, and found time to teach in the synagogues. However, there is no question that His love for the poor and the needy and the destitute found consistent and concrete expression in His life.

Here is the simplest expression of what the Bible requires – love God and love others. That is it. And if you do something for the least of these, then you have actually done it **TO** Christ. [Matthew 25:37-40](#) expresses it this way,

**<sup>37</sup>“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup>When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup>Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ <sup>40</sup>And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’**

To really be a committed Christian requires that all of our choices, all of our actions, and everything else in our lives be fully surrendered to God’s will rather than our wills. In its simplest definition, those are the requirements of the Christian life – to fully surrender our lives to Jesus Christ. There is no avoiding this. It is a lifelong process, but it always begins with a decision as to who and what is going to govern our life – either God or me. It is one or the other. If you choose to fully surrender your life to Christ, then it **WILL REQUIRE** personal sacrifice, and it will always come with a cost.

In general those who are not willing to do the Father’s will, will not enter into His kingdom. I do not want to debate that statement and all of the questions that I know can arise from such a statement. However, by the same token, I do not want to keep redefining the Christian life so that I am always comfortable and unchallenged. Jesus said these words in [Luke 6:46-49](#),

**<sup>46</sup>“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? <sup>47</sup>Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: <sup>48</sup>He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood**



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**arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. <sup>49</sup>But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”**

The conclusion is inescapable that the gospel asks much more of us than just believing the right things. The devil himself believes the right things, the demons believe the right things. They know the right things, and that is why they are constantly trying to get believers to do the wrong things. This is not advocating in any sense of the word salvation by works. However, what I am clearly advocating is salvation – not a mere profession of faith. Biblical salvation always reveals its true identity in what we do, not what we say. Anyone can say the right things – anyone. However, just saying the right things is not biblical salvation. It is believing the right things, and when we truly believe, biblically believe, then our life will reflect that in very tangible ways. Once again, we are not talking about perfection, but direction. In fact, if God only used perfect people, then nothing would ever be accomplished – nothing.

I do not mean to wander away from the text here, but at this point I want to say something very strongly. It seems that one of the most powerful reasons why we are not willing to totally surrender our lives to Christ is because we do not want to have to sacrifice the things that we possess. We cling to this desire for security and prosperity and convenience and comfort. We just have such a hard time letting go of those things. They are all that we have ever known, all that we have ever experienced, and have for the most part become all that we really want. Anything that I place before God becomes an idol in my life. It could be my family, my job, my possessions, my ideas, my goals – anything that I place ahead of God. What is it today that you just could not live without? Jesus spoke these words in [Mark 10:29-30](#),

**<sup>29</sup>So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, <sup>30</sup>who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.**

Those words are real words that Jesus spoke about what believers are really willing to give up for Him. He is calling every believer to a total commitment of their lives to Him – and for the most part, we do not get it.

The second way that we become content with the simple things in life is that we become grateful for what we have and what we do not have. We need to be very grateful for what God has given to us, but at the same time we need to recognize the simple truth of [Luke 12:48](#),

**<sup>48</sup>.....For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.**

I.e., the more that God has given to a believer, the more is actually required from them. We are burying our heads in the sand if we ignore that spiritual reality. Just ask yourself the question as to



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how much of what you make you spend on yourself, on your home, on your vehicles, on your kids, on your lifestyle, and then multiply that over the years to see if you have really been a good steward. If we are truly going to become disciples, then we have to begin to ask those kinds of questions. We have to. The widow who gave her two mites could do no more. Zaccheus gave half of what he had to the poor, and restored fourfold to those from whom he had stolen and defrauded.

Finally, we must be willing to evaluate the legitimate differences between our needs and our wants. Unfortunately, our affluent culture has convinced us that we need much more than we actually need, and what we want has become our standard for how we live rather than God's Word.

The following are some general observations related to money, possessions, and wealth – of which we all, comparatively speaking, have a great deal. It is important to first appreciate that God does not give us things begrudgingly. We all should be more and more grateful for what God has given to us. When reading the Parable of the Talents, what is found is that for those two stewards who were faithful in what their master had given to them, that they were actually given much more. For instance, in [Matthew 25](#) when the stewards that had five talents and two talents brought them to their master, he then rewarded them by making them rulers “**over many things**”.

There are several very clear principles that need to be both understood and embraced when it comes to personal resources. The first is that what we have has been given to us by God. I.e., the things that we have are not actually ours, but have been given to us by God. Biblically, we are just stewards, not owners. However, in our culture, we see it differently. We see ourselves as owners of our possessions, rather than as stewards of God's possessions – and that is an incredible difference. In fact, that it is a life-changing difference. I am a steward, you are a steward. Everything that you have has been given to you by God. In [Matthew 19:23-24](#), after the rich young ruler had sadly walked away from Christ because he owned many possessions, Jesus said these stunning words to His disciples,

**<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”**

[Mark 10:23-25](#) says the same thing a little differently,

**<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”**

Jesus clearly understood the incredibly powerful, almost magnetic pull that riches have on a man's heart. He understood that they would always compete with Him and could easily become a person's greatest idol and the one thing that keeps them from His most powerful blessings.





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At a personal level, I am convinced that God never asks us to give something that we do not have. The story of the five loaves and two fishes underscores the simple fact that God does not need a lot to do a lot. However, it also underscores the simple fact that God will not use something that we do not give to Him. [2 Corinthians 4:7](#) says,

**<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.**

It is not that God has to have what I have before He can do His work. We know that God can do anything He chooses to do, with or without us. However, the principle is still a very simple one that for the most part God has chosen to only use what we give to Him – and that places a much greater responsibility on each believer personally if that is in fact true, or at least predominantly true as to how God actually works. David only had a slingshot, but it was more than enough. The Israelites only had trumpets as they marched around the walls of Jericho, but it was more than enough in God's hands.

The second principle is that what believers have is something that has been entrusted to them. The biblical perspective clearly teaches that what believers have has been given to them by God not because they are entitled to it, but rather because God has chosen to **entrust** them with particular resources. No matter how much a believer has been given (Parable of the Talents), whether a lot or a little, they have been given a great responsibility to ultimately use those resources for God's glory - and either they do or they do not.

The third principle is simply the logical conclusion of the first two – whatever believers have been given by God, He expects them to use it wisely for His glory, and not just on indulging themselves, and living for themselves. That is the real issue. Believers cannot and will not use what they have for God's glory if they do not recognize that what they have is His. It just will not happen.

How do we look at what we have – do we see it as ours or as God's? It is a critically important and revealing question. Are believers entitled to do what they want to do with what they have, or have they been entrusted with resources so that they can be used for God's glory? I have to say from just a personal perspective that it is not an easy thing to be a good steward. I am reminded of how the early church in Jerusalem saw their possessions, and how they gladly shared with others so that no one had any need. [Acts 2:44-45](#) says,

**<sup>44</sup>Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, <sup>45</sup>and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.**

Now, this example is not a New Testament teaching that says that believers are to sell all that they have and have all things in common. Rather, this is a historical narrative of how God was working at that time and in that transitional stage from His redemptive channel being a nation to being a church. However, it certainly reveals something about how those people viewed their possessions AFTER they were saved.

Money is a very powerful influence and it actually competes with God for preeminence, for control, and for His Lordship. It seems that from a biblical perspective that the more that believers have, the



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less dependent they become on God. The more wealth, income, food, and possessions that believers have, the less inclined many are to really trust God for their provisions. Wealth makes people self-reliant rather than God-reliant. No wonder Jesus said that no one could serve two masters. So, the ultimate challenge that we face is really very simple – will we live in such a way as to actually become dependent on God and desperate for His power to work on our behalf.

Our culture has convinced people that it is okay to have substitutes for God’s Word and for obedience. I understand that we are saved by grace, and not by works, but I would state it this way - I am saved by grace, but saved for works. Unfortunately, many believers have become very comfortable living in disobedience. It seems that culturally many are more than willing to “redefine” what it means to be a Christian. We have subtly redefined Christianity and reduced it to our ideas of what the Christian life is. One of the ways that we do that is simple – we simply provide ourselves with substitutes for the real thing. A substitute is something or someone that takes the place of another. We live in a world that is filled with substitutes. If we watch a football game, one player will get substituted for another. We substitute margarine for butter, or generic drugs for the brand name drug. Unfortunately, if we do not like something that Scripture tells us, then we simply give it a more palatable, a more pleasant, a more acceptable meaning with which we are comfortable. I.e., we provide a substitute for the real meaning, and thereby probably miss the real meaning altogether. In the church, we have all kinds of substitutes. We substitute our programs for the mighty power of God, or advertising for earnest prayer in drawing people to Christ. Jonathan Edwards once said,

*“When God has something very great to accomplish for His church, it is His will that there should precede it, the extraordinary prayers of His people.”*

The question is this – what are we really depending on when it comes to God’s work? Are we depending on ourselves, or are we desperate for a work of God in our lives and in our churches? How much do we really want God to work, or are we just satisfied with Sunday morning church in America? What are we willing to risk, what are we willing to sacrifice personally to entreat God’s presence in our midst? How much do we really want God to work in our personal lives and in our churches? We have just been substituting our feeble efforts for God’s mighty presence. We have substituted our feelings and emotions as our preference over His doctrine and His truth. We have taken our programs and substituted them for the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit.

We studied earlier in [1 Timothy 3:15](#) that the church is the “**pillar and ground of the truth**” – that is its role. The church exists in the world to be the “**pillar and ground of the truth**”. If the church ever abandons that role and ever abandons the truth by substituting its own ideas for the truth, then it ceases to be the church of Jesus Christ. It is the solemn responsibility of the church to solely, without wavering and without moving, unshakably uphold and demonstrate God’s truth to an unbelieving world. The church is not the author of truth, and it alters it only at its own risk. Why? It is because the truth matters more than anything else. If the church loses the truth and is not willing to fully, publically, and openly proclaim and live out the truth without apology, then it ceases to be the church. It is one thing to proclaim the truth, but quite another to live it out. If the church is not willing to be perfectly transparent with what Scripture means, then it ceases to be the church. It will not



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produce faithful stewards or faithful followers of Christ if that is the case. In [Psalm 138:2](#), God declares that He has exalted His Word to the level of His name.

**For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.**

Personally as a pastor, I feel the weight of that and that is why studying and preaching is so intense for me because it is my pastoral responsibility to feel the weight of the truth of God and then to deliver it to my church. That is my calling. That is the calling of every man of God, of every teacher of the Bible, of every leader in the church, of every pastor, and of every elder. It is a weighty matter. Nothing is as important to me as the Bible, for it is through divine truth that we know God, and it is through divine truth that we know Christ, the Holy Spirit, and salvation. It is in the Word of God and by the Word of God that we are sanctified, set apart, built up in the faith, and delivered from sin and unrighteousness. I wonder whether or not you feel the weight of God's Word on your life, or are you inclined to live out your own ideas or your personal preferences above God's Word? Somewhere along the way, we have to make those kinds of decisions if our lives and our churches are really going to make an impact.

### [1 TIMOTHY 6:11-14](#)

**<sup>11</sup>But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. <sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. <sup>13</sup>I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, <sup>14</sup>that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,**

Of the 73 times that the phrase "man of God" is used in Scripture, it is only used twice in the New Testament. Timothy was called a "man of God" here in [1 Timothy 6:11](#), and then [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) says,

**<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

The actual term for "man of God" is a possessive term that means the individual has a very unique spiritual relationship with God. It is a term that refers to someone who has yielded their life to God for His purposes, and someone through whom God can work. One of the obvious aspects of a "man of God" is that he has a certain decorum about him so that when you are with him, you sense the presence of God in his life. It is not necessarily any one attribute, or any particular quality, but just a general sense that this individual has a very special relationship with God.

I was a little taken back when I realized that Timothy is the only person in the New Testament that is called a "man of God". Certainly there were many, but the term is only used in reference to Timothy. Paul was a man of God, John the Baptist was a man of God, Peter was a man of God, Stephen was a man of God – but none of them were actually called by that title.



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Now, if someone is to become a **“man of God”** (or a woman of God) or maybe already is a **“man of God”**, then that title, that identification, and that recognition carries with it an incredible level of responsibility. It is just like someone who has the title **“President of the United States”**. Just the title carries with it an extraordinary significance. So, the term **“man of God”** has profound spiritual implications, and everyone should desire that they could be called a man or woman of God. Either we are or we are not. Just the term itself implies so much - dependability, honesty, faithfulness, accountability, integrity, truthfulness. No one can be a **“man of God”** if they do not reflect and manifest the character of God in all that they do. So, for Paul to give Timothy this particular title gives a sense of what Timothy was really like.

In the Old Testament anyone who spoke the Word of God to the people of God was considered to be a **“man of God”**. All of the prophets were men of God, and their one particular duty above all others was that they faithfully and accurately discharged the Word of God. So, from an Old Testament perspective, if someone was a **“man of God”**, then he was first and foremost an individual who was faithful in accurately speaking for God as His representative. In the New Testament the same principle would be applicable. There is a similar passage in [2 Peter 1:21](#) that reflects this idea.

**<sup>21</sup>for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.**

That is the only verse in all of Scripture where the actual phrase **“men of God”** is used. However, once again, we can readily see that it is used in reference to how someone actually discharged the Word of God – and it had to be faithfully and accurately.

If I were to ask you the question as to what do diets, exercise programs, marriage, and the Christian life have in common, I wonder how you might respond. Here is my answer. They are all fairly easy and even fun to begin, but it is not so easy to hang in there over the long haul. Somewhere in our culture we have come to the conclusion that what we want can be acquired fairly easily. For instance, if we want something material, all we have to do is get in our car and go buy it. In the Christian life however, the exact opposite is true. Nothing comes quickly, and nothing comes easily. Faithfulness, integrity, endurance, and the like are all part and parcel of what it means to be a man or woman of God.

It is not very difficult to get people interested in the message of the gospel, but on the other side of that effort, it appears to be extremely challenging for someone to sustain the interest. Millions of people make decisions for Christ, but then very quickly fall away. The attrition rate in the Christian culture is incredibly alarming. I read an article on church growth and it stated that once an individual joins a church, that within eight weeks they have come to a place where they are no longer faithful in their attendance and participation – eight weeks! Many simply stop coming. I have always addressed this issue by saying that it is very easy to get decisions, but not conversions. In our current Christian culture, that seems to be even more the case. Many claim to be born again, but there is really no sustainable and convincing evidence for that statement. Obviously, I am not the authority or the final word on someone is salvation, but at the same time, if I am going to be a faithful minister to the Word of God, the worst thing that I could do is to give someone false assurance relative to salvation. The



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evidence of biblical salvation in a person's life should be concrete, easily identifiable, and life transforming. In the Christian culture that the church has developed, anything spiritual can be sold if it is packaged properly. However, when the novelty finally wears off, what someone thought was genuine no longer has any meaningful bearing on their life

Here is the problem, and it is a problem that we have created because we are not willing to be faithful to the proper exegesis of God's Word. We have become market driven and consumer driven. I.e., do whatever it takes to get people interested in what you are doing, even at the expense of faithfully proclaiming God's Word. There is a great market for religious experience in our world, but there is minimal enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of godliness and holiness. There is a minimal tendency to wanting to sign up for a long-term apprenticeship in godliness. The Christian life is not a hundred yard dash, but a marathon. So, the vital issue that Paul is addressing here in this passage is how does someone go the distance, how do they sustain what God has started, and how do they persevere in the things of God without succumbing to spiritual indifference and becoming absorbed into the world's culture. That is part of the question here that Paul is addressing. *"Timothy, I want you to be able to go the distance, to fight the good fight, to not lose heart."*

So, in these verses, Paul gives Timothy several principles to help him in his sustaining his faithfulness. Those principles are captured in the verbs of v11-12.

**<sup>11</sup>But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. <sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

**"Flee, pursue, fight"**, and **"lay hold"**. To persevere, a man of God will **"flee"** worldliness, **"pursue"** godliness, **"fight"** for the faith, and **"lay hold on eternal life"**. Those will be the marks of a man of God.

The first thing that Paul tells Timothy is that he is to **"flee"** certain things. The word **"flee"** is a present imperative verb which simply means that Timothy is to continually keep on fleeing, avoiding, steering clear of, and staying away from certain things in his life. It is the Greek word *"pheugo"* from where we get the English word "fugitive". It is a word that carries the basic idea of separating yourself from, of removing yourself from something that can be harmful to your life.

I had to ask myself *"Why do I have to flee certain things?"* The answer is really very simple. It is because certain things – no matter who I am, and no matter where I am in my spiritual life – certain things will have a very corrupting and debasing influence in my life if I become involved with them. For instance, it does not matter who you are or what you believe or how committed you may be, but if you smoke, then that smoking will have a very negative, corrupting influence on you physically. I was reading an article and it said that the number one killer of men in the United States was lung cancer, and the second was prostate cancer. I am not railing here about smoking – that is not my intent. The intent is simply to state that certain things – no matter who you are, and no matter how much you may love the Lord – if you allow those things to enter into your life they will corrupt, alter, and damage your life. For instance, if someone becomes addicted to pornography, it will destroy them, destroy





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their marriage, and destroy the calling God has placed on their life. It does not matter how much they say that they love the Lord, or how much they want to follow Him. If the yield to those kinds of things, then they will greatly corrupt their Christian life and testimony.

There are many things in Scripture that believers are told to flee, to avoid, and from which to keep themselves. For instance, [1 Corinthians 6:18](#) says,

**<sup>18</sup>Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.**

Nothing will ruin a man's integrity, commitment, and ministry as much as sins of immorality. There is so much immorality in America, and even within the church, that it is really somewhat frightening. There is pornography, extra-marital affairs, and pre-marital sex. [1 Corinthians 10:14](#) says,

**<sup>14</sup>Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.**

The American culture is addicted to worshipping everything but God. Anything that people place before God becomes an idol. It can be people – children, husband, wife, or friends. It can be affluence, opulence, and wealth. It can be personal goals and ambitions. Anytime that we place those things ahead of God, it becomes something that replaces God in our life, and is therefore an idol in our life.

[2 Timothy 2:22](#), speaking in a similar vein, says,

**<sup>22</sup>Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

In some ways, [1 John 2:15-17](#) sort of sums up all of the commands to “flee” when it says,

**<sup>15</sup>Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup>For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup>And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.**

I.e., we all have to wrestle with these strong desires to gratify ourselves by living by our feelings and our personal desires and ambitions rather than by obedience to God. The “**lust of the eyes**” refers to our desire to acquire things and some worldly status rather than developing godly character in our lives. Those people who will have the greatest rewards in God's kingdom will be those people that you never hear of, those people who have sacrificed their lives to live in places that we do not even know, and people who have faithfully and earnestly served God for nothing but His glory. They have set aside all of their personal goals, ambitions, and aspirations so that they can live for God's glory - and we do not even know they exist or who they are. Somewhere along the way they made the life transforming decision that they would not live for themselves, but for their God – and they have gone about doing exactly that.

Now, that is the exact opposite of what our culture encourages us to do. It is constantly saying – live for yourself, get to know yourself, do your own thing, live out your dreams, and follow your dreams.



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However, believers will NEVER find any encouragement in Scripture to make living for themselves as the priority of their life. In fact, God encourages believers to do the exact opposite. Jesus issued these sobering words in [Matthew 10:39](#),

<sup>39</sup>**He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**

We are not saying that a person cannot have personal goals, or pursue different things in their life. That would be foolish and unwise to imply. However, what we are saying is that whatever we pursue, it should never take precedence over seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness as the first priority of our life. God and His glory is to always be the first priority of our life. If we are not careful, our life will become our idol – living exclusively for ourselves rather than for God. God will become just a token part of our life.

One of our problems is that we see things, and we want those things, and then we want more, and we want this kind of recognition and this kind of life and lifestyle. We see what the world has and it becomes much more attractive and alluring to us than the Christian life. John summed it up by calling it the boastful “**pride of life**”. That phrase simply refers to living for ourselves. We become more focused on what we can achieve as opposed to what God wants to achieve in us and then through us.

In the context here of what Paul is saying to Timothy, he is warning him about loving money and about the desire to be rich. He is telling him to flee those things. Why? It is because of [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#),

<sup>9</sup>**But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.** <sup>10</sup>**For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

In studying this passage, it is clear that God has placed an incredible responsibility on the shoulders of godly men, and especially leaders within a church setting. The responsibility is really twofold. The first is that “**men of God**” are to faithfully nurture and minister to the church. In fact, that has been the majority of what Paul has been writing to Timothy – how to lead the church at Ephesus. However, secondly, a “**man of God**” is to pay careful attention to personal piety and faithfulness. A spiritually healthy church always depends on having spiritually healthy men and women of God whose ministry and personal life reflect Christlikeness. There are no short-cuts to these attributes of godliness. To the contrary, the journey will most likely be difficult and demanding and at times very wearisome.

At this final juncture in his letter, Paul is once again emphasizing the weight and importance of this responsibility by closing the letter in the same way that he opened it – by giving a very solemn charge to Timothy. He wants Timothy to be a fighter (v12). The dangers of unfaithfulness have been well documented by Paul. He has not tried to soft peddle what the ministry is or how Timothy is to live. [1 Timothy 4](#), for instance, was one continuous exhortation after another.

We have looked at Paul’s first encouragement to Timothy to “**flee**” those things that would hinder his pursuit of God and God’s kingdom. The second thing that Paul encourages Timothy to do is to “**pursue**” certain things – “**pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness**”. It is



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the double idea of running from something and running to something. Just like the verb to “flee”, the verb “pursue” is also in the present imperative tense which is a command to continually be doing something. All of these verbs are in that same tense. I.e., always be fleeing certain things and always be pursuing certain things. Continually stay away from certain things and continually seek certain things. Stay away from what is ungodly and pursue and what is godly.

One of the most important things that believers are to do is to seek after God with all of their heart. I have this counseling rule that I constantly tell people. It is very simple – just do what is right. In whatever circumstance that they find themselves, just do what is the right thing to do. We are to always be honest, always be faithful, always be diligent, and always be placing God first in our life and in our decisions. The list could virtually be endless. For our entire life we are to be doing these kinds of things. In essence, it is relentless, never-ending, every day, every week, every month, and every year. The moment that we stop either one – either fleeing things that are wrong or pursuing things that are right - the moment we stop, inevitably we will begin to suffer the negative consequences of that decision in our life. Once a person consciously decides NOT to pursue what is right, the flesh is so strong in them that they naturally begin to pursue those things that are not Godward. It just naturally happens.

God's expectations of those with a high calling are great. There just is no room for compromise in a man of God's lifestyle. So, Paul makes this clear in the spiritual formula that he gives to Timothy of “flee . . . pursue”. He actually uses the same formula in [2 Timothy 2:22](#) when he says,

**<sup>22</sup>Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

The tone of these exhortations is that of an emergency, and of something that is urgent and demanding. The “man of God” cannot just take some kind of casual, laid-back, careless, cavalier, and nonchalant attitude about his life. His life becomes his ministry. No character, no integrity, then no ministry and no usefulness. He has to watch over his life – he has to! So, if a believer wants to be a man or woman of God, then they have to be on guard for those things that will hinder them and hold them back, as well as those things that will make them stronger. This is a sustained, lifelong effort that only ends with the appearance of Christ. [1 Timothy 6:14](#) says it this way,

**<sup>14</sup>that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,**

Paul told Timothy in [2 Timothy 2:21](#),

**<sup>21</sup>Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.**

The word “cleanses” is similar to “flee”. There are simply things that must be purged out of our lives before we can be useful in God's kingdom – and it is our responsibility to know what those things are, and then to cleanse our life of them. In eternity, we will fully understand the great tragedy of never having really prepared our life to be useful to God. We found ourselves always distracted, always



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having other priorities than the right ones. Now, I would suspect that each of us have various negative things in our life that may be hindering us in becoming Christlike. If we know what those things are, then we need to realize that God has commanded us to flee them and to cleanse ourselves from them. It is my responsibility and my task to cleanse myself from these things. It is not that I just say a little prayer one night and hope that everything is okay the next morning. It just does not work that way. It takes a deliberate effort on my part to flee certain things and to pursue certain things. God will strengthen me in the process, but He is not going to do the work for me. Sanctification is a process by which God reveals and we respond. God has simply identified those things that do not produce Christlikeness, and He has given each of us a present imperative verb and a command, to cleanse our life of them. It is my personal responsibility to do so, and very often that effort is a reflection of how much I am really willing to be an actual “follower” of Christ.

The word “**pursue**” is often translated as “**persecute**”. I.e., it has the nuance of eagerly going after something. When people are being persecuted, they are being hunted down with great effort. Paul used this same word in [Philippians 3](#) when he described his life before his conversion. He said that he “persecuted” the Church, and it was the same word translated here as “**pursue**”. I.e., Paul followed hard after the church, he was pursuing the church. Kenneth Wuest in his [Word Studies in the Greek New Testament](#) says it means to run swiftly in order to catch someone or something. Metaphorically, it means to seek eagerly, to earnestly endeavor to acquire. So, the word implies great effort, diligence, and determination. No one will accidentally attain these attributes by just hanging out down at the church. Rather, these are very specific qualities that every believer must become very deliberate about pursuing. They do not just happen overnight. Believers have to actually “**pursue**” and follow hard after these things. The Amplified Bible and the RSV translate the verb as “**aim at**”. Make it your aim, make it your purpose, and make it your target to pursue and follow after these specific qualities.

The specific thing that Timothy is to pursue is given in a list of six specific attributes. Simply stated, it is a balanced spiritual life. These are specific qualities that help to make believers Christlike and are not intended in any way to be exhaustive, but rather to exemplify what a man of God is to be like. For instance, [2 Timothy 3:10](#) says something similar, but not exactly like this,

**<sup>10</sup>But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,**

These are all godly virtues that demonstrate the marks of genuine faith in a “**man of God**”. It all comes down to what we are going to let be the center of our life. Since Paul has been talking about money in the previous verses, we could say that if money or even the desire for money is the focus of our life, then we are going to become a miserable person. However, if God is at the center of our life, we are going to be spiritually rich, our life is going to be spiritually blessed, and our life is going to be spiritually full. So Paul is wanting Timothy to understand that he needs to always be putting God as the center of his life.

The first two terms, “**righteousness**” and “**godliness**” depict a certain kind of attribute that is required in order for someone to be a godly man or woman. The term “**righteousness**” as used here refers to a practical righteousness, an observable uprightness, a life that is lived in accordance with God's



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character, and is obvious to all who see it. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says this about the word "**righteousness**",

*"It is the character or quality of being right or just. It is used to denote an attribute of God, which is essentially the same as His faithfulness, or truthfulness, and that which is consistent with His own nature and promises."*

I.e., practical righteousness is just doing what is right. In its simplicity, practical righteousness requires that a man must do what is right, or he is not a righteous man. You cannot be practically righteous in your life and never do what is right. Because righteousness is an attribute of God, it means that to a righteous man sin is not something that he can just be indifferent to or regard in a lighthearted way. God does not take sin lightly or treat it indifferently, so neither can a righteous man. If a believer is going to actually be or become a godly person and they know that there are things in their life that are unrighteous, things that are immoral or impure, things that aberrant and wrong, and spiritual things to which they have become indifferent – and they do not address those issues, then there is something seriously wrong in their life. That kind of person most likely may not even be saved. The sin of spiritual indifference and spiritual apathy should frighten us. Believers do not have the right, they do not have the privilege and the freedom and the license to just ignore what God requires of them as a Christian. They have been bought with a price and they are not their own.

"**Righteousness**" is whatever conforms to the will of God and whatever has been appointed by God to be acknowledged and obeyed. So, in order for a man to be considered a godly man, it is imperative that he do those things in his life that conform to the will of God. If he knows that he is engaged in things that are outside of the will of God, then he is simply to flee, to stop, and to lay those things aside. God has appointed life to be lived a certain way and He fully expects the godly individual to live that way – nothing less. If someone is known as a "**man of God**", then it is because he has done those things that are right. He has taken the Word of God, understood what it required, and he has obeyed it. His life is right and his behavior is right.

The second term "**godliness**" is Paul's term for the whole of the Christian experience. Often the word is expressed as God-likeness. It is a very important word in this epistle and is used nine times, and four times alone in 1 Timothy 6:3-11. In fact, of the sixteen times that the word is used in the New Testament, it is used eleven times in the pastoral epistles alone. Paul does not actually use the word "**godliness**" in any of his other letters. In its simplest meaning, "**godliness**" means that a person is devoted to God. It is the Greek word "*eusebeia*". The prefix "*eu*" means well, and "*sebomai*" means to be devout. It could be translated "to be well devout". In our vernacular we would simply say "to be devoted". It carries the idea of doing something because you know that it will be well-pleasing to God. So, when putting "**righteousness**" and "**godliness**" together, it reflects a devotion to God that is characterized by a life of conformity to His righteousness and to His will.

Next, the attributes of "**faith**" and "**love**" depict two dimensions of genuine Christianity - a balance of personal faith and correct doctrine and works done in the power of the Spirit. The basis of the Christian life is the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He is the sole basis of why people are even saved. The means of salvation, however, is faith. Believers are saved through faith, they walk by





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faith, and they live by faith. Faith is that means by which believers embrace the Christian life. The evidence of salvation is good works. If someone has truly been born again, then there will be the corresponding evidence that will be reflected in good works. Believers are not saved by good works, but they are certainly saved for good works. Faith is that attribute by which believers are able to actually embrace the things of God. It involves confidently trusting God for everything in their life – for wisdom, knowledge, strength, help, and direction. It involves an unwavering confidence in God’s power and in God’s plan for our lives. We live in such a way that we believe God. We trust deeply in His sovereignty and power. We believe God for everything. Coupled with that, we simply love God. We love God’s people. We love God’s kingdom and the work He has called us into. We understand that great commandment that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and that we are to love our neighbor.

The final two attributes are “**patience**” and “**gentleness**”. The word “**patience**” is the Greek word “*hupomone*” and it literally means to stay under. “*Hupo*” means under, and “*meno*” means to stay. It is often translated as “**endurance**”. It is simply a no-quit determination in the face of opposition to the Christian life. This is the individual who remains under trials and difficulties in a very God-honoring manner. It means that the individual will remain loyal and faithful to the Lord in the midst of severe trials and difficulties. He is not willing to compromise just because things may be difficult. This has to be one of the most noble of all virtues – that ability to stand and endure hardship, to endure grief and hurt, and to endure injustice and criticism.

“**Gentleness**” is an attitude of kind and tender composure. It describes someone who has a kind of mildness of disposition and a gentleness in their spirit. Trench says of this word that “*it is that temper of spirit in which we accept God’s dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing and resisting.*” It indicates an attitude of quiet, reverent, and humble submission to the will and purpose of God. This word is actually the antithesis of the word pride or arrogance. It is often translated as “**meekness**” and refers to someone who has a very teachable spirit. These are things that we are to pursue, the spiritual qualities that God wants us to follow hard after. These are words that reflect character, wisdom, and understanding in a person’s life.

Next, Paul says that believers are to “**fight**”. We flee certain things, we pursue certain things, and we fight for certain things.

**<sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

The correct New Testament perspective on being a “**man of God**” is that the individual is someone who contends earnestly for the truth. [Jude 1:3](#) says,

**<sup>3</sup>Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.**

The fighting is not against people. This is what John MacArthur described in his book The Truth War as a war between truth and error, between what is right and what is wrong, between what is godly and



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what is ungodly. A godly man must see himself as a fighter and as a contender for the faith. The scriptural analysis would be that of being a soldier. [2 Timothy 2:1-7](#) describes it this way,

**<sup>1</sup>You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup>You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. <sup>5</sup>And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. <sup>7</sup>Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.**

Paul ended his ministry in [2 Timothy 4:7](#) by saying this,

**<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

There are so many things that engage us in the spiritual fight. There is the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is false teaching and heresy. There is sin, apathy, lethargy, and spiritual indifference. There is this eternal battle with what Jesus called “**the power of darkness**”. [Romans 13:12](#) says,

**<sup>12</sup>The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.**

[Ephesians 5:11](#) says,

**<sup>11</sup>And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.**

The sad part in all of this is that many people are not even aware that there is a battle going on. For instance, the church is definitely losing in the battle for its young people. We are literally losing an entire generation of young people. Very few of them will have little to nothing spiritually to pass on to the future generations. It is apparent that people are falling away from the faith in hoards, in mass. The defection from the church to the world is constant and frightening. People have abandoned the truth for error, have abandoned faithfulness for adultery, have abandoned goodness for unrighteousness, and have abandoned God for themselves and their personal pleasures. If believers do not even know that they are in a battle, then I can assure you that they cannot win a war that they do not even know exists.

As was the other verbs, this too is a present imperative tense verb – fight and keep on fighting. To do this takes great effort, great concentration, great discipline, and great conviction. The word for “**fight**” is “*agonizomai*” from where we get our word “agony”. Paul previously used the word in [1 Timothy 4](#). Strong’s says the word means to struggle, literally to compete for a prize, figuratively to contend with an adversary, or to endeavor to accomplish something. It means to fight, to labor fervently, to strive. A believer has to “agonize” through the conflicts and through the battles. They have to recognize that there is a spiritual conflict and a spiritual war and then they have to be willing to labor earnestly against those things that are contending against them and their families.

When Paul refers to the “**good fight of faith**”, the word “**good**” means the excellent or noble fight. It is a battle for truth, a battle for what is godly and what is right, a battle worth fighting for. A



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committed believer can never compromise the truth for expediency or as a way of avoiding the conflict. The Greek actually reads “**the faith**” (“**fight the good fight of the faith**”) meaning the Christian faith as revealed in the truth of God’s Word. Sound doctrine is critical for sound Christian living. So Satan attacks sound doctrine with subtle errors and truth out of balance. When Paul refers to “**the fight of faith**” he is talking about contending for the Word of God, fighting for the truth. We do not actually fight people. This is a spiritual war. [Ephesians 6:12](#) says,

**<sup>12</sup>For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

The history of the Christian church consists of repeated battles where the enemy introduces destructive heresies, those heresies are confronted, and the truth is clarified and proclaimed. [1 Timothy](#) has a very apologetic thrust – one of defending the faith. The great church councils and creeds, while not carrying Scriptural authority, were attempts to correct false teaching and to set forth sound teaching. The Reformation, for instance, consisted of godly men like Luther and Calvin who were contending against the corruption and false doctrine that had permeated the Roman Catholic Church.

Now, there are really a couple of ways to understand and apply this idea of carrying on “**the good fight of faith**”. One would be this: since personal faith is often threatened by personal doubt and unbelief believers must fight to maintain personal faith. From that perspective, the phrase “**fight of faith**” would refer to the struggle to keep on believing God, the fight to keep on trusting His promises. All believers struggle with this at times, and it is necessary that each fight to believe God personally. So, there is a sense in which every believer must keep on pursuing faith. We cannot just rest content as though the faith we have is all we need, or as though the faith we have will remain in our hearts without a fight against unbelief. Fighting the good fight of faith is the struggle to keep the faith, to keep from wavering and doubting, and to keep ourselves in the faith. No wonder Paul first told Timothy that he must continue to “**pursue**” certain things. We never fully attain anything, and faith was one of those things that Paul told Timothy to pursue and to follow hard after.

A second application of this phrase is simply that believers are fighting to obtain a goal, a prize. I John Piper wrote the following about this issue,

*“One of the reasons there is so little deep, earnest, passionate concern for godliness in the contemporary church is that this truth is so little understood—the truth, namely, that eternal life is laid hold of only by a persevering fight of faith. There is today, by and large, a devil-may-care, cavalier, superficial attitude toward the on-going, daily intensity of personal faith because people do not believe that their eternal life depends on it. The last 200 years has seen an almost incredible devaluation of the fight of faith. We have moved a hundred miles from Pilgrim’s Progress where Christian labors and struggles and fights all his life until he is safe in the Celestial City. O, how different is the biblical view of the Christian life than the one prevalent in the American church.”*

[Revelation 2:10](#), in speaking to the church of Smyrna, says,



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**<sup>10</sup>Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

This is very different from the mood of American Christianity. In this passage something infinite and eternal hangs on whether these Christians actually keep their faith in prison. Obviously, this is not a salvation by works or a salvation by perseverance. However, in a stark contrast to today's contemporary worship services, Bible studies, prayer meetings, and fellowship gatherings, most Christians do not have this kind earnestness, intensity, fervor, and depth because people do not believe in their heart that anything significant is at stake - least of all their eternal life. Many have got their ticket to heaven, and that is all they seem to want. That is the way people think. However, that is simply not an accurate or faithful picture of the Christian life and of what Paul later admonishes believers in this verse to do – to **“lay hold of eternal life”**. What Paul says here is very clear. He says that the way that believers lay hold of eternal life is by fighting the good fight of faith. They earnestly contend in their life for those things that are good, godly, and of the faith. [Hebrews 3:12-13](#), for instance, says,

**<sup>12</sup>Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup>but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**

In order to **“fight the good fight of faith”**, believers must do whatever God tells them to do so as to guard themselves against an unbelieving heart and against becoming hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. In this verse, believers are told to do that by **“exhorting one another”**. Part of the pastoral calling is to exhort, to push, to press, and to urge believers in the faith – and at times to even speak in such a way to trouble them.

The perseverance of a believer's personal faith depends on the regular exhortations of each one of us to each other. We are fellow soldiers in the **“good fight of faith”** and our fellowship in the truth and the Word of God is not optional. [Hebrews 10:23-25](#) says why.

**<sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

One way that this texts tells believers **“to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering”** is by not neglecting to meet together to stir each other up. It says in v25 that believers meet and they exhort one another in the faith. The Christian life cannot be lived successfully in isolation. If someone ever reaches a place in their life where they feel that they do not really need the church, that they can for the most part get by without it and only have a very casual commitment to it, they will be on the list of those who fall away. This **neglect** of the local church is the curse of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church. God intends for believers to gather, to exhort each other, and to stir each other up. Every believer is responsible before God to be an encourager, to be an exhorter, and to admonish and correct.



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**1 Timothy 6:12** says that believers are to “**lay hold on eternal life**”. The word for “**lay hold**” is an interesting word. It is the Greek word “*epilambanomai*” which means to lay hold of, to take possession of something. It has the idea to lay hold of or to seize upon something with the hands, to grab something and hold it tightly. In the Greek, the prefix “*epi*” makes the word “intensive”. I.e., “*lambanomai*” would simply mean to take hold of something. However, “*epilambanomai*” means to take hold of something tightly, firmly, securely, intensely. For instance, if you were a soldier in a fight and a helicopter came to pick you up, but you slipped and fell as it was taking off and you grabbed the landing bars, you would be taking hold of them very tightly. If you were drowning and someone threw you a life preserver, you would be taking hold of it tightly, firmly, and with all the strength you had. So, this idea of laying hold of something has a very strong intensive meaning to it. As all of the other verbs that have been studied, it too is in the present imperative tense. I.e., it is a command that believers are to be continually doing. It could correctly be translated as “**lay hold of, and keep on laying hold of**”.

One of the fundamental issues within the contemporary church is that it has simply lost its focus on what is important. The church, which should be heavenly minded, has become earthly minded. **Colossians 3:1-2** says,

**<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

The problem is that we seem much more concerned with “**now**” rather than “**then**”. For some people and the way they are headed, “now” want mean much “then”. People are so concerned about their earthly home that they eventually miss out on a heavenly home. People who are continually just living for themselves will miss out on eternal life. Everywhere that we turn people are looking for fulfillment, for purpose, and for self-worth, but they have not even considered God and His Word. So, everywhere they turn the source for truth is absent, missing, removed - and eventually the individual is left with just themselves and their ideas. If that is all that someone has, then all I have to say is good luck. Why? It is because they have to find all of their value and worth in themselves – AND THERE IS NONE THERE! Without Christ we have no value, we have no worth, and we can find no true meaning in our life apart from Him. Most people simply do not believe that. We were born in sin. The Bible says that we were brought forth in iniquity. **Psalm 51:5** says,

**<sup>5</sup>Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.**

The Bible is crystal clear that life is in Christ and Christ alone. Jesus said in **John 14** that He was the life. **John 1:4** says that in Christ is life.

John MacArthur said in one of his commentaries that “*Every human effort at self-improvement or self-satisfaction – no matter what its religious covering may be – is subject to the law of diminishing returns.*” The only way that a person can have a real sense of purpose, worth, and meaning in their life is by being in a right relationship with the One who created them – and that is it.

This particular phrase for us to “**lay hold on eternal life**” refers to the continual laying hold of that for which we were laid hold of by Christ. Paul stated it this way in **Philippians 3:12**,





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**<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.**

So, how does a believer do that? How do they actually lay hold of eternal life? Well, they put themselves in the way, in the path, and in the direction of eternal life. You have to exercise yourself towards it in order to lay hold of it. Paul already stated in [1 Timothy 6:11](#),

**<sup>11</sup>But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

He told the believer to flee certain things and to pursue certain things. If you want to get an education, then you have to go to school somewhere. You have to do some homework, write some papers, and take some tests in order to get an education. You have to put yourself on a path, in a direction, and on a course that allows you to be taught, to lay hold of, and to take hold of an education.

It is no different in the Christian life. We have to place ourselves in the way of eternal life. If we never do anything spiritual, we will never get anything spiritual. If we never seek Christ, we will never find Christ. If we never study God's Word, we will never understand God's Word. If we never obey God's Word, we will never have the blessings of God on our life. **We have to lay hold of these things.** We have to understand what they are and then take hold of them with intensity.

A believer cannot just drift along in their Christian life and expect some kind of spectacular result. It just does not work that way. Those people who are just drifting along in the church and who are just casually ho-humming themselves on Sunday are most likely not even saved. There are a lot of people who are casually, indifferently, and apathetically just drifting along in their supposed Christian life. **The issue is that they have never taken hold of anything!**

**They have never taken hold of God's Word.** It means nothing to them – nothing. If it meant something to them, then they would read it and embrace it. However, to the contrary, all they do is leave it at home on Sunday morning or Wednesday night. It means nothing to them. If it meant something to them, then they would read it earnestly and regularly - but they just do not. How can we ever think that someone has really embraced eternal life when the Word of God really means nothing to them? They do not know it, they do not read it, and they do not obey it. What or who would ever give them the impression that they have taken hold of eternal life? They have not!

**Secondly, they have never taken hold of the church.** It is just another social activity in their life, and if the truth was really known, they probably do not really want to be there when they are there. **We cannot separate Christ from His church.** The church is His bride, and the one for whom He is coming. All of the people that I know who I believe have taken hold of eternal life **love** God's church. They love it, and they want to be a vital part of it.

**Thirdly, they have never taken hold of walking with God.** They give Him almost no time whatsoever. If they do not love His Word and they do not love His church, I doubt seriously that they will love Him. The only time they pray is when they are in some kind of crisis or when things are not working out the way they want things to work out. They are too busy with other things, with their life, with



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their personal goals and ambitions – and walking with God is just not a priority in their life. They have just found a way to leave God out of their daily lives and be totally satisfied in so doing. They have never taken hold of eternal life!

Now, it is important to recognize that God has **ALREADY** blessed us with all of the spiritual blessings that we could ever imagine. [Ephesians 1:3](#) says it this way,

**<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**

The practical issue is not that we have been given these blessings. That is not the issue. The issue is that we need to take hold of what God has already done for us. If we have these spiritual blessings, if they have already been given to us and exist for us, but we do not use them, then they really do not provide any spiritual benefit for our life. So, as far as we are concerned, they do not really mean much to us.

I think the process is really very simple. We discover and discern what those blessings are in the Word of God. That is the only place that they have been revealed. From a very practical standpoint, we have to know what God expects of us. **What He expects of us is His perfect will for our life.** For instance, if God says that He desires for us to live a certain way, then that is the will of God for our life. So, those things that we know and understand to be the will of God for our life, we embrace them into our life. We trust in His sovereign Word, and we take hold of those things that we know to be His will for our life. I.e., we find out what God says and then we literally put those things into practice in our life. Ephesians 4:29-32 says,

**<sup>29</sup>Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup>And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**

In this passage we have a number of obvious things that God wants us to do, specific things that we know are His perfect will for our life. They are easy to see and they are easy to understand. There is no ambiguity here. The will of God in this passage is not difficult to comprehend or recognize. There is absolutely no mystery in these words. They are God's will for every believer's life today! So, if we allow them to impact our life, embedded within these words are real spiritual blessings. I cannot tell you what the exact spiritual blessings are. I can surmise what they may be, but the Scriptures do not give us a specific delineation of every spiritual blessing related to our obedience to the will of God. There are multitudes of blessings. However, it is important to remember one critical point - the blessings of God are ALWAYS related directly to His will. The closer believers are to the will of God operating in their life, then the greater the practical blessing of God will be on their life.

Now, here is some insight for [Ephesians 1:3](#) and for understanding the term “**spiritual blessings**”. Whatever the blessings are, they are “**spiritual**” in nature, their location is in “**heavenly places**”, and they are all “**in Christ**”. So, in order to be able to even enjoy them, you have to first be “**in Christ**”.



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Whenever the particular word for “**spiritual**” is used in the New Testament, it is always used in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit within the believer’s life. In a practical way, we could take the verses in [Ephesians 4](#) and say this: If we are not allowing any corrupt, dishonest, or damaging words to proceed from our mouth, and if we are putting away bitterness, anger, and evil speaking, and if we are becoming kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving, then it is because we are allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us. God is working in our life. These are spiritual elements – speaking properly and being forgiving and tenderhearted. They are the spiritual work of the Holy Spirit within us. They are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. So, we have to just take hold of these things. They are the fruit of eternal life, the evidence of eternal life working in a believer. If we are always struggling in these areas, it most likely is because we are not personally willing to submit ourselves to the perfect will of God for our life. We have determined that we will speak how we want to speak and that we will forgive who we want to forgive and that we will be angry when we want to be angry. God has said not be angry, to only say things that edify, and to forgive someone when they seek it – and we choose to do differently.

Secondly, when Paul talked about “**spiritual blessings in the heavenly places**”, the term “**heavenly places**” refers to the entire supernatural realm of God’s outworkings. There is no place and no time in a believer’s personal life where the blessings of God are not present and operative. Even though I may not fully understand it all, I am not of this world. I was born here, I live here, I will die here – but I am not of this world. Whenever I go to Romania or Zimbabwe, I am still a citizen of the United States. I am in another place, in another country where they speak another language and live differently than I do. They dress differently, they eat differently, and they travel differently than I do. However, I am not a citizen of that country. So, even though I live in this world, I am still a citizen of another world, of a heavenly kingdom. [Philippians 3:20](#) actually says that our citizenship is in heaven.

**<sup>20</sup>For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

In the kingdom of which we are now citizens, it is a supernatural realm in which God is in complete and sovereign control. Not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from His sovereignty. We must both see and embrace that kingdom. We must become heavenly minded. Why? It is because that is where our real home is, that is where our heart is, that is where our salvation is, that is where Jesus is, that is where the heavenly city is, that is where the angels live, and that is where the will of God is always perfectly obeyed.

So, how do believers live godly in an ungodly world? It is by simply yielding themselves to the Word of God and to the work of the Holy Spirit within them and by so doing taking hold of eternal life and placing themselves in the way of eternal life. [Galatians 5:16](#) says,

**<sup>16</sup>I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

Now, there is one last thing that needs to be understood. All of these blessings have already been given to the believer. They are not something that can be earned, not something that can be produced, and not something that is deserved. These are blessings that God has **already given** to the believer. For instance, what Paul says in [Ephesians 1:3](#) is in the past tense – “**has blessed us with every**



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**spiritual blessing**’. The following are two verses just to expound on this idea of God’s blessings all being in the past tense, or something that believers already have. [Romans 5:5](#),

<sup>5</sup>**Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

### [2 Peter 1:3-4](#),

<sup>3</sup>**as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, <sup>4</sup>by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.**

The point is simple – God has already given the believer whatever it is that they need. Their part is to simply believe that He has and then avail themselves of those blessings – whatever they are – love, peace, forgiveness, a tender heart, joy, wisdom, strength, grace – whatever they need. We do not earn these or merit these in any way. Christ earned them for us, and God the Father has given them to us.

Because God gave Jesus Christ, there is nothing else for Him to give. Everything eternal and meaningful and purposeful is in Him. So, the issue is not receiving something else, but simply taking hold of what we already have. We are in Christ. We are a new creature. We have a new home. We have a new perspective on life. We now know what is important and what is godly and what is ungodly. We now know what God’s will is for our life. So, we just want to bring our practice and our behavior into alignment with our position. We want to become Christlike in all that we do – everything. We want to take hold of eternal life.

We have been talking about what makes someone a man of God, and we have seen that they must “**flee**” certain things, they must “**pursue**” certain things, they must “**fight**” the good fight of faith, and they must “**take hold**” of eternal life. To put this another way, the man of God must have a godly focus in his life. He must see life from God’s perspective. There are certainly a lot of “things” that surround us, that gain our attention, that use our time, and that spend our resources. If we are not careful, those “things” can cause us to lose a godly focus. There are many worldly things that simply are not worth the time or effort we put into them. I am sure that in eternity that we will be more than aware of the vanities that we allowed to absorb us and ultimately to rob us of God’s eternal treasures. No wonder Paul said these words in [Colossians 3:2](#),

<sup>2</sup>**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth**

What is really important and what is really valuable are those things that have eternal value and that have eternal worth. Anyone can spend the rest of their life worrying about all of the marginal and insignificant matters of life. If they want to, they can spend the rest of their lives chasing after things that have no eternal value whatsoever, or they can choose to pursue those things that will last forever. The average Christian in the average church does not really believe God’s Word that much. Everywhere that we look we find little to no commitment to the things of God within people’s lives. It is just not there, and we are fooling ourselves and being intellectually dishonest if we try to convince



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ourselves that that commitment, devotion, and faithfulness is actually there. True disciples are few and far between. Obviously, there are some, but there are not a lot.

Paul wrote the following in v13-14 of this passage,

**<sup>13</sup>I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, <sup>14</sup>that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,**

What caught my attention were the words “**in the sight of God**”. Everything that a believer does is done before God and it is in His sight. He sees everything that the believer does. Nothing is hidden from Him, and one day every believer will answer for what they have done – either good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral. No one escapes. We will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account of our life. We cannot escape the eternal consequences of what we do in life and with our life. [Romans 14:10](#) says that,

**For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

[Romans 14:12](#) says,

**<sup>12</sup>So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.**

We will stand before an omnipotent and omniscient God who will bring all things to light. [Mark 4:22](#) says,

**<sup>22</sup>For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light**

[1 Corinthians 4:5](#) says,

**<sup>5</sup>Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.**

Every believer is living under the scrutiny of a holy God, and because of that the man of God should be continually motivated to do that which he knows pleases God. He is living in the sight of God. The word for “**in the sight of**”, or in the presence of, or before comes from the Greek word “*enopion*”. “*En*” means “in” and “*opion*” comes from a root word that means “face”. Literally, “**in the face of**”. It is the idea that God is constantly watching everything that we do. So the man of God must understand this and live as if God were right there with him when he does something. Whatever he is doing, he is doing in the face of God, in the sight of God, and before God.

So, what is it that Paul actually urges Timothy to do in v13? It is to “**keep the commandment without spot, blameless**”. Most commentators believe that the word “**commandment**” is referring to the entire revealed word of God. So, Paul is encouraging Timothy to hold on to the truth that he knows, to obey the truth that he knows, and to guard the truth that he knows. In light of the context and the thrust of the whole book, the best view is that Paul means that Timothy maintain his personal





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integrity – “**keep the commandment**”, do what you know is right - and that he discharge his ministry above reproach. In **1 Timothy 4:16**, Paul said the same thing,

**<sup>16</sup>Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**

In **1 Timothy 6:20-21** he encourages him with these words,

**<sup>20</sup>O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—<sup>21</sup>by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.**

In all of these verses in **1 Timothy**, Paul is charging Timothy before God that he live in such a manner that neither his personal life nor his ministry would bring any blot or any kind of blemish on the name of Christ. **In the ministry, it is always an issue of integrity.** To have integrity and to maintain that integrity, a godly man and a godly leader must understand doctrine, they must know the truth, and they must be committed to that truth no matter what the cost. Biblical preaching and teaching will rarely make anyone popular.

In John MacArthur’s commentary on **1 Timothy** he made the excellent point that doctrine controls behavior. We could put that another way and say that **how a person lives reflects what they really believe about God**. A.W. Tozer said in his book The Knowledge of the Holy that **what comes into a man’s mind when he thinks about God is the most important thing about that man**. You can predict with certainty the spiritual future of a man if you know what he thinks about God. No wonder Paul told Timothy that the reason he needed to keep the commandment was because of who God is in **1 Timothy 6:15-16**.

**<sup>15</sup>...He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, <sup>16</sup>who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power.**

Believers only have one source of spiritual strength, and that source is God. It is not something special about us, it is not our commitment, and it is not our integrity, It is God who strengthens the believer. **1 Peter 5:10** says,

**<sup>10</sup>But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.**

**Philippians 4:13** says it rightly,

**<sup>13</sup>I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

Only God can give a believer the strength to do what is right and what pleases Him – and so each believer must be constantly going to Him for that strength.

Spiritual integrity rests on a foundation beneath the surface where no one but the believer and God can see. Each believer must live each day with their life laid bare before the God who sees all. **Hebrews 4:13** puts it this way,



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**<sup>13</sup>And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**

A man of God has to open his heart to God and open his heart to the Word of God and allow that Word to search his heart. [Hebrews 4:12](#) says,

**<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

Every man of God must have an acute awareness of God's presence in their life, of His omniscience, and of His all searching presence over their life if they are to live a life of integrity and a life without compromise. [1 Timothy 6:13](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate**

Technically that phrase refers to God's power to raise the dead. However, the verse tells us two things. First, it tells us that spiritual life comes from God and that spiritual strength comes directly from God. He gives life and He gives spiritual life. Secondly, it says that Christ Jesus in the face of the most extreme persecution and suffering was not willing to compromise His confession – even though He knew that it would ultimately cost Him his very life. However, He knew that God the Father would raise Him from the dead. [Revelation 1:5](#) actually calls Christ “**the faithful witness**”.

I read a true story in one of the [1 Timothy](#) commentaries about a pastor in India who felt God's call to go to the second most sacred site for a Hindu pilgrimage and plant a church there. His wife chose to go with him, taking along their children, even though the last missionary who tried to live there had been murdered and his head placed in the temple. So, they went and lived in poverty, in filthy conditions, and with no human means of support. In the fifteen years he had been there, this man of God has been beaten many times, he has been threatened with being skinned and thrown into the sea, his oldest son has been beaten and threatened with crucifixion for preaching, and the schools he has built for pastors have been burned to the ground and he has built them again. However, he perseveres, willing to lay down his life for Christ because he trusts in the God who gives life to all and he knows that Christ Jesus who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate is with him.

For some reason, I believe this pastor understood that God is Sovereign – “**the blessed and only Potentate**”. We do not use the word “**Potentate**” much. In fact, in a good number of the translations this Greek word “*dynastes*” is translated as Sovereign or Ruler. It is a word that refers to the inherent capacity of someone to carry something out. It comes from a word group whose basic meaning is “power”. For instance, God delegates authority to earthly kings as He wishes, but they are nothing in His sight, and He can dispose of the mightiest earthly ruler as a man flicks an ant off his arm. The proud Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the greatest kingdom on earth, but God humbled him like a beast of the field so that he might learn that the Most High is ruler over all the realm of mankind, and He bestows it on whom He wishes. God is sovereign, He is immortal, He is invisible, and He dwells in unapproachable light.



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I have to say from a personal perspective that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God has become one of my two most favorite doctrines in all of Scripture – the sovereignty of God and the Incarnation. I have found and continue to find incredible strength in knowing that God is sovereign. There is nothing on earth or in heaven that can overrule or trump the sovereignty of God. God is never caught unawares, never caught by surprise. He is never worried, never anxious, never perturbed, and always perfectly calm. His sovereign will is never undermined or frustrated in any way. No one or anything can prevent His sovereign will from being accomplished exactly as He desires. He is the Sovereign God of the universe who is in complete control of every event of life.

So, really it is not a matter of being creative, talented, or exercising some kind of unique spiritual ingenuity. It is always a matter of submitting to the righteous and holy will of a sovereign God. Nothing rests on how persuasive we may be, or how clever may be the messages, or how impassioned some invitation that is given. Ultimately, nothing depends on me at all.

I do not have to manipulate people or try and control people. I fully understand that I cannot change people. I do not have to compromise my convictions to accomplish things. I do not have to even be subtle or clever in what I say or do. God is in complete control. I do not have to depend on my personal human abilities or my ingenuity. I do not have to depend on my human wisdom, on human talent, or human resolve. However, I do have to depend on a sovereign God who is all-powerful and all-knowing.

I think that I would be a basket case if I felt like people's eternal destinies depended on me and my abilities to convince them about Christ. I do not think I could do what I am doing if that was the case. I do not feel people are saved because of my ability to convince their human mind and move their human will. To the contrary, I believe the Bible teaches that God is sovereign and my responsibility is not to convince people to change their human will and come to Christ, but rather my responsibility is to preach and teach the Word of God faithfully and the sovereign work of a gracious God will redeem those that He has chosen as His bride.

For our class on "Preaching" in Romania we use a book called [The Supremacy of God in Preaching](#) by John Piper. In the book, John Piper, a pastor in Minneapolis, writes about a Sunday when he decided to preach on the greatness of God in His holiness and majesty as revealed in Isaiah's vision in [Isaiah 6](#). Normally, of course, Piper would have worked on applying such truth to his flock. However, on that day he felt led to just make a test of whether the portrayal of the greatness of God in and of itself would meet the needs of his people. What he did not realize was that not long before that Sunday one of the young families in his church had discovered that their child was being sexually abused by a close relative. This family was there that Sunday and sat under his message. Piper reflects, "*I wonder how many advisers to us pastors today would have said: 'Pastor Piper, cannot you see your people are hurting? Cannot you come down out of the heavens and get practical? Do not you realize what kind of people sit in front of you on Sunday?'*" Some weeks later, however, he learned the story. The father of this young child took him aside after a Sunday service and said, "*John, these have been the hardest months of our lives. However, do you know what has gotten me through this? It is the vision of the*



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*greatness of God's holiness that you gave me the first week of January. It has been the rock we could stand on".*

The man of God is always driven by a clear confidence in God. Every believer is a reflection of their theology. Right now, today, this moment you are living out what you really believe about God. For instance, if you believe that God is a God of utter holiness who despises sin, then that belief is going to mandate and control the way that you live. If you believe that God disciplines wickedness and evil and immorality, then that belief is going to affect the way that you live. If you believe God to be a God of mercy and grace and love and tenderness and kindness and forgiveness, as indeed He is, that is going to dictate how you treat other people because you know that you can go to Him for forgiveness and find grace to help in time of your own personal need. For an individual to be forgiving, tenderhearted, and gracious to other people who have hurt them is a portrait of Christlikeness. It is what God has called us to and if we do not understand that simple truth then we do not understand what it means to be a Christian. [1 Corinthians 4:11-13](#) says,

**<sup>11</sup>To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. <sup>12</sup>And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup>being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.**

This was the most godly man on the planet speaking. [1 Peter 2:23](#), one of my most favorite verses in Scripture, says,

**<sup>23</sup>who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously**

Talking about an example to follow. This is Christlikeness.

Our theology about God, our thinking and understanding and knowledge of and belief in the nature of God is going to impact how we live. If you develop in your life a theology where God can tolerate sin, then you will tolerate sin. If you have a God who can tolerate mediocrity, then that is what you will give to Him – a spiritually mediocre life and one that has little to no impact. I graded a student's paper recently and I thought it reflected a very minimal effort on his part. So in my comments I told him that I thought his minimal efforts reflected something of his attitude about God and the ministry, and that somehow he seemed to think that excellence in the ministry did not require much and that if he submitted another paper of such poor quality that he would not pass the course. You see, if you have believe in a God who does not really care that much as to whether or not your life is invested in eternity, then that is exactly what you will invest your life in – this world, and ultimately nothing of any eternal value.

It is important to understand that what we know and what we really believe are two different things. Please understand that **it is what you really believe that affects how you live out your life**. So, all of our life is simply a reflection of our view of God. Just look at your life today. Where are you headed, what are you living for, what occupies your time and your heart? That is the real evidence and proof of what you really believe – what and who you are living for.



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### 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-21

<sup>17</sup>**Command** those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. <sup>18</sup>Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, <sup>19</sup>storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. <sup>20</sup>O Timothy! **Guard** what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—<sup>21</sup>by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.

Whenever studying a passage, one of the first things to look at are the verbs and the tenses of those verbs. They are the “action” words. They are the words that set the tone for what the writer wants to say. In this passage Paul uses two very strong words – “**command**” and “**guard**”. The first word “**command**” deals with what we do with **money** and what money does with us. The second word “**guard**” deals with what we do with **truth** and what truth does with us. The first word deals with how believers handle earthly treasures, and the second word deals with how they handle spiritual or heavenly treasures, how they handle the truth of God’s Word.

The word “**command**” here is a very strong word. God is not providing an option. He is commanding the teacher to teach and exhort on these things. This is a command that must be given to the rich in this age – which is us. So, Paul says “**command those who are rich**”. There is no command here to give it all away. There is no command here to take a vow of poverty. There is no command to become an ascetic and live on nothing. The command here is to deal with money in a way that honors Christ.

It seems that at the core of what Paul is saying that he is clearly communicating that believers are all stewards – both of their material wealth and their spiritual wealth. John MacArthur rightfully said in his commentary that “*how believers handle those two treasures is a measure of their spiritual maturity and devotion to Christ*”. Whatever it is that God has given to us – whether it is wealth or knowledge or time or whatever – at that moment we become stewards of what God has given to us. In reality, we live out our Christianity on the basis of how we handle our stewardship. How we handle our riches and how we handle the truth is in many ways the authenticating mark of the character and quality of our Christian faith and the measure of our Christianity.

It is interesting how much Paul actually talks about money in this chapter. It is like he cannot stop talking about it, and I would surmise the reason for that to be that there were some wealthy people in the Ephesian congregation who had not been good stewards of that wealth. There is no trial like affluence and prosperity. I certainly do not want to belabor the point, but all Americans are very rich by the world’s standards. You may be thinking, “*Well, I am not rich and I never will be.*” That is not true, though. Perhaps none of us are super rich like Bill Gates. However, by the world’s standards, in America we are very rich. Our homes have indoor plumbing, electricity, heat, and furniture. We own all kinds of appliances and we have nice clothes. Most of us own at least one car. Ninety three percent of the people in the world do not own a car. We enjoy clean drinking water and good food supplies, and we have access to the world’s best medical care.





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A member of my church may say to me, “*Well Gary, I will tell you what it is really like. By the time I pay our house payment and by the time I make the car payments and by the time I put clothes on my kids and put food on the table – there is just nothing left. There is always way too much month left at the end of the money.*” But you know what? They are all still rich. Why? It is because we choose to eat \$15 meals when we could eat \$4 meals. We choose to wear a different outfit everyday rather than one a week. We choose to buy new cars and trucks rather than used ones. Instead of just having a warm place where we can sleep and eat, we choose to have a furniture store that we call our home. These are all choices we make about the discretionary use of our money. Most of the time we choose to live at the highest level we can afford. If we can afford a nicer this or that, we get it. I am not eating a partial meal a day of bare minimum food, barely clothed, and barely sheltered and crying to God for my next day's provision. I was thinking about the story that Jesus told in [Luke 12:16-21](#) and one particular phrase in that passage,

**<sup>16</sup>Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup>And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup>So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”” <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ <sup>21</sup>“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”**

The real issue is whether I am “**rich toward God**”. If we are going to be “**rich toward God**”, then obviously we have to guard against the dangers of riches. Paul says that they can cause anyone to be “**haughty**” or proud (v17). The word “**haughty**”, or “**high-minded**”, comes from “*hypsēlophroneō*”, a compound Greek word made up of “*hupselos*” that means to exalt or be lofty, and from “*phroneo*” which means to think. I.e., to exalt yourself in your mind, to think highly of yourself, to be exalted in your own mind about yourself.

Sometimes, unfortunately, we tend to look down on people who may be lower on the economic ladder than we are. In an unassuming way, we become like the priest and the Levite who “**just passed by on the other side**”. We know that we may be smarter than them and have more than them, and in a very subtle way we just kind of do not notice them. Rich people have a way of flaunting their wealth – they drive BMWs, wear a lot of expensive clothes, shop in the best stores, eat at the expensive restaurants, and live in the gated communities. It is like Paul says “*Do not live that way, do not be haughty, and do not live with a superior attitude that makes others appear to be less than you. It is unbecoming and not Christlike.*” [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) says,

**<sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.**

Secondly, riches can cause a believer to not put their trust in God. V17 puts it this way,

**...nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God.**



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That phrase simply means that the more we have, very often the more inclined we are to trust in what we have and not in God. We become self-sufficient rather than dependent on God. [Philippians 2:3](#) gives us what is best,

**<sup>3</sup>Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**

No wonder Jesus spoke these words in [Matthew 19:23-24](#),

**<sup>23</sup>Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”**

The tendency is when you have a lot, you trust in a lot. However, when you have little, you trust in God. One of the benefits of just having enough to live on is that you actually become dependent on God to make a provision, and when He provides it you rejoice in it with thankfulness. One of the reasons that so many Christians are so smug and so apathetic and so cold about their Christianity is simply because they really do not need God that much. They have replaced God with their bank account, with their 401K, and with their financial investments. [James 5:1-5](#) says,

**<sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! <sup>2</sup>Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. <sup>4</sup>Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.**

[1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) says,

**<sup>9</sup>But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

If a man is not right with God, then he simply is not ready for the future and he is not prepared for what is to come. All of his riches, and all of his ideas, and all of his goals will fade into utter nothingness on the day that he meets the living God. The richest man in the world will die and face God – and nothing that he possesses will be of any eternal benefit for him at that moment. Most of us need to loosen our grip on earthly things and tighten our grip on Christ. If our happiness or hope is tied up with things, we will be a nervous wreck trying to protect them. However, if our trust and hope is in God, then we can rightly enjoy what He allows us to have, but let things go if He takes them away. If you have something you cannot live without, you do not own it - it owns you.



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In v18, Paul says to simply “**be rich in good works**”. Do good things for people, do things that help people, and do things that make their life meaningful. He says to “**be ready to give**” and to “**be willing to share**” with others what you have. [Titus 3:14](#) says,

**<sup>14</sup>And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.**

A number of years ago, some Gallup polls were taken and what they found was that the more that families made, the less they actually gave proportionately. As their income would rise, people would give less proportionately. For instance, households earning under \$10,000 gave away 5.5 percent (\$550) and those making \$50,000 to \$60,000 gave away 1.7 percent (\$1020).

George Mueller founded an orphanage that grew to over 2,000 children. What was so unusual about his efforts was that he never solicited funds, except in prayer to God – not once. He simply prayed to God to provide and God provided. However, one aspect of Mueller’s success with God was that he lived very simply and generously gave away vast sums of money to missions. In 1874, for example, he received for personal income from donations the equivalent of \$310,000 in today’s money. That was an enormous amount of money in those days, and if he had chosen to, he could have lived very lavishly. However, he and his family lived on the equivalent of \$25,000 and gave away the rest. So, he lived on 8% of his income and gave away 92%. Beginning in 1870, George Mueller personally fully supported 20 missionaries with the China Inland Mission. Between the years 1831-1885, he gave away 86 percent of his income to the Lord’s work! God funneled it in the top, but Mueller kept the bottom open, never hoarding it or squandering it on his personal luxury. He was what Paul described here as being “**rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share....**”

The phrase “**ready to give**” literally means to be generous, to be liberal in our giving. Do you want to know why too often we are not very generous? It is because we do not really trust God! We think that we have got to cover all the bases, all of the possible contingencies and unforeseen events and emergency possibilities that may be out there, and so we are afraid to give because we do not really trust that God will meet our needs.

Another reason that we too often do not give generously is because we are sloppy and careless with our resources, irresponsible in our spending, and impulsive when it comes to buying. We get caught up with the American dream and consumerism. We think that we need more stuff and we need it right now. So, we spend money we do not have on stuff we do not need.

Now, someone is going to ask the question, “*Well, then how much should I give.*” Well, I cannot tell you what you should give. The New Testament says that God simply “**loves a cheerful giver**”. The tithe is an Old Testament starting point, and is probably a good starting point for a New Testament believer. However, for me personally, I think it is where you build from, not where you build to. [1 Corinthians 16:2](#) says,

**<sup>2</sup>On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.**



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I.e., give as God has prospered you – whatever that may be. Many Christians are just throwing minor tokens at God, a little here and little there as long as it does not interfere with their life style and high standard of living. It is a conscience soothing kind of thing. Honestly, no matter what we think of ourselves, we know virtually nothing about sacrifice and sacrificial living. We would go crazy if we had to live without some of the things that we are addicted to. Can you imagine not having a cell phone or computer? The vast majority of people in the world do not own either. [2 Corinthians 9:6-8](#) says,

**<sup>6</sup>But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.**

Now, once again, this is not some plea for you to give more money to your church. It is just Scripture that all believers need to heed in a God-honoring way and let God deal with them in this vital area of our lives. In v19, Paul says,

**<sup>19</sup>storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**

We all know that we will die and face eternity. So, in very practical terms, we only have so many years to be storing up treasures in heaven. It would be short-sighted and foolish to live well here, but to have no regard for what lies ahead. We all leave our earthly money here, and we take our spiritual good deeds there. Literally, we store up eternal treasures by giving earthly resources. It is a kind of spiritual oxymoron.

I guess the questions that we have to ask at this point are really very simple.

Do we view all that we have as belonging to God, or to ourselves?

Do we view ourselves as a steward, as a manager of God's resources, and someone who is accountable to Him for how we handle all He that entrusts to us?

Do we evaluate our income, our possessions, and our spending in light of God's purposes and God's glory?

Is our aim to become rich toward God?

How a believer views and approaches money and wealth is really a very critical gauge as to whether or not the gospel has really taken control of their heart. We could broaden the issue to not just be a money issue, but a stewardship issue. I.e., how do we handle all of the many things that God has blessed us with? Just because someone may call Him Lord does not mean that they live like He is Lord. Money is an important indicator as to whether He really is Lord. It is an inescapable spiritual reality.



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### 1 TIMOTHY 6:20-21

**<sup>20</sup>O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—<sup>21</sup>by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.**

What is important about all of this is that Paul was writing to a pastor, and much truth had been committed to him for the simple reason that he could clearly communicate that truth back to others. Timothy was Paul's protégé and disciple, and had spent nearly 15 years with Paul. We could surmise that in that time frame that Paul had committed a great deal of truth to Timothy and did not want his efforts to be wasted. So, he ends his first letter by encouraging Timothy to guard what had been committed to him. The word "**guard**" relates specifically to protecting something that has great value associated with it – and in the case of the context of this entire letter, what Timothy is to "**guard**" is the truth. He is told the same thing in [2 Timothy 1:13-14](#),

**<sup>13</sup>Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.**

The same language of [1 Timothy](#) is being repeated in [2 Timothy](#). He ends [1 Timothy](#) with these words about guarding and then begins his second letter with the same idea. Paul is calling on Timothy to hold fast to the truth and to sound doctrine, and to hold fast to the standard of sound words that he had received. He wants him to hold fast to the all of the content of the Christian faith. Paul is very emphatic in saying, "*Timothy, value that truth. Protect that truth. Defend that truth. Retain that truth.*" The Christian message is not something which a pastor just works out for himself. To the contrary, Scripture is a divine revelation which has been committed to his care, and to which he is bound by a sovereign duty to pass on unimpaired to others. The words for "**committed to your trust**" refer to something that has been deposited with another for safe keeping. I.e., guard the deposit. It would be like leaving your children with someone else to keep them. You are giving them your treasure, and you want them to guard those little treasures with all of the diligence and carefulness possible. It is interesting here that Paul starts off this last exhortation with the words "**O Timothy**". It is like he is pleading with Timothy to hear everything that he is saying and has said. [Jude 3-4](#) says,

**<sup>3</sup>Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. <sup>4</sup>For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The word there for "**contend**" is "*epagonizo*". You might recognize the middle part of the word from where we get our English word "agonize". We have to fight for the truth, guard the truth, hold fast to the truth, and to handle it with extreme care and with extreme caution. There is really no place for creativity and imagination and personal ingenuity in preaching and teaching the Word. The Bible is not the pastor's message. The Scriptures are God's Word to His people, and those who teach it are to





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be a faithful steward of God's Word and are not to give it their own personal embellishments. In v20, Paul says,

**...avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge**

The word for “**avoiding**” means to go out of your way to stay clear of the things Paul mentions. The word “**profane**” is “*bebelos*” and literally means that these things are not sacred and have no relation to God's holiness. Timothy is to continually stay clear of them. False teaching is like spiritual gangrene.

A while back I chided some of my students at school on my comments on their papers that I had graded. I thought their approach to the writing assignment was minimal, lazy, and had no attention to detail. I do not know how to actually communicate this to others, but the most severe crime that a pastor can commit is to mishandle the word of God so that people are not able to see who God really is. In [2 Corinthians 2:17](#), Paul was speaking about his own ministry and said these words,

**<sup>17</sup>For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.**

Some of the translations say “**corrupting**” or “**adulterating**” the word of God. It comes from the root Greek word “*kapelos*” which means a huckster. However, the full meaning of the word literally means “to retail”, or using the Word of God for financial gain. It refers to men who use the Word of God to finance their own personal indulgences, and who manipulate the Word for their own personal gain. Adam Clarke in his commentary said about this verse that men “*corrupt the word; mingling with it their own inventions, and explain away its force and influence, so as to accommodate it to men of carnal minds.*” We cannot mingle the word of God with our human philosophy and traditions. It would be similar to adultery in a marriage, or mingling the marriage relationship with another person. A man who does so is unfit for the pulpit.

If you moved to another city and were looking for a church, I wonder what you would actually be looking for. Would it be certain children's programs, or senior adult programs, or a good nursery, or people that you could relate to or have fellowship with? Would it be the facilities, would it be how long the preacher preaches, would it be how many of your friends attended there? I wonder what criteria you would have in evaluating what kind of church to attend. To me, and I guess just because I am a pastor that I feel strongly about all of this, but to me the most meaningful attribute of a church is what do they do with the Scriptures? How do they handle the truth of God's Word? Do they even teach it? The emergent church movement is in the process of just giving people what they want, and in the process the truth almost becomes irrelevant. What does the church do with the Word of God – that is the question? In our context, do they guard it, and are they willing to protect and fight for the truth no matter what the cost? That is the question.

I do not want to teach on sanctification, but you can be assured that biblical error and the mishandling of Scripture will literally stop the sanctifying process in a believer's life. We know from [John 17:17](#) that a believer cannot be sanctified apart from the truth, and they cannot grow in holiness and



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Christlikeness apart from the truth. It is spiritually impossible. So, if what you receive from the pulpit is mishandled, then in essence it is not the Word of God. You must know what Scripture says, and what it means by what it says. The meaning of Scripture is the Scripture. I.e., if you do not have the meaning, then you do not have Scripture. You might use the correct word, but have the wrong meaning. If that is the case, then you do not have the Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is the Scripture.

There is not one single ounce of virtue in exposing yourself to erroneous teaching. In fact, you should avoid anything that diminishes the truth in any way. People cannot be saved apart from the truth and people cannot be sanctified apart from the truth. So, what should a church do? It should always preach and teach the truth. If the truth is not taught, then genuine salvation will not occur and genuine sanctification will not occur. I was thinking about how many times in this epistle that Paul addresses the issues of false teachers and false teaching. In fact, when you look at the qualifications for elders, of which the pastor is one, the only qualification not character related is that the man has to be able to teach. It is the only skill identified. I.e., that is his primary role – to guard, to protect, to accurately teach and preach. That is the sacred trust - the individual is to be skilled in teaching.

So, if I was looking for a church and the pastor was just a story teller, someone who only gave me little spiritual tidbits and elementary ABC principles all the time, I would look somewhere else. Why? It is because the primary purpose of the pulpit is to take believers to spiritual maturity, and not simply to maintain a low level of teaching that never challenges them in their faith. Many of the emergent churches are built around “home groups”. I certainly am NOT against people studying the Word of God collectively in their homes. That is a wonderful thing. However, what I am against is the de-emphasis on strong preaching and the simple fact that there are not to be many teachers among us. [James 3:1](#) clearly teaches that there are NOT to be many teachers in the church.

**<sup>1</sup>My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.**

What the emergent church has casually developed are hundreds of home groups, and I can assure you that many of the people that “lead” those groups are not qualified to actually teach the Word of God, and very often the content of the home group is more “discussion” with everyone giving an opinion about a particular verse. So many of the group leaders simply are not teachers, and not men or women who really study the Word of God. So the ultimate result is that people just never get fed the Word of God. They have good camaraderie, and good fellowship in the home – BUT THEY NEVER GROW. Why? It is because they are not really being taught by someone qualified to teach. Here would be my twofold caution in the case of home groups: (1) Do not have many teachers, and (2) make sure that the person leading is qualified to teach. Those are very simple guidelines and will help protect the church from becoming spiritually stunted in their growth and development. Unfortunately, many of the churches base their development of home churches on [Acts 2:46](#),

**<sup>46</sup>So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,**



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But it must be remembered that at this time in the history of the church that there was no church, there was no teaching on the church, and there were no elders, deacons, and pastors. It was just the apostles. There were no church buildings, and so they had to go into the home setting.

I am certainly not trying to set up the pastor or elders as the only legitimate teachers in a church. That is not the issue here. We are definitely not interested in becoming the Catholic Church over again. The problem that the Roman Catholic Church has had all during its history is that it has effectively taken the Word of God from the laity and from the average guy in the congregation, and placed it exclusively in the hands of the clergy. However, having said that, Scripture is still clear that there just simply are not to be many teachers among us – and there is a specific Scriptural reason for that or God would not have placed it in his Word. We clearly know from Scripture that everyone is commanded to study the Word of God, to seek out the truth, and to grow in their understanding of truth. However, not everyone is commanded to teach or preach at a congregational level. For instance, every father is to be a priest in his home and is to bring the Word of God to his family. However, not every father is to be a teacher in the church.

I am convinced that as a Christian that I must be counter-cultural. However, at the same time, in the Sardis / Laodicean church age in which we live, there are times when we also have to be counter-cultural in a church sense. Jesus told both of those churches that they were dead! Many churches have become so culturally relevant that they are now biblically irrelevant. Many people are just struggling with the immaturity and almost juvenile behavior of their church. Everything is always on a superficial level, and rather than being a foundation to the church, it seems that sound doctrine and genuine biblical teaching has actually become a threat to the church. Mature doctrinal teaching is not what many people are looking for in a church. It becomes too demanding.

The church is the pillar and ground or foundation of the truth. The church is to uphold the truth. I would never go to a church that treated the Word of God rather casually. Personally, I would not even consider a place like that to be a true church – just a religious organization only having some minor social value, but certainly no spiritual virtue. A church is not a place where you can mishandle, misinterpret, or misuse the Word of God – and certainly not a place where the Word of God is de-emphasized. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth! The church is like a safe deposit box for the truth – a place where it can be guarded and protected and defended. Believers should be so jealous for and so protective of the truth that they would immediately defend it when someone was dishonoring it.

Without the Scriptures we really do not have anything. However, to have the Scriptures and not handle them faithfully is reprehensible, scandalous, and immoral. The Scriptures tell us who God is, what God has done to save us, what God is going to do in the future, and what God requires of each one of us. This is not something that we can just casually give our attention to or frivolously ignore. I hope that you appreciate and that you fully realize and understand that the Bible that you have contains the most sacred words ever spoken. My task is to guard the truth, to clearly communicate the truth to you and for you. However, if a man does not guard the truth, then you can be assured that he will not properly communicate the truth.



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Paul has already told Timothy in [1 Timothy 4](#) that a great tendency of people is to move away from the truth, what he calls “departing” from the truth. Very often that tendency emerges when the pastor does not properly guard the truth. In Scripture there are cardinal truths that are non-negotiable. They are fixed and eternal. They cannot be tampered with in any way, and the moment that a church or a pastor casually tampers with the meaning, that very moment he creates an environment for people to move away from the true faith to another gospel. In [1 Timothy 4](#) the advancement of these false doctrines come from what Paul called “**deceiving spirits**” or demon spirits. So, we have demon spirits advancing demon doctrines in the church! Do you think that Paul is serious when he commands Timothy to guard the truth? [1 Timothy 4:13](#) and [16](#) says,

**<sup>13</sup>Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.**

**<sup>16</sup>Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.**

[1 Timothy 5:17](#) is just more of the same,

**<sup>17</sup>Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.**

That is our calling – to “**labor in the word**” and in the teaching of doctrine to the church. In [2 Timothy 2:15](#) Paul said,

**<sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

The phrase “**rightly dividing**” means to cut something straight. The Greek Interlinear Bible says “**to keep on a straight course**”. Strong’s says “to make a straight cut”. [Titus 1:9-11](#), just more of the same, says,

**<sup>9</sup>holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. <sup>10</sup>For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, <sup>11</sup>whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.**

[Titus 2:7](#),

**<sup>7</sup>in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,**

“**Incorruptibility**” – i.e., no corrupt doctrine. All of this is written to pastors who are to be an example to the flock. We are all to protect the truth, to guard the truth, and to hold fast the form of sound, doctrinal words. That is the foundational ministry of any pastor and of any church and of any committed Christian. May God help us to do what He has called us to do.