

LIVING LIFE, PLEASING GOD

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
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Let's Begin

A.W. Tozer once confessed it was the blessing from the Lord he sought and not the Lord. He wanted what God could give him but not God Himself. And, then all that changed. He wanted God more than what God could give. Tozer insisted such a change in perspective is the basic teaching of the deeper Christian life. He once said, "It is the willingness to let Jesus Christ Himself be glorified in us and through us. It is the willingness to quit trying to use the Lord for our ends and to let Him work in us for His glory."

Paul's one great focus was to live life to its fullest and please God while doing it. That captures well the last chapter in 1 Timothy. Paul explains two keys which make living life and pleasing God possible.

As we begin our study of 1 Timothy 6, let's follow the outline below:

- I. The First Key is Faithful Service (vv. 1-16)**
- II. The Second Key is Fulfilling Service (vv. 17-21)**

I. The First Key is Faithful Service (vv. 1-16)

Being a believer means more than what happens on Sunday morning. The Christian is transformed inside out, and consequently every sphere of his or her life is affected. Sometimes the change is radical; sometimes it affects only minor aspects of our lifestyle. Whatever the case is, one thing is for sure: followers of Jesus Christ do more than attend church on Sundays.

The Apostle Paul speaks of pleasing God and living life to its fullest. He writes, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort" (vv. 1-2).

First, we must observe *faithful work*. Paul reminds us we are "under the yoke." A Christian is but a slave to the Lord Jesus. The term "yoke" referred to a literal slave in first century times.

Indeed slavery was a burning social issue at the time. When a slave became a believer in Christ, it immediately caused issues. Since they were free in Christ, were they not also free in society? If so, should slaves revolt against their masters? However, if they revolted against their masters, a deeply embedded social institution would collapse. Rome would never allow it. Hence, they would exterminate the present slave population and bring in "uninitiated" slaves, retraining them to the social institution. Even so, the Christian slaves who revolted could make it illegal for slaves to become Christians. Issues like these were on the mind of the Apostles during the first century.

We thank our Lord today slavery is not an issue. Freedom not only is Biblically derived, freedom also is written within our constitution. Nevertheless, the principles Paul reveals concerning masters and slaves are applicable to the relationship between employers and employees. Hence, Paul refers to count "masters" worthy of "honor." In other words, our employer (represented by our immediate supervisor) is deserving of the utmost respect. No Christian should go to work and purposely give his or her boss a hard time.

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Reflection Connection

How is your relationship to your supervisor at work? Is it strained or intense? Why or why not?

On the other hand, “believing masters” must never despise the working man. No productivity could exist without the lowest man or woman on the “totem pole” at work. If the job is worthy enough to merit a paycheck, it is worthy enough to deserve praise and commendation. To think or behave otherwise is to fail in rendering faithful service.

Harmful words are a blight upon any relationship, including the relationship between employer and employee. Paul’s ideal was “wholesome” words and “godly doctrine” (v. 3). In fact, the Apostle counseled Timothy to shun those who speak perversity. He writes, “He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (vv. 4-5). Teaching is intended to produce a better life, designed to produce right living. Harmful words produce “doting,” a term meaning to be sickly in mind.

Not only do *harmful words* make faithful service to the Lord difficult, Paul also mentions *deceitful wealth* as a hindrance to faithful service, a theme he will pursue again in the final section (vv. 17-21). He contrasts two lifestyles as options for believers: *contentment* and *covetousness*. He writes, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (vv. 6-8).

Pertaining to *contentment*, the key phrase is “godliness with contentment.” The word translated “contentment” means “self-contained” or “self-sufficient.” While it sounds like Paul is commending being self-

reliant or self-dependant, an idea foreign to living a life God-dependent, he certainly is not (cp. Phil. 4:11). Rather, Paul is simply advocating the simple life. In other words, a Christian is content when he or she can be fulfilled in proportion to the things he or she can live without.

Paul speaks plainly on the lifestyle opposite *contentment*—the life of *covetousness*, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (vv. 9-10). To the covetous-laden person, making money or obtaining wealth becomes an end in itself. Accumulation is the aim of one’s life.

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Yet, according to Paul, money is deceptive. It promises what it cannot deliver—*contentment*. Real contentment is not obtained by the addition of things but rather the subtraction of things. Losing desires for more leads to the contented Christian life. The only exception to this is, never losing one's desire for more and more of Jesus.

Finally, Paul explains two principles which make understanding the key to faithful service easier. *First, he explains three imperatives to being persistent to faithfully serve the Lord.* He writes, "But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (vv. 11-12). Initially, the faithful servant is to *flee* those things which deter faithfulness (cp. 1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 10:14). Some things stand in our way, things from which believers should never run (cp. Neh. 6:11). On the other hand, some things demand our getting away as fast as we can! (Gen. 39:12)

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Next, Paul counsels the faithful servant to *follow* persistently in faithfully serving the Lord. We must eagerly pursue our goal in honoring Christ with our service. Last, the faithful servant must be prepared to *fight*. We contend as an athlete (cp. 2 Tim. 4:7). However, our war is not with people but with our "adversary, the devil" (cp. Eph. 6:10ff; 1 Pet. 5:8).

Second, Paul explains four incentives to being purified to faithfully serve our Lord. Paul writes, "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 13-14). In the beginning, we are motivated by Christ's *first* appearing. He came to put away sin by His personal sacrifice (Heb. 9:26-28; 2 Tim. 1:10). Jesus stood firm "before Pontius Pilate" offering a "good confession." Faithful servants live a life as a true witness for the Lord. When we profess Jesus before men, we are doing what He did for us.

Next, Paul refers to His *final* appearing. One day, Christ will make a glorious manifestation of Himself from the heavens (Titus 2:13; 2 Tim. 4:8). Third, Paul speaks of the Immortal One (v. 16a). Immortality is the direct opposite of death. The Lord has immortality and gives it to all who trust in Him (John 5:26; 1 Cor. 15:52-53). Finally, He is the Invisible One (v. 16b). Paul describes Him as the One "no man hath seen, nor can see." He is the One Whom we serve faithfully!

II. The Second Key is Fulfilling Service (vv. 17-21)

Paul first dealt with *faithful service* to the Lord as a key to living life to its fullest while pleasing God. We must remain persistent and trustworthy in all we do for Him. Now the Apostle is concerned with the nature of the service itself. In other words, we must faithfully serve, doing the right work, *fulfilling* work to the Lord.



Only then will the door be opened to a life lived to its fullest while pleasing God in the process.

Therefore, Paul lays a foundation for genuine, fulfilling service—or, true riches—through which believers faithfully serve our Lord while fully pleasing God. In doing so, he mentions three levels of riches. The Apostle writes, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (vv. 17-19).

First, Paul deals with *material* riches. He identifies those who are “rich in this world.” Believers must be aware of these kinds of riches. Why? Because we may be rich one day and poor the next! These riches are inherently fickle. In addition, material riches are easy to *abuse*. Paul describes this abuse as being “highminded,” which, simply put, is pride-filled. Instead we must seek humility. And, we are to seek humility with caution. We must not place trust in material riches.

Even so, we should avoid extreme conclusions regarding what Paul does not suggest. Wealth is not a sin in itself. Instead we are to be faithful stewards with God’s gracious blessing upon our lives, storing up in advance for abundance in heaven.

Second, Paul deals with *spiritual* riches. He writes, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith...” (vv. 20-21a). *Spiritual* riches are the second level of riches with which Paul deals. Those with *spiritual* riches may lack most *material* riches (cp. Prov. 13:7; Luke 16:11).

In other words, it is possible to be poor in material wealth but rich in spiritual wealth. Believers are to “keep” what God commits or “deposits” under his or her care and “avoid” the “profane and vain.” Gnosticism was a first century sectarian group which made influential headway in the early church. Both Paul and John dealt with them at length. “False knowledge” was their trademark. However, true spiritual wealth was about Jesus not about “secret” knowledge only for an elite group.

Level three riches are *eternal* riches. The best is yet to come! The “riches of His grace” constitute God’s riches at Christ’s expense. In addition, *eternal* riches include *saving* grace (cp. Eph. 2:8-9) on the one hand and *satisfying* grace on the other (cp. 2 Tim. 2:1).

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Reflection Connection

Reflect for a moment on your understanding of riches. Do you feel you have a healthy view of riches? Explain. Does the church place proper balance on riches from a Biblical perspective? Why or why not?



Golden Greek Nugget

Paul affirmed to Timothy that “godliness with contentment is great gain” (v. 6). The Greek term translated “gain” is *porismos* and means “a providing” or “an acquisition.” It was used of financial profits and/or wages earned. Being content to live godly lives remains a spiritually profitable pursuit even today.

Wrap Up

Paul’s concern for Timothy focused on his living life to its fullest while pleasing God to the max. Keeping life balanced in such a way made two principles non-negotiable: serving faithfully and serving with a sense of fulfillment. May our Lord give us all the power to live life to its fullest while pleasing Him every step of the way.

