

GUARDIANS OF THE MINISTRY

1ST TIMOTHY 6:2-10

Notes on

1 Timothy 6:2-10

In this section, two groups are brought into view: the false teachers (again) and the Christian poor. Paul has already revealed much about the false teachers—enamored with trivial myths, self-promoting liars, hypocritical opponents of Christ's Gospel, conscienceless justifiers of immoral practice... Now he offers a few additional insights to help identify and refute such forceful and dangerous influencers of the Church. And his remarks lead him then to discuss the Christian's relationship to material things like food, clothing, shelter and money...

v.6:2b - Teach and urge these things... This phrase looks back to all that Paul has said thus far in his letter. It also looks forward to the things he is about to say... What Paul says to Timothy, Timothy is to teach to the church, and he is to do so not merely for their knowledge and intellectual understanding. He is to urge their obedience. I am reminded of Jesus' Great Commission command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to *observe* all that I have commanded you." Obedience and not mere exposure is the rightful goal...

v.3 - different doctrine... A sharp contrast is drawn between the teaching Timothy is to be doing and that characteristic of the false teachers which is in conflict with both the **sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ** and teaching that is consistent with and encourages **godliness**... This is a good two-part test for us regarding sound teaching:

1) Historical/Theological Test: Is it consistent with what Jesus said and did? And 2) Ethical Test: Does it encourage me to do what is right and good? Along these lines, Paul indicates that what the false ones are teaching leads them to be...

v.4-5 - ...puffed up with conceit... full of unfounded pride for to the extent such a teacher disagrees with Jesus, he actually **understands nothing**... Paul then adds that such folks have a divisive affect on others... They love to create **controversy**, and fuel **quarrels**. It is like someone who gratuitously stomps on an ant hill to watch the ensuing

False Teachers and True Contentment

Teach and urge these things. ³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

- 1 Timothy 6:3-10



formicidaen chaos, and it produces a variety of relationship-damaging results: **envy** (resenting what others have), **dissension** (spirit of competition and strife), **slander** (verbal abuse of those perceived to be opponents), **evil suspicions** (allowing no room for trust upon which healthy relationships are always built), and **constant friction** (the fruit of all of these: endless discomfort between people)... These false teachers are, and encourage others to be, **depraved in mind** (twisted in their thinking) and **deprived of the truth** (actively separating themselves from the real Jesus & His real life-giving message)...

Here is another good test for sound teaching: Does it tend to unite or divide God's family?... Finally, the false teachers are in it for the money, thinking (erroneously) that **godliness is a means of gain**... In their day (before there were big book, television and advertising companies), traveling teacher/philosophers made a living by going from town to town and, for pay, dazzling people with their clever ideas

and skillful presentations... These opponents of Timothy, Paul & Jesus seem to have been following this model. If they can convince people of the extraordinary God-inspired-and-blessed nature of themselves and their words, they can then pry their money away from them. *They don't care about godliness itself, but only in what it can get for them.* This spirit has dogged the church throughout its history and into the present day...

v.6 - ... In a brilliant turn of phrase, Paul next asserts that **godliness with contentment is**, in fact, **great gain!**... Same words, opposite meaning! Thus, he begins his word to the Christian poor... Godliness is gain. Great gain. As long as we

understand the gain to be spiritual, in relationship to God and other people, rather than financial, in relationship to things of the world. And Paul adds the key component of *contentment*. This was an important ideal within Stoic philosophy (by which they meant a carefully-crafted self-sufficiency in thought and attitude that left one impervious to the uncontrollable realities of life circumstances). For the Christian, this sufficiency is found in Christ and not in self...

v.7 - Then Paul contrasts two different kinds of poor people—the *contented poor* and the *covetous poor* (using John Stott's phrases)... First, he reminds us that **naked** (physically, financially & otherwise) is how we both enter and exit this world (see also Job 1:21 & Ecclesiastes 5:15).

v.8 - food and clothing... the word for “clothing” here (*skepmasma* in Greek) means “covering” and so would likely include the basic need of shelter/housing... With such necessities, those who are poor will be rich with blessings for they will be the *contented poor*. Luxuries are not needed, and so not worthy of our preoccupation with them... It is important to note that this is not a passage hailing poverty, anti-human austerity or flesh-denying asceticism as the goal for “real, committed, truly spiritual, followers of Christ.” Poverty is not good for us or for our neighbor: Contentment is. The goal is contentment, and the enemy is not money or possessions in general but materialistic idolatry and covetousness. (One hastens to add that these enemies are extremely powerful and clever and will use even this previous sentence in service of their godless and debilitating goals!)

vv.1 - Now Paul turns to the *covetous poor*... They **desire to be rich**, and so lower themselves into a pit of deception, destruction and despair... What happens to people who possess and cling to such desire? They have an unhealthy and unsatisfiable addiction. The entirety of God's Word gives consistent warning against such materialistic addiction.

Adam & Eve. Achan. The Rich Young Ruler. Judas. Ananias & Sapphira. The money-driven person falls **into temptation, into a snared, into many senseless and harmful desires**... Promising greater freedom and power, the desire for more (always more) money actually robs us of our power, debilitates us. Senseless and harmful? A wealthy person I knew included a daily visit to her bank in her daily activities—Every day—to check on the current health of her sizable accounts. What a life. She is gone now, and she left entirely “naked,” financially speaking. Those who desire get rich never arrive it seems. They also fall into **senseless and harmful desires**... And where does all his lead? **Ruin and destruction**... Paul may well have two kinds of calamity in mind here: ruinous disaster in this life and the eternal destruction of hell in the next. Taking the bait and driving toward the false promises of material wealth beyond what we now possess, striving vainly for material gain, we end up with “total loss, the loss of our integrity and indeed of ourselves” (Stott, p.152). Jesus asked: *What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?* (Mark 8:36)

v.10 - Finally, what motivates people toward such foolishness? **The love of money** which Paul says is the **root of all kinds of evil**... This is a famous phrase which is more often than not misquoted as “Money is the root of all evil.” This is not true. Money is not behind everything evil, just a lot of them (like cheating, lying, fraud, envy, hatred, violence, murder...) and money itself is neutral, simply a means of bartering for goods and services. (Much of our money still says “IN GOD WE TRUST” which is a very good thing to put on our money!). The problem is **love of money** which is idolatry—putting something from His created world into the place only God belongs: the place of ultimate glory, worship, affection and allegiance. We count on our God for our real health and salvation: Never money!

Read & Reflect - 6:2-10

First Reading: How would you put the main idea of this passage into one sentence?

Search & Consider

6:2b - What is the difference between “teaching” something and “urging” it? Why are both ideas important here?

6:3-5 - Who is Paul talking about here? What has he already said about them (see 4:1-3)? What new insights does he add now?

What leads a person down this path of false teaching and opposition to Jesus and His Gospel?

What is the goal of such a false teacher? What good is godliness to him? What does he want to gain?

6:6-8 - How is the person commended in these verses different from the one described in verses 3-5?

What kinds of “gain” does godliness bring?

Why is the idea of contentment important for us? Why is it better than money?

6:9-10 - What sorts of things happen to people who make the acquisition & accumulation of money their goal & heart’s desire?

Apply

When you think about money, what feelings do you find rising up within you?... Anxiety? Envy? Regret? Despair? Anger? Indifference? Thankfulness? Joy?... Why do you think your heart and mind react this way?

What might you advise a person to do to find a greater sense of contentment in his/her life?

For Small Group Discussion - 1 Timothy 6:2-10

- A. **OPENER...** If money were no object, what would you most like to acquire for yourself and/or your family?
- B. **1 TIMOTHY 5:1-6:2...** Share your Personal Study Guide answers above... As time permits you may want to reflect together on these questions as well...
 1. Which of the characteristics of money listed on the back page do you find most frightening? Why?
 2. Share your thoughts on the statement below from the Evangelical Committee to Simple Lifestyle (1980)?

A FINAL THOUGHT...

“We resolve to renounce waste and oppose extravagance in personal living, clothing and housing, travel and church buildings. We also accept the distinction between necessities and luxuries, creative hobbies and empty status symbols, modesty and vanity, occasional celebrations and normal routine, and between the service of God and slavery to fashion.

Where to draw the line requires conscientious thought and decision by us, together with members of our family.”

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Money Unmasked

By our disciplined, premeditated and sacrificial financial giving, we reveal our true identity (“a people belonging to God”), we honor our God, and we answer the question “*Who or what do you love?*” Our best answer is this: *We love our wonderful, saving Lord whom we could never out-give.* And as we make this wise declaration by our generous giving as stewards of the resources He has entrusted to us, we are also making two corollary affirmations: 1) *We love and are dependent upon God alone and not any other would-be gods.* (This would be idolatry.) And 2) *We do not love and are not dependent upon money and things.* As we will see, keeping our distance from money is very wise.

As with everything else God owns, money (“our” money) serves us best when it is treated as a tool for accomplishing God’s purposes and bringing Him glory and not allowed to become a distracting and debilitating desire of our own hearts.

Seven Things Money Is... Besides Attractive! (1 Timothy 6:3-10)

1. Money is... **INFLATIONARY** (Presumptuously Attractive/Distractive) (read 1 Timothy 6:5)

This is the essence of this message: **Money is a means (tool) and not an end! (heart’s desire).** But money masquerades as an end and tempts us to presume that things of much greater value (like godliness!) are merely means to use to acquire it... “*He’s a man of means...*” This is an informative phrase. It means that this man has money. But notice: The phrase isn’t “*He’s a person of ends!*” (This would be much better, and you and I can be men or women of “ends” with or without money!) Something we can be that is much better than “financially rich?” How about *godly* (imitating God... loving, giving!... God pleasing...)? And how about *content!*? These are “riches” indeed!

2. Money is... **ADDICTIVE** (Insatiably Attractive/Distractive) (6:6 & 8)

Money, by itself, does not tend to be a good means to contentment, but often it proves to be the opposite! (addictive!) How much is enough money?... Like with all addictive things, the answer is MORE! My favorite sign at a local sandwich shop: “The gap between ‘enough’ and ‘more’ never closes.” Addiction is the thirst for which there is no water, so we must keep drinking more and more dirt.

3. Money is... **EARTHBOUND** (Restrictively Attractive/Distractive) (6:7)

“You can’t take it with you,” they say. What can you take with you? Character... True Identity.. Faith... Hope... Love... Can we buy any of these things with money? Even the Beatles know the answer to that one... “*I don’t care too much for money. Money can’t buy me love!*” What are we spending our best efforts to get? Faith? Cash?

4. Money is... **DECEITFUL** (Dangerously Attractive/Distractive) (6:9a)

The story is told of clever traps used to catch monkeys. These “Monkey Traps” feature a colored bead placed inside a coconut chained to a tree. The coconut has a hole big enough for a monkey’s hand to go in flat and empty, but it is not big enough for its hand to come out as a fist grasping the bead. The monkey is stuck, but it will not let go of its prize. So it starves, and the hunter has another pelt or the farmer has exterminated another pest. Could money be like that for people like us? Does it turn us into “money monkeys?”

5. Money is... **DESTRUCTIVE** (Harmfully Attractive/Distractive) (6:9b)

We all know the story of King Midas, patron saint of the “Get Rich Quick Schemers.” There is also the more recent story of Hetty Green who in the Guinness Book of World Records is known as “The Worlds Greatest Miser.” She was too “frugal” to heat her porridge, but ate it cold every day. She wore the same plain dress every day. She had a son who had to have his leg amputated because of her delays in finding a “free” medical clinic. And she died in 1920 with something like \$190,000 in the bank, a great sum in those days! Putting her money first in her life, making sure, as a matter of first importance, that her wealth was maintained, brought tragic destruction to her life and made a fool of her.

6. Money is... **GENERATIVE** (Influentially Attractive/Distractive) (6:10a)

Other wrong things grow from the root of money-love, and like the root of a plant this love of money can remain hidden until something suddenly sprouts up. And all kinds of ugly, noxious weeds grow from this root. People will lie, cheat, steal, sacrifice their honor, betray their families or their countries, murder... to get the money they love.

7. Money is... **HELLBENT** (Infernally Attractive/Distractive) (6:10b)

“Pastor, I’m afraid this year I’ve made so much money, I can no longer afford to tithe (give 10% for God’s work in His Church).” Immediate prayer from the Pastor: “*Lord, help this man! Help this man, Heavenly Father. I ask you to reduce his income right away! Reduce it, so he can again be faithful to You!*” Our attitude toward and use of money is, like so many things, a spiritual matter, a spiritual battle. Forces for evil can and will use money, effectively use money!, to pull us from things that are good for us, things that make us healthier, things that make us whole. And so our own foolish love of money can cause us to wander from the faith, to wander from the One we need most – The Living God, the Saving Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit. And so, by our disciplined, premeditated & sacrificial financial giving we do some remarkably beneficial things for ourselves and model great wisdom and life-giving habits for one another. 1) We reveal, affirm and manifest our true identity (“a people belonging to God”). 2) We honor our God. And 3) We answer the question “*Who or what do you love?*” – Our Wonderful, Saving Lord whom we could never out-give – and we make those divinely-inspired corollary declarations: 1) *We love and are dependent upon God alone!* 2) *We do not love and are not dependent upon money & things!*

Thus we keep our distance from money. And this is very wise!

