

1 Timothy Devotionals

Devotionals and Sermons Illustrations

1 Timothy Various Sources

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1 TIMOTHY 1

1 Timothy 1:1 Christ Jesus Who is our hope... (see study of Believer's Blessed Hope)

1 Timothy 1:1 By the Will of God

Paul often referred to himself as 'an apostle by the will of God' (1Corinthians 1:1, 2Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, see note Colossians 1:1). In this case, however, he says, 'It's not just His will for me, it's His command that I am to be an apostle—one who is sent out, one who shares truth.'

The things that we have been commanded to do can sometimes become wearying when we find ourselves in situations we weren't anticipating—like prison. After all, it was from a Roman prison cell that Paul wrote to Timothy. And in this, I am reminded of another who found himself a prisoner...

'Oh, Lord, I cannot speak. I am but a child,' Jeremiah protested when called to minister.

'Before you were born, I knew you and ordained you to be a prophet,' the Lord replied. 'I will put My words on your lips—and you shall go.'

So Jeremiah did. And what happened? He eventually ended up in a dungeon.

'OK, Lord,' he said. 'Yes, You commanded me. Yes, You anointed me. But people aren't responding. No one is getting saved.'

So Jeremiah decided to quit prophesying, to quit sharing—until he realized that the Word of God was like fire in his bones and that he could not keep quiet (Jeremiah 20:9).

Maybe like Jeremiah, or perhaps like Paul, you feel imprisoned and are tempted to throw in the towel, to quit sharing the Gospel with people since none seem to respond. But if you do, the Word of God will burn in your heart as surely as it did in Jeremiah's, and, like Paul, you will realize you have no choice in the matter, for you are under the command of God. ([Courson, J. A Day's Journey: 365 Daily Meditations from the Word October 13. Santa Ana, CA: Calvary Chapel Publishing](#))

1 Timothy 1:1,12-17 Business Card By C. P. Hia

In some cultures, the title below your name on your business card is very important. It identifies your rank. The way you are treated depends on your title as compared with others around you.

If Paul had a business card, it would have identified him as an "apostle"

(1 Tim. 1:1), meaning “sent one.” He used this title not out of pride but out of wonder. He didn’t earn that position; it was “by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, his was not a human but a divine appointment.

Paul had formerly been a “blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” (v.13). He said that he considered himself to be the “chief” of sinners (v.15). But because of God’s mercy, he was now an apostle, one to whom “the King eternal” (v.17) had committed the glorious gospel and whom He had sent out to share that gospel.

What is more amazing is that like the apostle Paul we are all sent out by the King of kings to the world (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Let’s recognize with humility that we don’t deserve such a commission either. It is our privilege to represent Him and His eternal truth in word and in deed each day to all around us.

Let us go forth, as called of God,
Redeemed by Jesus’ precious blood;
His love to show, His life to live,
His message speak, His mercy give.
—Whittle

God gave you a message to share. Don’t keep it to yourself!

1 Timothy 1:1 Did you hear about the little boy who returned home after his first Sunday School class? His mother asked, “Who was your teacher?” and the little boy answered, “I don’t remember her name, but she must have been Jesus’ grandmother because she didn’t talk about anyone else.” Does our conversation reflect our love of Jesus? Would our words give away our relationship with him? (Leadership Magazine)

1 Timothy 1:5 Gutters And Windows

By Jennifer Benson Schuldt

While we were out for a family drive, a spotless white sign with perfect red lettering caught my attention: “Gutters and Windows—Quality Work Guaranteed.” The sign was pristine, but I feared the house and barn directly behind it might collapse at any moment. The paint was peeling, the windows were cracked, and the gutters were nonexistent!

Many of us “advertise” for Jesus, but our spiritual houses are in disrepair. We may attend church, speak in “Christianese,” and mingle nicely with others. But when our conduct does not align with our hearts, our first-class behavior is just a performance of piety. When Jesus confronted the Pharisees, He said, “You ... outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt. 23:28).

Jesus had a different but equally direct message for His followers: “Do not be like the hypocrites” (6:16). The Bible encourages us to “love from a pure heart ... and from sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). These inner attitudes should pour out through our words and actions (Luke 6:45).

Today, consider the state of your spiritual house. If people look beyond the beautiful outward display, will they discover an authentic heart?

Hypocrisy is a common sin That grieves the Lord above; He longs for those who’ll worship Him In faith and truth and love. —Bosch

God desires that our actions be a reflection of a pure heart.

1 Timothy 1:2 Safe Climbing

AMONG the safety rules mountain climbers must remember as they scale rocky cliffs is this: Keep three points on the rock. In other words, before you move a foot, make sure the other foot and both hands are firmly positioned on solid rock. And if you are going to move a hand, make sure your other hand and both feet are securely placed.

That’s a good safety tip for our spiritual lives as well. To keep from falling, we need to keep a grip on three rock-solid truths: grace, mercy, and peace, the words the apostle Paul often used to begin or conclude his letters.

The first message I heard Dr. M. R. DeHaan preach was part of a series of lessons called “Three Sisters of Salvation,” which were about these three words. I made up my mind then that I would make these three qualities part of my life.

We are given our salvation as a gift of God's grace. His wrath is withheld from us because of His abundant mercy. And His peace enables us to stand in quiet confidence when the howling gales of adversity swirl around us. They will give us security during our spiritual mountain climbing experience.

We can appropriate these gifts through prayer and obedience. In the storms of temptation we will not fall if we always keep three points on the Rock. —D C Egener ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

1 Timothy 1:2 Three Sisters

By M. R. De Haan

Grace, mercy, and peace are the three sisters of salvation. In these three words we have the gospel in capsule form. They sum up our complete salvation in Jesus Christ.

Grace is the foundation of our redemption, mercy is the manifestation of our redemption, and peace is the consummation.

Grace points to the past—our salvation goes back “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). Mercy speaks of the present—it is manifested to us day by day. And peace is the consummation because it makes our future secure.

Grace is receiving what we do not deserve. Mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. We deserve to go to hell, but by His mercy we shall never go there. We do not deserve to go to heaven, but by grace we'll spend eternity there. Grace justifies. Mercy pardons. Grace admits us to heaven. Mercy saves us from hell. The death of Christ was enough to pardon us in mercy, but it took the resurrection to effect our justification. He “was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

And now, by faith, we have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

[Our Lord] took death upon Himself

On that cruel cross of pain,

And those who look in faith to Him

Eternal life shall gain! —Johnson

None live so serenely, so pleasantly, and so triumphantly as those who walk by faith.

1 Timothy 1:1-7 A Change From Within

By Herbert Vander Lugt

On several occasions I have been encouraged when men I knew to be dishonest and immoral agreed to talk to me about their conduct. Yet each time I was disappointed at the outcome of our meetings.

In each situation the person said he believed in God and wanted to escape hell. Some rationalized by saying that everybody, even churchgoing people, are basically selfish. They do good only to be rewarded, and avoid evil only to escape punishment. Those who reasoned this way believed that because they sometimes were kind and gave generously to charitable causes, their chances of going to heaven were as good as those of the Christians they knew. One man vowed that he would do his very best to be more honest, moral, and kind. But like the others, he wanted to have eternal life without the forgiveness and inner change that only Jesus can give.

The apostle Paul told Timothy how to deal with religionists who focused on externals. He reminded him that the purpose of godly instruction is a life that reflects a radical inner change: “love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5).

Has God changed you from within? You can have a life-changing encounter with Jesus if you'll trust in Him.

How To Be Changed From Within

Admit that you are a sinner and turn from your sin.

Believe that Jesus died for you and rose from the dead.

Call on Him to be your Savior and Lord.

When God changes you, He works from the inside out.

1 Timothy 1:1, 2; Acts 16:1-5 Good Counsel

But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. - Philippians 2:22

The first seven chapters of Proverbs are believed to have been written by King David for his son Solomon. David was about to hand over the kingdom to his son, and he wanted to take the opportunity to share wise advice and counsel, exhorting his son to pursue wisdom and to live righteously.

This month we will study the books of 1 and 2 Timothy, letters written by the apostle Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy. In a similar way to Proverbs 1-7, Paul wants to pass along wise advice, helping to prepare Timothy for the ministry that he had been given.

It's likely that Timothy became a believer when Paul first passed through Timothy's hometown of Lystra on his first missionary journey (cf. Acts. 14:8-20), meaning that Paul was Timothy's spiritual father since he introduced Timothy to Christ. Although Timothy and his mother were believers, his father was not (Acts 16:1). Paul was a Christian mentor, entrusting ministry responsibilities to Timothy and viewing him as the successor to his own legacy of ministry. Paul and Timothy exemplified a father-son relationship through Christ that still provides a model for believers today.

Understanding this relationship provides the lens through which we can read and understand Paul's letter. First Timothy provides important and urgent instruction for the church, but it isn't a formal church document. Rather, it's a personal letter meant to cheer, instruct, and strengthen a young pastor-missionary. Although Timothy was certainly a man held in high esteem both by Paul and the churches in which they had ministered together (Acts 16:2-3), he was altogether "ordinary," just as we are. Young and timid, he needed Paul's encouragement (cf. 2Tim. 1:7). Raised by an unbelieving father, he didn't have the perfect Christian heritage we might expect. We learn how God often delights to work powerfully through the most unlikely candidates.

1 Timothy 1:3-11 What The Law Can't Do

By Haddon W. Robinson

Evangelist Fred Brown used three illustrations to explain the proper use of God's law. First, he likened the law to a dentist's mirror. With that little mirror he can spot cavities. But the dentist doesn't drill with the mirror. The mirror can reveal a cavity, but it can never repair it.

Brown then compared the law to a flashlight. If the lights in your home suddenly go out, you use a flashlight to guide you through the darkness to the electrical box. The flashlight enables you to see the blown fuse or tripped circuit-breaker, but you don't insert the flashlight in its place.

In his third image, Brown likened the law to a plumb line. A builder uses a weighted string to see if his work is properly aligned. If he discovers a mistake, he doesn't use the plumb line to correct it. He uses his hammer and saw.

The apostle Paul said, "We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8). The law of God reveals the problem of sin, but it doesn't provide a solution. The answer is found in Jesus Christ. He bore our guilt on the cross and now offers us new life. When we put our faith in Him as our personal Savior, He forgives us and enables us to live by His strength in ways that please Him. What the law can't do, Christ can. Have you asked Him to be your Savior?

For Further Study

What does Galatians 3 say about

our relationship to the law? (vv.11-14,24-25).

What can we learn about the law in Romans 8:1-4?

God's law pinpoints our problem; God's grace provides the solution.

1 Timothy 1:3-7 False Advertising

Stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer. - 1 Timothy 1:3

Someone has reinterpreted lines from employment ads. When the ad reads, "Join our fast-paced company," it really means, "We won't have the time to train you." If the ad boasts of a casual work atmosphere, perhaps it's because they don't pay enough for their employees to wear something nicer! And if the ad announces you need problem-solving skills, prepare to join some chaos!

Verse three from today's reading outlines Timothy's job description, but Paul doesn't use deceptive language. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus for an important mission. The problems in Ephesus were urgent and required a great deal of authority. Paul made the chain of command clear, invoking his apostolic authority at the beginning of the letter (v. 1) and conferring authority to Timothy over the elders of the Ephesian church. Paul doesn't give Timothy the job of suggesting solutions or collaborating towards agreement. Rather, Timothy had the task of "command[ing] certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer" (v. 3).

This first half of chapter one reveals the heart of the crisis in Ephesus. Certain men, presumably elders of the church, were teaching false doctrines. The content of their teaching had been both misleading and false (vv. 4, 6), with drastic results. They were undermining the essence of true Christian faith, which is first love for God and then love for others (v. 5, cf. Matt. 22:34-40). Because of this false teaching and the controversies it had produced, the members of the church spent more time arguing than loving God and loving each other.

The fact that they had lost sight of the goal of faith, especially of love for God, is proved by their abandonment of "a good conscience and a sincere faith" (v. 5). Without a proper love for God, we abandon our desire to obey Him. Our conscience quickly suffers from our betrayal. And without love for God, we no longer protect the revelation of God. We idolize our interpretations about God rather than pursue the truth of God.

1 Timothy 1:8-17 Sound Doctrine

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. - 1 Timothy 1:15

"I would have been less surprised if little green men had walked in," said Patrick Quinn, an editor for The Associated Press, of Farris Hassan's knock at his hotel door on Christmas Day, 2005, in Baghdad. The sixteen-year-old had traveled from Fort Lauderdale to Baghdad without his parents' knowledge or permission, all for a journalism assignment. Whether bravely or foolishly, he had traveled alone halfway across the world to a danger zone.

The Ephesian church also took a journey from the safety of sound doctrine to the minefields of false teaching. The journey hadn't taken long. About four years earlier Paul bid the Ephesian elders farewell (Acts 20:13-38) and warned them of the false teaching that would soon emerge within the church. Now his prophetic warnings were realized, and Timothy had to bring the church back to sound doctrine (v. 10).

It's helpful to see the contrast between sound doctrine and false teaching. The false teaching emphasized myths and genealogies, a focus on non-essential biblical ideas to the exclusion of important doctrines. The false teachers also improperly used the law, teaching that observance of the law was a means of righteousness.

To highlight these errors, Paul reminded Timothy about the essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not achieved by following the law. The law's proper use is for condemning us and pointing us to our need for a Savior. Paul admitted his own incalculable need for this grace. He was the sorriest of sinners. He desperately needed God's forgiveness for what seemed unforgivable: blasphemy and persecution. There was no hope of erasing his record, only hope for the patience and mercy of God through Christ Jesus (v. 16).

All preaching and teaching, all sound doctrine builds on this foundation of grace. It reminds us of our sin, our need for God, and His forgiveness made available through Christ Jesus.

My grandfather, my father, and his brothers were all tough men who, understandably, didn't appreciate people who "got up in their faces about faith." When my father, Howard, was diagnosed with a rapid and deadly cancer, I was so concerned that I took every opportunity to talk to him about Jesus' love. Inevitably he would end the discussion with a polite but firm: "I know what I need to know."

I promised not to raise the issue again and gave him a set of cards that shared the forgiveness God offers, which he could read when he wanted. I entrusted Dad to God and prayed. A friend also asked God to keep my dad alive long enough to know Jesus.

One afternoon the call came telling me Dad was gone. When my brother met me at the airport, he said, “Dad told me to tell you he asked Jesus to forgive his sin.” “When?” “The morning he passed,” Mark replied. God had shown him “mercy” as He had shown us (1 Tim. 1:16).

Sometimes we talk about the gospel, other times we share our story, still other times we just show a silent Christlike example, and always we pray. We know that salvation is ultimately a work of God and not something we can do for another. God is a gracious God, and no matter what the outcome of our prayers, He can be trusted.

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling—Calling for you and for me; Patiently Jesus is waiting and watching—Watching for you and for me! —Thompson We plant and water, but God gives the increase.

1 Timothy 1:12-19 The “Pistol” And The Lord

By Dave Branon

That’s okay with me. Children need good role models and examples. And Maravich was a Christian. But I would be disappointed if my children didn’t see Jesus Christ modeled in my life also and want to be like Him. That’s why when Stevie tells me that Jesus is his best friend, I’m a happy dad.

As parents, we must tell our children about Jesus and be role models who live for Christ. That was the case with Paul, who counted Timothy as his son in the Spirit (1 Tim. 1:18), and with John, who rejoiced over those whom he called his children (3 Jn. 4).

Like them, let’s live, talk, and love in a way that points everyone—especially our children—to Jesus.

Whatever you write on the heart of a child

Is written indelibly there;

Each action and word makes an impact, you know,

Like a kindness or beautiful prayer. —HGB

The greatest gift a parent can give is a worthy example.

1 Timothy 1:18-20 Two Movies

Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. - 1 Timothy 1:18-19

Two movies, A Perfect Storm and Titanic, tell of two very different historic shipwrecks. A Perfect Storm recounts the loss of a small fishing boat and its six-member crew; Titanic dramatizes the loss of the “unsinkable” ocean liner and the lives of 1,500 people. The crew of the Andrea Gail knew when they set sail from Gloucester, Massachusetts, in October that they could encounter unpredictable weather and potential storms. They knew there could be danger, and they took the risk. The crew of the Titanic sailed with confidence and feared nothing—until they hit the iceberg, and it was too late.

Paul wrote about another kind of shipwreck—the shipwreck of our faith, a prospect much more frightening than the fates of the Titanic and the Andrea Gail (v. 19). Two Ephesian leaders had already been shipwrecked (v. 20). Paul gives the reasons for their spiritual demise and encourages Timothy to avoid their pitfalls.

These men abandoned two essential things that preserve our lifelong commitment to Christ: “faith and a good conscience” (v. 19). Faith is the sound doctrine to which Paul referred earlier in the chapter (v. 10). In this context, faith refers to the essentials of our Christian beliefs, doctrines such as salvation by grace through Christ Jesus. Later in chapter three, we’ll see Paul flesh out even more the content of this faith (cf. 3:16), but already Paul has emphasized the crucial importance of faith, or right belief (1:4, 5, 14). What we believe really matters.

Alongside right belief is right behavior, or the actions that spring from a “good conscience.” Through the Holy Spirit, our conscience sounds the alarm when we’re wandering from God and His commands (1:6). Our right actions should flow from our right beliefs; these two elements work together in our lives.

That’s why Timothy is encouraged to keep fighting the good fight of the faith while holding onto both right belief and right behavior. We still face this very real battle even today.

1 Timothy 1:3-15 Computer Ethics

"We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully." - Matthew 6:34 (see note)

The Computer Ethics Institute has proposed 10 commandments for computer users. The laws include:

- . Thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people.
- . Thou shalt not snoop around in other people's computer files.
- . Thou shalt not copy or use proprietary software for which you have not paid.
- . Thou shalt always use a computer in ways that ensure consideration and respect for your fellow humans.

Many of us have had enough contact with computers to see the need for such rules. We may also realize, however, that merely publishing laws will not change human nature. Even the Law of Moses, which these principles imitate, was never able to change anyone's heart. No one can become good by keeping the commandments.

The Law's highest purpose is to show us God's perfect standards and our need for Christ. No one else has paid the price for our forgiveness. No one else enables us to love "from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5).

Christ doesn't change us by teaching us to keep the Law (Gal. 3:1-5). He transforms us by giving us a new heart. And that will affect even our use of computers. -- M R De Haan II

A changed life is the result of a changed heart. ([ibid](#))

1 Timothy 1:5 Safe Sailing - Stay on Course

When you set sail on the high seas, you need to know three important facts: your location, your destination, and your course. By referring to a map and using a compass, you can end up where you want to go.

The hard part comes in determining where you are at any given moment. Foul weather creates conditions that can sometimes confuse sailors. I heard about someone who set out across Lake Michigan from Milwaukee to Grand Haven. After sailing for 2 hours, trusting his own sense of direction, he spotted a large city on the horizon—Milwaukee! Somehow, thinking he was headed east, he had gone in a huge circle.

How does a follower of Christ stay on course and avoid spiritual shipwreck? By carefully reading and following the directions in God's Word, depending on the Spirit's leading, and listening to the wise counsel of Christian friends. —D. C. Egner.

To STAY ON COURSE, TRUST THE COMPASS OF GOD'S WORD. ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

1 Timothy 1:12-17 Not Good Enough

By David H. Roper

A friend told me recently of a young mother who was trying to explain her father's death to her 4-year-old. The girl wondered where Grandpa was. "I'm sure he's in heaven," the mother answered, "because he was very good." The girl replied sadly, "I guess I won't be in heaven." "Why not?" her mother asked in surprise. "Cause I'm not very good."

The story saddened me, as I'm saddened when I hear of others who believe they must be very good to get into heaven, especially since we all know deep down in our hearts that we're not very good at all.

Perhaps like this little girl you're thinking about your sins and asking, "What must I do to get to heaven?" The answer has already been given: Jesus, by His death, has paid in full the price of your sins, no matter how sordid, tawdry, or shameful they may be. Your salvation is free.

God promises, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). John Donne writes:

Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might,

That being red, it dyes red souls to white.

No one is good enough to get into heaven. Eternal life is a gift. Receive Jesus by faith.

The perfect righteousness of Christ

Is free to everyone,

But we by faith must take that gift

And trust God's precious Son. —D. De Haan

No one is good enough to save himself; no one is so bad that God cannot save him.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 Salvation of Sinners

This is a faithful saying ... that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

Thomas Bileny, an Englishman who died a martyr's death in 1531, described his salvation experience:

"My soul was sick and I longed for peace, but nowhere could I find it... But at last I heard of Jesus Christ. It was then, when first the New Testament was set forth by Erasmus, that the light came. I bought the book, being drawn by the Latin rather than by the Word of God, for at that time I knew not what 'the Word of God' meant. On my first reading I chanced upon these words, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' This one sentence through God's inward working did so light up my poor bruised spirit that the very bones within me leaped for joy and gladness. It was as if, after a long dark night, day had suddenly broke."

When people recognize the awful reality of their sin before a holy God, they may be overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness and despair. They cannot escape the fact that they are sinners, and they know they cannot save themselves. But the hope Thomas Bileny found is available to all. Jesus died for sinners, and He can replace hopelessness and despair with confidence and unbounded joy.

Pride makes it difficult to acknowledge the wickedness in our hearts. But admitting our sin is the first step to salvation. Then we must place our trust in Christ and accept His wonderful gift. —D C Egener

We are dead in sin, but Jesus can make us dead to sin. [Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#)

1 Timothy 1:15 "I Did That Too"

By David H. Roper

Our friend Barbara Leavitt loved flowers. Her home was a garden of rare beauty and sweet fragrance, and so was her life. Her presence was like a delightful bouquet.

Barbara went to be with the Lord in 2005, but something happened a few days before she died that I will never forget. My wife and I were sitting at her bedside with other friends telling stories about our childhood when I mentioned that I had once stolen some flowers. There was a park between the elementary school I attended and our home. One day, while walking through the park, I saw a row of irises in bloom and cut several to take to my mother. Some older boys saw me and threatened to call the police. I lived in terror for weeks thinking they would come and take me away.

Barbara placed her hand over mine and murmured softly, "I did that too." I thought, That should be my response when I see the sins of others or hear about them—"I did that too." Perhaps I've not committed their particular sin, but all sin is blameworthy and requires God's forgiveness.

Awareness of our own depravity is what John Newton called "the root of perpetual tenderness." I don't want to be like the ungrateful servant in Matthew 18. I want to be gracious and show mercy, for "I did that too."

Teach me to feel another's woe,

To hide the fault I see;

The mercy I to others show,

That mercy show to me. —Pope

We can show mercy to others because God has shown mercy to us.

1 Timothy 1:15 The Answers Can Wait

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. —1 Timothy 1:15

David Herwaldt, a thoughtful, reflective pastor friend of mine, was slowly dying after 50 years of faithful ministry. He often talked with me about the nature of God and the eternity he would soon enter. We realized that we had only a superficial grasp of these mysteries, but we were not distressed. We knew that God had rescued us from our sin and guilt, and we rejoiced in our salvation. We had all we needed to obey the Lord gladly, live confidently, and serve Him gratefully.

When we are distressed by our inability to answer life's most vexing questions, we must remember that Christ did not come to satisfy our curiosity. Rather, He saw us as fallen and hurt, and He came to lift and heal.

When Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2 to the people in the synagogue (Luke 4:16-21), He presented Himself as the promised Messiah, whose primary purpose for coming was spiritual. He came to deliver us from the helplessness of our spiritual poverty, to release us from the shackles of our guilt, to heal our sin-caused blindness, and to set us free from sin's enslaving power.

Let us therefore trust Him and make obeying Him our highest goal. This is the path to a grateful, joyous, and hope-filled life. The answers can wait. —Herbert Vander Lugt

When trouble seeks to rob your very breath,
When tragedy hits hard and steals your days,
Recall that Christ endured the sting of death;
He gives us hope, and merits all our praise. —Gustafson

Christ came not to satisfy our curiosity but to save our souls.

1 Timothy 1:1-17 (Exposition by C H Spurgeon)

1 Timothy 1:1

Christ is our hope; we have not a shadow of a hope apart from him. I remember, when on the Continent, seeing on a cross the words "Spes unica," the unique, the only hope of man; and that is true of the cross of Christ, and of Christ who suffered on it, he is our hope.

1 Timothy 1:2

Notice the apostle's triple salutation, "Grace, mercy, and peace." Whenever Paul writes to a church, he wishes "grace and peace"; but to a minister he wishes "grace, mercy, and peace." Ah! we want mercy more than the average of Christians; we have greater responsibilities; and, consequently, might more readily fall into greater sin, so to a minister Paul's salutation is, "grace, mercy, and peace."

1 Timothy 1:3, 4

You see, the apostle, in his day, had to contend against those who ran away from the simplicity of the gospel into all manner of fables and inventions. Such, in our day, are the doctrine of evolution, the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine of post-mortem salvation, the doctrine of the final restitution of all men, and all sorts of fables and falsehoods which men have invented.

1 Timothy 1:5-7

There were some who put the law into its wrong place. They made it a way of salvation, which it never was meant to be, and never can be. It is a way of conviction. It is an instrument of humbling. It shows us the evil of sin; but it never takes sin away.

1 Timothy 1:8

In its own place it has its own uses, and these are most important.

1 Timothy 1:9-13

Paul must have written this verse with many tears. What a wonder of grace it was that he should be put into the sacred ministry, to

bear testimony for Christ, when he had been before a blasphemer!

1 Timothy 1:13

He almost thought that, if he had done all this wilfully, he might not have been forgiven; but he felt that here God spied out the only extenuating circumstance, namely, that he was mistaken: "I did it ignorantly, in unbelief."

1 Timothy 1:14, 15

He spoke from his heart, from deep experience. This indeed was to him the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that had saved him, the very chief of sinners. He could therefore with confidence commend it to others as worthy of all acceptance.

1 Timothy 1:16

The case of Paul is not a singular one; it is the pattern one. If there are any here who feel that they have sinned like Saul of Tarsus, they may be forgiven like Paul the apostle. He is a pattern to all who should thereafter believe in Christ to life everlasting. Just as we often see things cut out in brown paper, and sold as patterns, so is the apostle Paul the pattern convert. What God did for him, he can do for thousands of others.

1 Timothy 1:17

Paul could not help this outburst of praise. He must put in a doxology. When he remembered his own conversion and pardon, and his being entrusted with the ministry of the gospel, he was obliged to put down his pen, and lift up his voice in grateful thanksgiving to God. So may it be with us, be with us, as we remember what great things the Lord hath done for us!

1 Timothy 1:9 - Profane - The isle runner in a wedding is saved for the bride. It is to profane or disdain the isle runner for everyone to walk on it. Why? The purity, and cleanliness is symbolized in this tradition.

1 Timothy 1:12a (Oswald Chambers)

The Real Thanks of the Worker

1 Timothy 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord ...

Everything that God has created is like an orchestra praising Him. "All Thy works shall praise Thee." In the ear of God everything He created makes exquisite music, and man joined in the paeon of praise until he fell, then there came in the frantic discord of sin. The realisation of Redemption brings man by way of the minor note of repentance back into tune with praise again. The angels are only too glad to hear that note, because it blends man into harmony again (see Luke 15:10).

Praising God is the ultimate end and aim of all we go through. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." What does it matter whether you are well or ill! whether you have money or none! It is all a matter of indifference, but one thing is not a matter of indifference, and that is that we are pleasing to the ears of God.

Paul had got back again by way of repentance into tune with God (cf. 1 Timothy 1:13), and now he has his base as a worker in thanksgiving to Christ Jesus; his whole life has been brought into perfect relation to God.

The Realised Test of the Worker

1 Timothy 1:12 who hath enabled me ...

The test of the worker is that he knows he has been enabled by the Lord Jesus, therefore he works and learns to do it better all the time. The realisation that my Lord has enabled me to be a worker keeps me strong enough never to be weak. Conscious obtrusive weakness is natural unthankful strength; it means I refuse to be made strong by Him. When I say I am too weak it means I am too strong; and when ever I say "I can't" it means "I won't." When Jesus Christ enables me, I am omnipotently strong all the time. Paul talks in paradoxes, "for when I am weak, then am I strong."

The Recognised Truth by the Worker

1 Timothy 1:12 for that He counted me faithful ...

To recognise that my Lord counts us faithful removes the last snare of idealising natural pluck. If we have the idea that we must face the difficulties with pluck, we have never recognised the truth that He has counted us faithful; it is His work in me He is counting worthy, not my work for Him. The truth is we have nothing to fear and nothing to overcome because He is all in all and we are more than conquerors through Him. The recognition of this truth is not flattering to the worker's sense of heroics, but it is amazingly

glorifying to the work of Christ. He counts us worthy because He has done everything for us. It is a shameful thing for Christians to talk about “getting the victory”; by this time the Victor ought to have got us so completely that it is His victory all the time, not ours. The overcoming referred to in the Book of the Revelation is not the personal overcoming of difficulties but the overcoming of the very life of God in us while we stand resolutely true to Him.

The Responsible Trust of the Worker

1 Timothy 1:12 ... putting me into the ministry.

The ministry is, the “glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” If I am going to be loyal to that trust, it will mean I must never allow any impertinent sensitiveness to hinder my keeping the trust. My trust is the glorious gospel for myself and through me to others, and it is realised in two ways: in the perfect certainty that God has redeemed the world, and in the imperative necessity of working on that basis with everyone with whom I come in contact (cf. see **notes** Colossians 1:28; 1:29). ([Chambers, Oswald: Approved Unto God: The Spiritual Life of the Christian Worker. Discovery House. 1997](#))

1 Timothy 1:12b

TODAY IN THE WORD In 1976, Vie Carlson bid \$400 for the angry letter Frank Sinatra wrote to Chicago Daily News columnist Mike Royko. Twenty years later, that letter was valued at more than \$15,000. In the letter, Sinatra promised Royko \$100,000 if he could prove that Sinatra punched the elderly man Royko claimed he did. He could double his earnings if he could pull Sinatra’s alleged hairpiece. “Quite frankly,” Sinatra fumed, “I don’t understand why people don’t spit in your eye three or four times a day.” It is always telling how a person responds to criticism and personal attack, and Paul began his letter to the Galatians having to do just this. Conspicuously absent are the customary greetings and blessings of his other letters. Rather, Paul had to immediately assume a defensive posture.

Much more is at stake than Paul’s personal reputation. His critics wanted to subvert the gospel he had been preaching, and their first line of attack was to discredit Paul as an apostle. If Paul was to defend the gospel he preaches, he must also defend the validity of his apostleship. He reminded the Galatians that he had been sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father. No man commissioned him, not Peter or any other elder of the church. He had a divine call, and therefore he had legitimate apostolic authority. The forcefulness of his defense, which becomes even clearer as we read on in chapter one, helps us to realize the critical nature of the attack.

The gospel is what matters most. The Galatians had to understand the gospel rightly, and these opening verses summarize the gospel. The theology of Galatians is Trinitarian: the gospel is a shared work of the Father, Son and Spirit. In these opening verses, Paul exalts the work of the God the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ. Both have willingly expressed their love for humanity. God the Father sends Jesus for our rescue; God the Son lays down His life as payment for our sins. By the end of this letter, we’ll see even more clearly the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. For this spectacular mission to save the world, God deserves glory forever and ever.

APPLY THE WORD Paul didn’t always defend himself when attacked. In 1 Corinthians 4:3, Paul told his critics, “I care very little if I am judged by you.” So why was Paul so eager to defend his apostleship in his letter to the Galatians? He was convinced that the truth and purity of the gospel were at stake, and he was really rallying to the defense of the gospel. When we suffer personal attack, we should follow the example of Paul and use wisdom to discern when and why it’s appropriate to respond.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 Guilty Of Plenty

By Anne Cetas

A man was filling out a job application when he came to the question “Have you ever been arrested?” He wrote, “No.” The next question, intended for people who had answered “Yes” to the previous question, was “Why?” The applicant answered it anyway: “I never got caught.” He evidently knew he was guilty of plenty!

So was the apostle Paul. He knew he had personally done wrong and sinned against God. He wrote, “I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” (1 Tim. 1:13). He even called himself the “chief” of sinners (v.15).

We too were once separated from the Lord because of our sin and were considered His enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21). But when we confessed our sin and acknowledged our need for His forgiveness, He cleansed us and made us new.

Those of us who have known the Lord for many years may have the tendency to forget what we’ve been rescued from and forgiven of. Sharing about our past and current failures and giving praise to God for forgiveness will help us not to come across as “holier-than-thou” to people who don’t yet know the Lord.

The truth is we’ve all been guilty of plenty, and God deserves the glory for His mercy toward us.

All that we were—our sins, our guilt,

Our death—was all our own;

All that we are we owe to Thee,

Thou God of grace, alone. —Bonar

Grace is everything for those who deserve nothing.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 My Heart Condemns Me

By Herbert Vander Lugt

Do you sometimes feel guilty and unworthy because of something you did years ago? You have confessed it and asked God to forgive you, but the memory of it still haunts you.

I empathize with you. Feelings of guilt still sweep over me when I recall how I failed an elderly, childless woman while I was training for the ministry. She was a regular customer in a store where I worked part-time. After a while, I became a friend and spiritual counselor to her and her husband. I even conducted his funeral.

When I moved to a nearby town to become a student pastor, I lost touch with her. I intended to contact her but kept procrastinating. One day I saw her obituary notice. I was overwhelmed with grief and confessed my sin to God.

More than 30 years after Paul's conversion, he referred to the time when he had been "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man" (1 Tim. 1:13). He even called himself the "chief" of sinners (v.15). Yet he repeatedly exulted in the certainty that he was a forgiven sinner.

God, who is greater than our heart and knows us thoroughly (1 John 3:20), has forgiven us for the sins we've confessed (1:9). We can believe Him!

Come now to the fountain of cleansing,

Plunge deep in its lifegiving flow.

His mercy and grace are sufficient,

His pardon He longs to bestow. —Robinson

Confession to God always brings His cleansing.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 God's Delight

A Scottish preacher spoke of evangelism as a fellowship of reconciled, forgiven sinners who don't simply preach but live out their faith. They also offer to others the same reconciliation and forgiveness they have received from God.

The apostle Paul expressed the same conviction: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). Once a blasphemer and persecutor of Christians, Paul believed that God's mercy was shown to him, the worst of sinners, as an example to other sinners who would later believe on Christ (1 Timothy 1:16).

Whenever we testify that God has forgiven us and provided eternal life through faith in Christ, we're declaring that God is a saving God. Yet, when we observe destructive lifestyles among people, it's easy to write them off. Instead, we should look at them as Christ does. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them" (Matthew 9:36).

Jesus said He came not to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17). Rather than condemning people, we should say, "Who am I to condemn others, when God has forgiven me so generously?" God delights to use forgiven sinners to reach other sinners.—Joanie Yoder ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Love is giving for the world's needs,
Love is sharing as the Lord leads,
Love is caring when the world cries,
Love is compassion with Christlike eyes. —Brandt

To love sinners is to be like Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:12-20

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. - 1 Timothy 1:17

TODAY IN THE WORD Historian Perry Miller writes that Jonathan Edwards was “the greatest philosopher-theologian yet to grace the American scene.” Just a few facts about this remarkable man show that this claim is not exaggerated. Edwards started learning Greek, Hebrew, and Latin at age five. Just a few years later, he was making important scientific observations. At age 13 he entered Yale, where he graduated at the top of his class four years later. Shortly after his graduation, Edwards experienced a personal conversion while reading 1 Timothy 1:17. Of this experience Edwards later wrote: “There came into my soul ... a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I had ever experienced before.”

It's not hard to see why 1 Timothy had such a significant influence on Edwards. This epistle was written by the apostle Paul to another outstanding young man who had been called to the Lord's ministry. Paul begins this section by praising Jesus Christ for the grace that had been poured out upon his own life, even though he had been persecuting the early church. Paul then continued with a very precise statement of the Christian faith: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (v. 15). Paul knew firsthand that salvation was only because of God's mercy and patience in Christ Jesus. This core truth naturally led to the hymn of praise in verse 17--the verse that so profoundly struck Jonathan Edwards. Paul follows this praise with a personal appeal to the young pastor Timothy: “fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience” (vv. 18–19).

APPLY THE WORD Like Jonathan Edwards, many people link their own personal “spiritual awakening” to the power of the Word of God. God's Word is essential not only when we are spiritually “sluggish,” but also for maintaining our daily spiritual health.

1 Timothy 1:12-20 Do You Hear A Whistle?

By Joanie Yoder

My car has a wonderful feature. Whenever I forget to turn off the headlights, a shrill warning goes off the minute I open the door. I don't like its jarring sound, but I like what it saves me from—a dead battery.

Our conscience can work like that. When we sin or are tempted to, our conscience blows a whistle. It's a sign that the Holy Spirit is either convicting us of sin or warning us before we do. If we do wrong, the jarring feelings from our conscience are meant to lead us to repentance. When we confess and repent, God forgives and clears our conscience.

The apostle Paul knew what it was to have a bad conscience. In 1 Timothy 1:13, he wrote, “I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy.” He received the mercy of Christ's forgiveness, faith, and a good conscience. He charged young Timothy to fight the good fight and maintain his faith and good conscience. Paul said that some had rejected these, and spiritual shipwreck was the result (vv.18-19).

Be thankful if you have a good conscience. When it gives you a warning whistle, pay attention! Then fight to preserve your faith and keep your conscience clear. That jarring sound is there to help you stay in fellowship with Christ.

Our conscience is a gift from God,

It is a guiding light;

And when aligned with His sure Word,

It tells us wrong from right. —Sper

A Good conscience is one of the best friends you'll ever have.

1 Timothy 1:15 Good News

A Christian counselor was troubled by this line in her church's statement of faith: “We deserve God's condemnation.” She said she often talks with clients who are so beaten down with self-condemnation that they need to hear, “You deserve God's love.”

I commend that therapist for her empathy, but I'm afraid her thinking is subtly flawed. The good news of the gospel is not that we deserve God's love. The good news is that God sees us in all our sin and unworthiness, yet He loves us so much that He has provided for our complete forgiveness and acceptance.

The apostle Paul said that he had persecuted believers "ignorantly in unbelief" (1Timothy 1:13). Yet this was not an excuse. He accepted responsibility for his unbelief, referring to himself as "formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man." Although he saw himself as the "chief" of sinners (1Ti 1:15), he wasn't shackled by the guilt of past sins. His primary emphasis was on the Lord's marvelous grace that freed him from a debilitating sense of unworthiness.

It's true that "we deserve God's condemnation," but it's also true that "Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Ti 1:15). That's good news for all of us, no matter what we have done! —H V Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

No condemnation now I dread,
I am my Lord's and He is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine. —Wesley

The one who receives Christ will never receive God's condemnation.

1 Timothy 1:15 Christ Sets Captives Free

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

Missionary Irene Webster-Smith... returned to Japan after World War II to continue her work. On one occasion, she met the wife of a Japanese military leader who had been condemned to death for war crimes. This woman was a Christian who was deeply burdened for her husband. She asked Irene to visit him in prison. Irene did, and the man accepted Christ. Soon a call came to Irene that other war crimes prisoners wanted to visit with her. Eventually, fourteen of the twenty-five convicted men put their faith in Christ. No matter how awful the sin, we have a Savior whose love and grace can reach far beyond the worst transgression (Ro 5:20-note).

Paul claimed the title (chief of sinners) for himself. Was the apostle just being overly modest, or was he using a little hyperbole to make his point? It doesn't sound like it. Paul sincerely agonized over his former role as a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man (1Ti 1:13). The great apostle made the most of God's grace in his life by traveling the world to preach the Gospel to anyone who would listen. Because he considered himself to be the worst of sinners (1Ti 1:16), he marveled at the grace of God in saving him. As God's evangelists should grow as we consider how great our forgiveness is. True, not all of us have arrested Christians or committed war crimes, but our sin still cost Christ His life. There are no big and little sinners in God's sight. Paul's ministry is a healthy reminder that evangelism is not simply a solo act by isolated believers. The most effective evangelism is that which grows from the context of a body of believers being motivated and trained for God's work (see Eph. 4:7-16). If you are not part of your church's evangelism training program, consider joining it. And if none exists, ask about the possibility of beginning one.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 A Real Savior

By Dennis J. De Haan

Some Christians become deeply troubled when they think about their sinfulness. They long for purity, yet they see only evil within their heart. Guilt torments their minds and they may even doubt their salvation.

Martin Luther struggled with this problem. When he entered the monastery at Erfurt, Germany, he devoted himself to prayer, fasting, and service in an effort to gain relief from the weight of his sins. But the burden remained.

It was the simple testimony of John Staupitz, the dean of the theological faculty, that brought light to his troubled soul. He urged Luther to look away from his dark thoughts and cast himself completely in the Redeemer's arms. "Trust the righteousness of His life and the atonement of His death," he said.

Luther did that and found peace. But a short time later he began doubting. "Oh, my sin, my sin, my sin!" he lamented. With utmost kindness, the dean told him that his great sorrow for his sin was his greatest hope. He said, "Know that Jesus Christ is Savior even of those who are great, real sinners, and deserving of utter condemnation."

Each day let's thank Jesus for dying for us. He is a real Savior for real sinners.

Alas and did my Savior bleed?

And did my Sovereign die?

Would He devote that sacred head

For such a worm as I? —Watts

Christ crossed out our sins at Calvary.

1 Timothy 1:15 Heaven's Surprises

By Vernon C. Grounds

Scripture gives us only a glimpse of the glory we will share in heaven with our crucified and risen Savior. Just think—no more sorrow, no more death, no more crying, no more pain, for the former things will have passed away! (Rev. 21:4).

These brief glimpses make us eager to know more of what will flood us with awe when we get there. No doubt the dwelling place of the Lord will be infinitely more beautiful and breathtaking than we are capable of imagining.

Among the surprises that await us in heaven will be three astonishing ones that John Newton pointed out. The converted slave-dealer, who wrote the universally loved hymn “Amazing Grace,” perceptively foresaw what every sinner will feel who has been redeemed by Christ’s atoning sacrifice. He wrote, “If I ever reach heaven, I expect to find three wonders there: First, to meet some I had not thought to see there; second, to miss some I had thought to meet there; and third, the greatest wonder of all, to find myself there!” And that greatest wonder will cause John Newton and all of God’s children to fall on their knees in gratitude for God’s amazing grace. But let’s not wait. Now is the time to begin expressing our gratitude.

Someday the silver cord will break,

And I no more as now shall sing;

But oh, the joy when I shall wake

Within the palace of the King. —Crosby

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 Mercy And Reward

By Herbert Vander Lugt

When the great Puritan preacher Thomas Hooker (1586-1647) was on his deathbed, a friend tried to console him by saying, “Brother Hooker, you are going to receive your reward.” “No, no!” he breathed. “I go to receive mercy!”

In sharp contrast, A. W. Tozer recalled the prayer of a man who had the idea that he could earn heaven as a reward for trying to keep the Ten Commandments. It went something like this: “Now, God, I admit I have not kept number 1 and number 3 and number 7 and number 9. But remember, Father, that I have kept all the others.”

How foolish! This man failed to see that if he had broken one commandment, he was guilty of breaking them all (Jas. 2:10). His works were earning him condemnation, not salvation.

As the apostle Paul reviewed his 30-plus years of sacrificial service, he saw himself as the “chief” of sinners and totally dependent on God’s mercy. Although he undoubtedly anticipated the rewards he would receive, he gloried only in the cross (Gal. 6:14). There Jesus paid the price for sin so that everyone who trusts in Him will receive mercy.

The wonder of God’s mercy and grace! Someday I will “go to receive mercy.” I hope you will too.

’Tis mercy all, immense and free,

For, O my God, it found out me;

Amazing love! How can it be

That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me. —Wesley

Grace is getting what we do not deserve. Mercy is not receiving what we do deserve.

1 Timothy 1:15a (see also next 2 devotionals)

TODAY IN THE WORD When the U.S. government decided to build the first transcontinental railroad, two railroad companies were

commissioned to do the work. The Central Pacific began laying track east from Sacramento, California, while the Union Pacific began working west from near Omaha, Nebraska. The two lines met at Promontory, Utah, in May 1869, and drove the last spike to connect the continent.

The church began with two lines moving toward each other, each having a separate beginning point but destined to meet and be joined. These lines were the Jews and Gentiles, two great bodies of people God was bringing together to make one new unified body (Eph. 2:15). And the two “foremen” He was using were Peter and Paul (Gal. 2:7).

We can see God preparing the church for this unification in the last portion of Acts 9. Paul, who was still called Saul at this point (note Acts 13:9), stirred up so much hatred that he had to leave Damascus secretly. He had come as the persecutor of Christians, and now he was the target of murderous persecution.

Paul came to Jerusalem, but his reputation preceded him. Barnabas befriended Paul and helped him gain acceptance among the believers, but Paul couldn’t get away from his Jewish enemies. He had to be sent to Caesarea, and from there he went to his hometown of Tarsus.

Luke then closes this portion of the church’s history with another progress report (v. 31), which indicates just how strong Jewish opposition to Paul had been. With Paul away, the church “enjoyed a time of peace.”

Although Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles, it was Peter who first brought the gospel to non-Jews. Acts 9 records Peter’s healing of Aeneas and his raising of Dorcas from the dead--wonderful miracles that attested to God’s power on Peter. These areas, Lydda and Joppa, were partially Gentile in makeup. God was preparing Peter for his historic ministry to the household of the Roman commander Cornelius, a ministry to the Gentiles.

APPLY THE WORD Peter was an apostle who had known Jesus intimately. Paul was a leading Pharisee and one of the rising stars of Judaism. These men might have been tempted to live in the past. We can be tempted to live in the past too. Maybe you can look back to a time when you were closer to the Lord, more active in your witness, and really hungry for spiritual things. This devotional is committed to helping you keep your love for Christ strong. Are you spending time each day in the Word and in prayer?

1 Timothy 1:15 The Christian Herald once ran a story about London’s Crystal Palace where, on October 7, 1857, Charles Spurgeon preached to 23,654 people. According to the paper, Spurgeon visited the hall the day before, fearing his voice wouldn’t carry to all corners. Standing on stage, he quoted 1 Timothy 1:15. Satisfied with the acoustics, Spurgeon left the building, unaware that a poor workman, battling depression, had been huddling behind one of the statues trying to pray. Suddenly a voice boomed into his ears: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” From that moment, the man was converted to Christ. At the beginning of church history, the Lord deliberately transformed the angriest anti-Christian zealot on earth, Saul of Tarsus, as a token of His power to save anyone and everyone. “For that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe” (v. 16 NIV).

If you’ve given up on yourself or your loved one, don’t! Jesus came to save the chief of sinners—the worst of the worst—and that’s a statement deserving all acceptance. Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me; Died that I might live on high, Died that I might never die.—William McComb, 1864 ([My All in All - Robert J Morgan](#))

1 Timothy 1:15

TODAY IN THE WORD “I would have been less surprised if little green men had walked in,” said Patrick Quinn, an editor for The Associated Press, of Farris Hassan’s knock at his hotel door on Christmas Day, 2005, in Baghdad. The sixteen-year-old had traveled from Fort Lauderdale to Baghdad without his parents’ knowledge or permission, all for a journalism assignment. Whether bravely or foolishly, he had traveled alone halfway across the world to a danger zone.

The Ephesian church also took a journey from the safety of sound doctrine to the minefields of false teaching. The journey hadn’t taken long. About four years earlier Paul bid the Ephesian elders farewell (Acts 20:13-38) and warned them of the false teaching that would soon emerge within the church. Now his prophetic warnings were realized, and Timothy had to bring the church back to sound doctrine (v. 10).

It’s helpful to see the contrast between sound doctrine and false teaching. The false teaching emphasized myths and genealogies, a focus on non-essential biblical ideas to the exclusion of important doctrines. The false teachers also improperly used the law, teaching that observance of the law was a means of righteousness.

To highlight these errors, Paul reminded Timothy about the essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not achieved by

following the law. The law's proper use is for condemning us and pointing us to our need for a Savior. Paul admitted his own incalculable need for this grace. He was the sorriest of sinners. He desperately needed God's forgiveness for what seemed unforgivable: blasphemy and persecution. There was no hope of erasing his record, only hope for the patience and mercy of God through Christ Jesus (v. 16).

All preaching and teaching, all sound doctrine builds on this foundation of grace. It reminds us of our sin, our need for God, and His forgiveness made available through Christ Jesus.

APPLY THE WORD The gospel of Jesus Christ is the best news that we can receive because it announces that God is both holy and patient. He condemns sin but saves the sinner. No one is out of reach of this grace, not even the "worst" of sinners. Feeling unworthy of God's love is a great obstacle to faith. When your unsaved friends and family struggle with this doubt, you can remind them that no sin is too great to forgive, and God's patience doesn't run out. Additionally, we should be living examples of love and forgiveness toward those around us.

1 Timothy 1:15

TODAY IN THE WORD This fall will be the fiftieth anniversary of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock. We remember the courage of nine black students who walked through the jeering, bigoted crowds. We'll recall the work of the leaders of the civil rights movement, whose commitment to equality began to transform a society infested with racial discrimination.

The people who changed the world have been committed to great ideas. The gospel is the most important among these. We started our study this month with a passage from Galatians, exploring Paul's passion for the defense of the gospel. He never tolerated sloppiness when it came to thinking about and communicating the gospel. Paul's preoccupation with the power and preservation of the gospel echoes throughout each of the New Testament books, and no less here in 1 Corinthians 15.

The gospel always ignites action. Notice all the verbs in the first two verses of chapter 15: preach, receive, take a stand, save, believe. The gospel is an agent of action, doing the work of saving us. But it is also a promoter of action. It compels us to preach its truth, to receive and believe by faith, and defend its truth with courage. What the gospel can never accommodate is apathy or indifference. It always pushes us to a precipice of faith, forcing us to choose what and whom we believe and trust.

The gospel conveys to us the historic truths of the Christian faith, those about which Paul reminds his audience in verses 3 through 7. In every age, these truths have been attacked. But Christians, following the example of Paul, have gone to bat, defending the veracity of the gospel. And this will continue to be our job.

Most of all, the gospel changes us. As Paul put it, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect" (v. 10).

APPLY THE WORD What action do you need to take in response to the gospel? Have you never yet received the truth of Jesus' love and sacrifice for you, a sinner? Embrace the gospel by faith today. Is God calling you to preach the gospel to someone in your life who needs the hope of Jesus? Will you take a stand for the gospel when attacked by its critics? And will you surrender yourself to the life-changing power of the gospel?

1 Timothy 1:15 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Homily)

Sinners, of whom I am chief.

If the elephant can go safely over the swaying bridge, the horse and mule can; and the apostle seems to glory that in the very beginning of the progress of the Gospel through the world it had laid hold of and converted himself, because if he had been saved, any one might be. As men have been brought under conviction, in successive ages, it has been a profound consolation to learn that the chief of sinners has been in heaven for eighteen hundred years. In him first Jesus Christ showed forth "all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe."

Without doubt Paul never forgot the excess of his hatred and persecutions towards the infant Church. But probably he alludes here also to the deepening consciousness of unworthiness and sinfulness which accompanies all progress towards the knowledge and love of God. This phase of experience may be accounted for thus. The true saint of God, though certain of forgiveness, reviews his past sins in the light of that purity of which he is ever obtaining truer perceptions, and thus recognizes shades of evil in them which a slighter knowledge of God had failed to reveal. He also feels himself a greater sinner than others, because he supposes that God cannot have treated another with the same forbearance and mercy as have been extended to himself; and the greater the love the more heinous the transgression. And in addition, as subtler forms of temptation are suggested to him, and to every one, he knows that there are kindred susceptibilities within him, even though they are abhorred and resisted. It is beneath the pressure of such thoughts that he recognizes his uttermost indebtedness to the grace of God.

1 Timothy 1:18-20 A Wrong Reading

By Dennis Fisher

William Scoresby was a British seafaring explorer in the 19th century who responded to God's call to the ministry. An interest in the workings of navigational compasses stayed with him during his work as a clergyman. His research led to the discovery that all newly built iron ships had their own magnetic influence on compasses. This influence would change at sea for various reasons—leading crews to read the compass incorrectly. Often this led to disaster.

There is a striking parallel between the misread compass and false biblical teaching. In 1 Timothy 1, Paul warned against “fables and endless genealogies” (v.4)—man-made changes in the doctrines of God's Word. People who teach false doctrines “have suffered shipwreck,” Paul concludes (v.19). Two people who opposed the Word of God by placing false teaching in its place, and who thus faced spiritual shipwreck, were Alexander and Hymenaeus (v.20).

Biblical truth is being questioned and in some cases even replaced in the church today. Our opinions must never replace the truth of God's Word. The Bible, not man's erroneous opinions about it, is the ultimate guide for our conscience in navigating life's changing seas. Beware of wrong readings.

God's words of pure, eternal truth

Shall yet unshaken stay,

When all that man has thought or planned,

Like chaff has passed away. —Anon.

The first point of wisdom is to know the truth; the second, to discern what is false.

1 Timothy 1:19 A Winning Combination

... having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck. —1Timothy 1:19

A new believer slipped into his old ways by attending a party and getting drunk. When he arrived home, his wife would not let him in. Instead, she called their pastor, who found the man sleeping in his car.

The pastor took him to a motel to sleep off his drunkenness. He knew him well and was confident that a strong rebuke would not be needed. Instead, he asked God to convict the man and bring him to repentance. In this case the pastor chose the right course. The young man later said that he had learned a valuable lesson through this experience and that the Lord had "taken all the fun out of sin."

A "good conscience" will disturb us when we do something we know is wrong. We keep it "good" by heeding it and turning away from sin. Paul said the faith of Hymenaeus and Alexander "suffered shipwreck" because they rejected the voice of their good conscience (1Timothy 1:19, 20). By doing so, they had deadened their conscience and then apparently twisted the truth to justify their conduct.

True faith and a sensitive conscience will take all the fun out of sinning and remove the desire to twist the truth to justify what is wrong. Faith and a good conscience are a winning combination. Let's keep them strong.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Our conscience is a gift from God,
It is a guiding light;
And when aligned with faith and truth,
It tells us wrong from right. —Sper

Conscience is a safe guide when guided by God's Word.

1 Timothy 2:1 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Homily)

That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.

A life is revealed here of which many of us know practically nothing. We do not feel the absolute necessity of being much alone in the presence of God, not so much for ourselves, as for others; and this sad neglect of intercessory prayer, which we all deplore, really points to a lack of the divine life, since if that were mightily within us we should inevitably feel its throb and pulse in this direction. This comes out clearly in the words that follow.

Intercession is necessary that we may know the secrets of a quiet, peaceable, and godly life (1Timothy 2:2).

Such intercession for others is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1Timothy 2:3). And the word translated good might be rendered beautiful.

It is consonant with the Divine purpose, for God wishes to have all men saved (1Timothy 2:4). If, then, his Spirit is within us, we, too, shall long that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Our hearts will be filled with a Divine tenderness of yearning which will find vent in strong cryings and tears. It is only thus we can live in harmony with the Divine purpose. One writes "When I think of this, I feel I must pray. Oh, how near it brings to God to pray in the Spirit, and leads me to see that no pressure of duty among men can free us from the absolute need of much prayer."

Such intercession is in profound union with the mediation of our Lord (1 Timothy 2:5, 6). — As the great High Priest, He ever liveth to intercede; and in our little measure we, too, as members of a holy priesthood, must blend our supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks with his (1Peter 2:5).

1 Timothy 2:1 Prayer Evangelism

I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. --1 Timothy 2:1

Over the centuries since Jesus died for our sins and rose victorious from the grave, many methods have been used to spread the gospel. From Peter's first sermon, when 3,000 were saved, to great preaching campaigns of men like Charles Spurgeon and Billy Sunday, to friendship evangelism, many ways of influencing others to accept Jesus' free gift have been tried.

In a major city in the midwest, another method has been launched: prayer evangelism. In the campaign to reach the populace of this city, organizers have set out to pray for every individual. They have divided the city into sections, and all cooperating churches have been assigned the names of the people in those sections.

Of course, it will also take other kinds of contacts, such as literature or face-to-face visits, but prayer is the major component. In 1 Timothy, Paul explained that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). And the method suggested for beginning the work of evangelization is "supplications, prayers, intercessions ... for all men" (1Ti 2:1).

What about your neighborhood and mine? Let's begin right now to do some prayer evangelism. --J D Brannon ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

For Whom Can I Pray Today?

Talk to God about people before you talk to people about God.

What's More Important Than Voting? Joe Stowell

1 Timothy 2:1-2

Don't forget to vote!

We have all heard that call to good citizenship. But beyond being a good citizen, being a good follower of Jesus means that we don't forget to pray for our leaders. When we do pray, it just may make a difference in our own lives!

I don't know how you feel about the people in authority over you, but if you're like me, praying for them may not be your first impulse. There are plenty of leaders I would rather vote out of office than pray for! Yet according to 1 Timothy 2:1-2, we are to include them on our prayer list on a regular basis. We may not have "kings" who rule over us, but all of us can name people who qualify as "those in authority"—government officials, police officers, supervisors, parents, teachers, and a host of others who can pull rank on us.

Sometimes it's hard to know how to pray for them, especially if we don't know them personally. But we can start by praying for what

they need. Every leader could use an extra dose of God's wisdom for the challenges and decisions they face. In addition to wisdom, we should pray for integrity—for honesty and uprightness in their actions and freedom from deceit. Pray that they would have a genuine commitment to doing what is best for those who are under their authority. Ask God to give them humility that will enable them to use their power not for their own gain but for the good of the people. Pray that godly people will be in their circle of influence. Pray that they will come to know Christ as Savior.

But our text alerts us to the fact that praying for those in authority is not the end of the line. We ourselves are standing in the need of prayer as well.

First, we are called to pray for "peaceful and quiet lives" that are marked by "godliness and holiness" (1 Timothy 2:2). If we pray for our leaders and pursue these character qualities in our own lives, we just might make some progress—and in turn make a marked difference on our society and on our leaders as well.

Second, when we pray for those in authority over us, it serves to remind us that they are under God's authority. And, just as they are under God's authority, so must our lives be under His authority as well. When we are irritated that others don't lead as people under the authority of His righteousness, we should think about how He must feel when we don't live under His authority in the choices we make and attitudes we express. And remembering that He is the ultimate ruler reminds us that our hope is not in earthly "kings" but in the King of kings, who alone has power and authority over even the most powerful rulers.

Connect the dots! When we recognize that Jesus is the only One who can make a difference in the lives of our leaders, it should stir our hearts to pray for them.

And, as we pray for them, our hearts just may be stirred to focus on the needs of our own lives. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, through prayer, Jesus would change the hearts of those leaders? Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing if, through prayer, Jesus would change your heart and my heart? So, don't forget to vote. And, more importantly, don't forget to pray!

YOUR JOURNEY...

Make a list of the leaders in your life. Ask the Lord to reveal some prayer points for those people, and commit to praying for them on a regular basis.

As a result of his bold witness for Christ, Paul had significant interaction with those in authority over him. Read the book of Acts chapters 22–26, and learn from Paul's example.

What was the exchange between Paul and King Agrippa in Acts 26:28-29? Have you ever prayed for your leaders like that?

Look for some ways to actively demonstrate your prayer support for leaders. Organizations such as the National Day of Prayer (www.ndptf.org) can help you get started.

1 Timothy 2:2 The Lord wants us to pray for all nations, and for kings and for all in authority (1Ti 2:2). We can exercise knee-based influence over leaders whom we may never meet. Here's an example: Prince Edward VII of England was well known for his drinking and immorality. When his mother, Queen Victoria, died in 1901, Edward assumed the throne at age fifty-nine and reigned for nine years. In 1910, a prayer warrior named Joe Evans was vacationing in the New York mountains, away from newspapers and interruptions. One morning he felt a burden to intercede for Edward, and the burden became so intense he anguished in prayer for the king's conversion. The following day came the news, "Edward is dead." Years later, Joe shared dinner with Dr. J. Gregory Mantle of England. Dr. Mantle said, "Joe, did you know that Edward VII was saved on his deathbed?" He went on to explain: "The king was in France when he was taken ill. He was brought to England and there was hope that he might recover. However, there came a turn for the worse. At that time, His Majesty called one of his lords-in-waiting and ordered him to go to Paternoster Row and secure for him a copy of a tract that his mother, Queen Victoria, had given to him when he was a lad. It was entitled "The Sinner's Friend." After much searching, the lord-in-waiting found the tract, brought it to His Majesty, and upon reading it, King Edward VII made earnest repentance and received the Lord Jesus as his Savior." ([My All in All - Robert J Morgan](#))

1 Timothy 2:1-2 Prayer And Politics

[Pray] for all men, for kings and all who are in authority. . --1 Timothy 2:1-2

In 1787 a convention was called in the United States to revise the Articles of Confederation. For weeks delegates reviewed ancient history and analyzed modern governments, searching for insights. But nothing suited the infant nation.

Finally, a distinguished gentleman named Benjamin Franklin rose and said, "In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were in

the dark to find political truth and scarce able to distinguish it when it is presented to us, how has it happened that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings?" Mr. Franklin believed there was a sovereign God who could provide guidance to those who sought it.

If ever there was a time to follow that prayerful example, it is now. Paul said that governments are ordained of God (Ro 13:1), and that we are to pray for those in authority over us (1Ti 2:1, 2). This prayer principle also applies to the election of our leaders. We must become informed and vote prayerfully for those who shape our laws.

Because God has instructed us to do so, we can--indeed we must--unashamedly and boldly mix prayer with our politics. --D J De Haan ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

In God we trust, let others trust their rulers,
We trust in God to save us from alarm;
Like broken reeds, the works of man will fail us,
Our God alone can keep us from all harm.
--Smith

**Whatever makes men good Christians
makes them good citizens.**

--Webster

1 Timothy 2:1-6

TODAY IN THE WORD O Lord, You lover of souls, in whose hand is the life of every living thing, I bring before You in my prayers all those who are lonely in this world. Yours they are, and none can pluck them out of Your hand... For Your love's sake. Amen.--Little Book of Prayers

When we say to people, 'I will pray for you,' we make a very important commitment. The sad thing is that this remark often remains nothing but a well-meant expression of concern. Intercessory prayer--prayer for others--is an important commitment and a profound way to love.

The greatest model of intercession we have is Jesus. Today's passage from John shows us that He prayed for us during His time on earth, and Hebrews 7:25 says that He always lives to intercede for us. We also have the Holy Spirit, who intercedes for us, translating our wordless prayers into petitions according to God's will (Ro 8:26-27).

Intercessory prayer is vital for unity in the Body. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, "A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses.

APPLY THE WORD Today's passage from Timothy urges prayer for everyone--that's pretty inclusive! Tomorrow we will discuss prayer for those in authority; today we focus on individuals in our lives. Lists can be quite helpful for intercession, either to record petitions or to ensure that you don't overlook individuals you wish to support in prayer, such as neighbors and coworkers. If you have children, ask them to make their own prayer lists for their friends and others in their lives. Also, many churches list prayer needs in the weekly bulletin or keep track of prayer requests in the church office. Consider bringing these petitions to the Lord as a family.

1 Timothy 2:2 Better Times Ahead

[Pray] for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. --1 Timothy 2:2

Paul lived in the Roman Empire under the rule of the cruel and ruthless Nero. Yet he saw the possibility of better times ahead. If he hadn't, he wouldn't have exhorted the first-century Christians to pray for "a quiet and peaceable life" (1Timothy 2:2).

If Paul were living today, I don't think he would be pleased when Christians paint a totally dark picture of the future. Although some governments do repress their citizens, think of what's happened. Since the Berlin Wall came down, new winds of freedom have been blowing in the world. And even though immorality and broken homes are still a terrible blight, many people seem to be returning to the values of marital fidelity.

I believe that the only real hope for the world is the return of Jesus Christ. I don't know when the Lord will come, but while I wait I'll

continue witnessing for Him and praying for a great revival. I'll be asking the Lord to lead the nations into paths of peace and prosperity. I'll be doing what I can to help people who are struggling in dire poverty. I'll vote for leaders who uphold moral values.

We must not withdraw from the world but do what we can to make it a better place to live. God is in control. We can't lose. Let's be optimistic! —H V Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Keep me ever watching, Master,
That no fear my faith may shake;
Working, praying, hoping, longing,
Till the joyful morn shall break. —Dimmock

The future is as bright as the promises of God.

1 Timothy 2:1-7

God our Savior ... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. - 1 Timothy 2:3-4

Keith Green's song, "Make My Life a Prayer to You" could easily have been inspired by our passage today from 1 Timothy. Both call us to prayer and to godly living: "Make my life a prayer to you / I wanna do what you want me to / No empty words and no white lies / No token prayers, no compromise."

Keith Green's song focuses on proclaiming the gospel in a credible way, and in our text today Paul talks about prayer and godly living as actions that we can take to spread the news about Jesus.

Our God is God the Savior (v. 3). Verse four reveals that God wants to save men and women. By nature, He is compassionate and rich in mercy. He wants to forgive and reconcile people to Himself. And not only does He want to save but He has made a way for salvation. It's one thing to want something done and quite another to get something done. Our God has done both—desired our salvation and achieved our salvation. Imagine if He wanted our salvation but couldn't make it happen. We would hardly serve Him as the great, sovereign God that He is, holding together the universe by His word (cf. Heb. 1:3). And if He had the power to save us but chose not to do so, we would think Him terribly cruel and unfair. Thankfully, the God we worship is both all loving and all powerful.

Because of God's heart of compassion, our hearts should be equally tender to those who don't yet believe. Paul gave himself completely to the task of evangelism (see 1 Cor. 9). We're instructed here to do two things to further the message of salvation. First, we can pray (v. 1). Then, we can live holy lives, lives that bring credibility to the beauty and truth of this message and the name of Christ (v. 2)

1 Timothy 2:5 (See also devotional below)

TODAY IN THE WORD This coming Sunday you may lift your hands in worship and sing, "Our God is an awesome God," and then a few hours later use the same term to describe the meal you just ate or the detailing on your neighbor's car. Although the language of awe is commonplace among us, we rarely actually experience it.

Israel, on the other hand, learned from firsthand experience that the God they worshiped was awesome. After they heard the words of the Law proclaimed by God's own voice, they were filled with joy and terror. They rejoiced to discover that "a man can live even if God speaks with him" (Deut. 5:24). However, they did not feel that such a relationship could be sustained without help. They begged Moses to act as their mediator—pleading with him to be God's spokesman and their representative.

This illustrates one of the primary themes of the Old Testament law: the truth that we need someone to bridge the gap between man and God that has been created by our sin.

While the church has always recognized this problem, it has not always sought an adequate solution. Like Israel, some have looked to other believers to function as mediators. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ has fulfilled what Israel asked of Moses. Others may be appointed as priests, but only Christ can function as a true priest. He alone knows what it's like to be God and man. His death on the cross is the only payment God will accept for sin. Because He rose from the dead and lives forever, He is the only one who is "able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Heb. 7:25).

APPLY THE WORD Have you been looking to someone or something other than Jesus Christ to serve as your "bridge" into God's presence? Perhaps you have been relying on the clergy or rites of the church to make you right with God. Others in the church can

instruct us and pray for us. They can be a source of great encouragement and can be used to help us grow spiritually. The ordinances of the church are a helpful reminder of what Jesus did. But only Christ can bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

1 Timothy 2:5

TODAY IN THE WORD On November 4, 1979, rioting students stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 Americans hostage. For the next fourteen months, direct communications were cut off between the United States and Iran's newly formed revolutionary government. Contact with the hostages was only possible through other countries, such as Canada. Despite military rescue attempts, in the end it was the work of intermediaries, such as an Algerian diplomat, that brought about the hostages' release on January 20, 1981.

The Iranian hostage crisis illustrates the key role that intermediaries play in resolving seemingly insurmountable hostilities. When face-to-face negotiations aren't possible between two parties, a third party can act as a bridge. This understanding of mediation is helpful in order to grasp Christ's role as the mediator of the new covenant. We might think of fallen humanity and a perfectly holy God as two parties that cannot meet face-to-face without some type of mediator.

The old covenant made with Moses at Sinai offered some provisions to bridge the gap. Even so, human inability to keep this covenant (Heb. 8:7-8) pointed toward the need for a new covenant that would be completely effective in removing sin (v. 12). Just as the new covenant is superior to the old one, so also the mediator of the new covenant, Jesus Christ, is superior to the old covenant's mediator, Moses.

The change of covenants doesn't imply that God somehow changed His mind, but rather that God graciously provided one means of dealing with sin that was provisional until His final means, the perfect sacrifice of His Son, could be enacted. In this way, Jesus' blood accomplished what animal blood could not, namely a truly cleansed conscience (Heb. 9:14). Thus the new covenant guarantees our eternal inheritance.

Jesus as our mediator is one example of His present ministry on our behalf. Tomorrow we'll see that Jesus is also our High Priest.

APPLY THE WORD One of the unique aspects of Christianity is that it emphasizes a personal relationship with God, only possible because of our mediator Christ. Christianity isn't an external set of do's and don'ts, but an internal change in which a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and fully reconciled to God the Father through Jesus' atoning work. With this in mind, ask yourself if you've fallen into the trap of viewing your faith as rules to obey instead of a relationship that transforms from the inside out.

1 Timothy 2:8-15 Women's Rights

Judith Martin has been writing Miss Manners for over twenty-five years. She answers questions of all sorts, from those of simple table etiquette to more complex questions of social graces. "You can deny all you want that there is etiquette, and a lot of people do in everyday life," Miss Manners explains. "But if you behave in a way that offends the people you're trying to deal with, they will stop dealing with you."

Etiquette is a word that describes social propriety. This word propriety appears twice in our text today (1Ti 2:9, 15), and its meaning is richer than simple manners. It appears only one other time in the New Testament (cf. Acts 26:25) where it is translated "reasonable." "What I am saying is true and reasonable," Paul insists when Agrippa mocks his testimony as the words of a crazy man. "Propriety" refers to reasonable and appropriate actions.

In today's passage, Paul sets forth guidelines for a life governed by Christian propriety. These actions are our reasonable response to the grace we have in Christ. For the men, propriety means peace (v. . As a reasonable response to the peace they have with God because of Christ, they must make peace with one another.

For the women, propriety includes modesty in dress and submission. Propriety in dress doesn't necessarily forbid women to wear gold and pearls but emphasizes that their focus and energies should be spent on inner beauty (cf. 1Peter 3:3-4). Propriety also means understanding proper roles in the family and church. This does not mean that women are relegated only to the kitchens and nurseries of the church. Paul obviously expects that women will want to learn and should continue learning (1Ti 2:11). However, men, not women, are given responsibility for the authority of the church and family (cf. Eph. 5:23). By submitting to these reasonable restraints in dress and decorum, women continue in the high calling of "faith, love and holiness" (v. 15).

Today's passage is one of the most controversial biblical texts, and it has certainly been abused by some as an excuse to mistreat women. Note that Paul does not exclude women from pastoral roles because they lack the intellect or leadership savvy. He bases his argument on the order of creation (1Ti 2:13). The argument is not cultural or psychological but inherently biblical. And as we seek to understand this text today, may our approach parallel Paul's in that we allow the Bible to speak for itself and by itself.

1 Timothy 2:9 God Can Save Anyone!

Therefore I exhort ... that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. —1 Timothy 2:1

Today, as always, there is an urgent need for us to pray for "all who are in authority" (1 Timothy 2:2). But does the word all include the most wicked of leaders? Are there ever people in positions of power and influence who are beyond the help of prayer?

The answer to this question can be found by noting the word therefore in verse 1, which calls our attention to the immediate context. In 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Paul admitted that he was once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a violent man (1Ti 1:13). He vigorously affirmed that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Then he added this significant phrase: "of whom I am chief" (1Ti 1:15).

Paul explained that he received God's mercy so that Christ would display His limitless grace in him as a pattern for those who are going to believe on Him in the future (1Ti 1:16). In effect, Paul was saying, "If I, the worst of sinners, can be saved, anyone can." Paul therefore exhorted us to pray for all in authority, because God our Savior desires all to be saved and to embrace His truth (1Ti 2:4).

So let's not only pray that honorable leaders will act wisely, but also that ungodly leaders will be saved. Yes, God can save anyone. —Joanie Yoder ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

No leader is beyond God's grace
When righteous people pray;
For when God's children intercede,
The Lord will have His way. —D. De Haan

To influence leaders for God, intercede with God for leaders.

1 Timothy 2:11-15 (Elisabeth Elliot)

"It is in willing submission, rather than grudging capitulation, that the woman in the church (whether married or single) and the wife in the home find their fulfillment."

1 Timothy 2:11-15 (Vance Havner)

"A good woman is the best thing on earth. Women were last at the cross and first at the open tomb. The church owes a debt to her faithful women which she can never estimate, to say nothing of the debt we owe in our homes to godly wives and mothers."

1 TIMOTHY 3

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (See also devotional below)

Obeys your leaders and submit to their authority. - Hebrews 13:17

TODAY IN THE WORD It can be argued that there is no organization on earth that has a higher standard for its leaders than the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus handpicked the twelve men who became His apostles and the earliest leaders of the church. Even though the office of apostle ended with the death of John (the last survivor of the Twelve), the apostle Paul maintained a high standard for church leadership when he wrote these instructions to Timothy. It's good for us to step back once in a while to refresh ourselves on the qualifications for leadership in the body of Christ. The writer of Hebrews wanted us as believers to give our leaders the respect and cooperation they need to carry out their service, for which they are accountable to God. Paul saw to it that the leaders selected were worthy of the respect demanded of God's people.

The word "elder" here could be translated as "bishop" or "overseer." The more common word for elder, from which the English word "presbyter" comes, is used elsewhere to describe the same office. It involves giving direction and spiritual oversight to the church, especially including the work of preaching and teaching the Word.

Someone might look at the demands of spiritual leadership, and the accountability required, and wonder why anyone would want the job of elder. But Paul encourages those who feel that God is calling them to this work.

These verses concerning elders contain fifteen separate qualifications. They range widely across the span of a man's life from the church to his home to his relationships with other people, including unbelievers. A person holding this office should also be

""hospitable"" and ""able to teach"" (v. 2).

Along with his gifts, the elder in any local church--whether pastor or lay leader--needs control and balance in his personal and family life so that he is not vulnerable to falling into some area of temptation. It takes time for someone to establish these kinds of credentials, and it takes maturity not to be carried away by the power associated with leadership. This explains why the elder needs to have a good ""track record"" in the faith.

APPLY THE WORD Any parent who has had to deal with a cantankerous, contrary child knows why the writer of Hebrews urges us not to make things hard for our pastors.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. - 1 Timothy 3:1

TODAY IN THE WORD How does one get to be a leader? "Leaders aren't born, they're made," said football coach Vince Lombardi. "And they are made just like anything else, through hard work." What are the secrets to good leadership? Former President Dwight Eisenhower advised, "You do not lead by hitting people over the head—that's assault, not leadership." Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair noted, "The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes."

Today's reading kicks off a six-day examination of what the Bible says about church leadership. Yesterday's devotional already taught us that leaders must help build up the body of Christ toward maturity and a fuller expression of spiritual unity. Only two specific leadership offices, overseer and deacon, are mentioned in Scripture, though different churches use different names (pastor, elder, bishop, etc.). Overseers are responsible for teaching, preaching, and evangelism, and deacons are responsible for practical service. Today's passage is one of two main passages laying out the qualifications for the "noble task" of the overseer (v. 1). These qualifications can be examined under three headings. First, an overseer must have excellent moral and spiritual qualities. He should be a person of integrity, faithful in marriage, self-disciplined, and with priorities in the right order.

Second, an overseer should manage his own family well before he can be considered for church leadership. The care of the home is explicitly said to be an analogy and preparation for caring for the local congregation. As individualistic Americans, we might resist this line of thinking, but Paul was quite clear here that children's behavior reflects on their parent.

Third, an overseer must have spiritual maturity. Specifically, he should not be a recent convert, but old enough in the faith to resist pride and be able to teach sound doctrine. He should also have a "good reputation with outsiders," especially given that Satan delights in bringing down church leaders.

APPLY THE WORD Do you know how your church or denomination is governed? What roles do overseers and deacons play, and what terms does your church use? How much authority do pastors hold? On what issues does the congregation vote (if applicable)? How are leaders held accountable? How do ordinary church members learn about leadership decisions? Ways to find out about these matters include reading the church constitution, talking to your pastor, or taking a church membership class.

1 Timothy 3:7

In The Spotlight

By Mart De Haan

Rosa Parks' refusal in 1955 to give her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, was a turning point in the civil rights struggle. So in 1994, the public was stunned when 80-year-old Rosa was robbed and mugged in her home by an intruder. A short time later, an alert citizen recognized the suspect from a police photo and with a friend held Rosa's mugger until police could arrive.

But the public spotlight was not good for the new hero. After he gave a TV interview, FBI agents recognized him as a fugitive from the law. They arrested him for driving the getaway car in a 1991 robbery of an automatic teller machine.

This incident illustrates the truth that unresolved sin can rob a person of the honor of being known for doing good. This is why Paul emphasized in 1 Timothy 3 how important it is for church leaders to have a good conscience and a blameless record of dealing with their own sin. Those who want to be known for walking with Christ must face and deal with anything that would disqualify them from receiving that honor.

Living with a good conscience isn't just a religious and moral obligation. It's the only way to be able to walk with Christ in the spotlight of a watching world.

"Be sure your sin will find you out,"

The warning is for you;

But if you're quick to deal with sin,

Your witness will ring true. —Hess

You can't put your sins behind you until you're ready to face them.

1 Timothy 3:8-15 (See also devotional below)

TODAY IN THE WORD Bible teacher Chuck Swindoll once described a neighborhood kids' club that had a humorous, but wise, list of rules for its members. The rules were beautiful in their simplicity: ""Nobody act big. Nobody act small. Everybody act medium.""

That's a list of rules anyone can keep! Those children may not have read 1 Timothy 3, but their club membership rules come very close expressing the New Testament standard for the body of Christ.

No members of the body should be inflated with pride because they consider themselves bigger or more important than others. Nor does God want His people dropping their heads and shuffling through life with a false idea of humility that someone has aptly termed ""worm theology.""

Acting ""medium"" is a good standard after which to strive. Paul described it as evaluating ourselves with balanced judgment (Ro 12:3). The office or ministry of deacon is a good example of the balance the Bible wants us to have.

Clearly, this office is subordinate to that of elder in the administration of the church. The ""prototypes"" of the deacon's ministry were the seven men chosen by the church to help administer aid to the church's dependent widows in Jerusalem so the apostles could concentrate on prayer and preaching the Word (Acts 6:1-7).

But while the deacon's role is one of service, there is nothing second-rate about the qualifications needed for the office. Deacons need to be committed to the truth, which means they need to know God's Word. Personal integrity and a solid marriage and home life are also high on the list.

Deacons who do their jobs well are worthy of ""excellent standing"" in the body of Christ. This is not a self-conferred honor, but respect from the church that is given to people who take their spiritual responsibilities seriously and show others an appropriate way to behave in God's work.

APPLY THE WORD Whatever term your church may apply to the people who keep the facilities in good shape and perform other physical services, chances are your congregation couldn't function without these servants. The deacons of Acts 6 were not only good administrators. Stephen and his friends were also men of the Word. If your church is blessed with people like this, they are worthy of your respect. Why not also encourage one of these special servants with a note or word of appreciation this Sunday? Expressing thanks seems to be our calling this month!

1 Timothy 3:8-15

TODAY IN THE WORD In the months surrounding last November's election, we heard a lot about "vetting." The two presidential candidates vetted potential running mates, then President-elect Obama vetted his choices for Cabinet and other leadership positions. "Vetting" indicates close and thorough investigation and evaluation. Politically speaking, it involves exhaustive background checks and interviews, since no one wants a "skeleton in the closet" to emerge as a surprise that discredits the person. Vetting is a time-consuming and detailed process, but it is considered an essential prerequisite to political leadership.

The passages we've been studying these past few days give biblical guidelines for "vetting" church leaders. In particular, the description of potential deacons being "tested" to make sure "there is nothing against them" sounds much like the political vetting process. Today's reading lists the general qualifications for deacons, a word meaning simply "one who serves." The standards are similar to those described earlier for overseers. Deacons too must be righteous persons with a solid grasp of sound doctrine and whose families are ably led. The phrase translated "their wives" (v. 11) might also be translated "deaconesses" or even indicate that deacons and their wives served together in leadership. Some churches today treat female deacons as a separate leadership office, some open the office to both men and women, and others commission husbands and wives to serve together.

Church leadership theories abound, but we must be careful not to see the church as a merely human organization (vv. 14-15). It is "God's household ... the pillar and foundation of the truth." It is a living organism, charged with living out the mystery of redemption. It is the body of Christ and He is the Head. No wonder our conduct within such a "household" is so important, and no wonder our leaders must meet such high standards of spiritual accountability.

APPLY THE WORD Our culture promotes notions of leadership that include striving for the top, taking advantage of opportunities

(and others), and being in charge to get your own way. These do not match the qualities of biblical leadership found in Scripture. Today, pray for leaders in the church, that their ministry will be characterized by godliness, not worldly ideas about power.

1 Timothy 3:14-15 I am writing you these instructions so that... you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household. - Chuck Swindoll once described a neighborhood kids' club that had a humorous, but wise, list of rules for its members. The rules were beautiful in their simplicity: ""Nobody act big. Nobody act small. Everybody act medium."" That's a list of rules anyone can keep! (Today in the Word)

1 Timothy Devotionals J R Miller

1 Timothy 1:14 The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant. - J R Miller

Some one has said that to him the greatest wonder in the story of divine grace was that he himself had been saved. Paul seems to have felt the same wonder regarding himself. He had been a blasphemer, a persecutor; yet Christ had chosen him for His service. In this the grace of Christ abounded exceedingly.

Note also that the apostle says as to the reason why he had been thus saved: "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief - chief of sinners - might Jesus Christ shew forth all His longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on Him." That is, the reason Paul was forgiven and made a preacher was that no other sinner need ever despair. If he could be forgiven, after all he had done against Christ, anybody could be forgiven. Christ saved the chief sinner that lesser sinners ever after might have confidence as they sought mercy. But every one of us may also wonder why we are saved, for not one of us is worthy.

1 Timothy 3:15 That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God. - - J R Miller

It is important that those who occupy official positions in the Church shall be worthy, and that they fittingly "behave themselves in the house of God." The minister should be without reproach. His name should be like ointment poured forth. He should be "temperate," using the word in its broader sense; he should have his temper, his speech, his feelings, his appetites, under complete mastery. He should be soberminded - not long-faced, but serious, reverent. He should be apt to teach; gentle, not contentious. He should be well spoken of among those who are outside.

Other church officers are under scarcely less holy sanctions. Deacons must be grave, not double-tongued, not greedy for money, holding faith in a pure conscience, and living a blameless life. Holiness becometh God's house, and all who are active in its affairs should be reverent, sincere, and worthy examples to all who look to them as their leaders. Unfit behavior in official church members hurts Christ's cause.

1 Timothy 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee. -- J R Miller

We should make the best possible use of our gifts and talents. Timothy was exhorted not to neglect the gift that was in him, referring to his ordination to the ministry. When a man is thus set apart his holy office is a gift. Then there are gifts which are part of one's natural endowment or come through education and experience. Whatever gifts of any kind we possess, we should use, not neglecting them.

In another place Paul exhorts Timothy to stir up the gift of God that was in him. The words suggest a fire banked up, not burning brightly, needing to be stirred up. Timothy was not living at his best, was not making the most of his life.

There are many Christian people who are good, but not nearly so good as they might be. They are useful, doing good service, but they are capable of doing a great deal more. The fires of their love, their earnestness, their enthusiasm, need stirring up. No gift or capacity of ours should be neglected or buried.

1 Timothy 5:1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father. -- J R Miller

It takes a great deal of tact to tell others of their faults so that good will come from the telling. Not many people accept reproof or criticism kindly. Many resent any and every suggestion of fault or blame. One would think that children would be glad to have their parents tell them of their mistakes, but even children are too often vexed by words of reproof, however gently given.

If only we could see how we might be benefited by learning of our faults, we should rejoice when anyone points out something in us that is unbeautiful. But most of us are proud, and it hurts us for any person to tell of anything in us that is a blemish. So it requires all the wisdom and delicacy of touch we can command to administer reproof. Some people just blurt it out, without any attempt to do it gently. If we have to give reproof, we would better do it in as kindly a way as possible. Paul suggested that an elder should not be rebuked but exhorted, and that gently.

1 Timothy 6:6 Godliness with contentment is great gain. - J R Miller

Contentment does not mean satisfaction - with our great natures we never can be satisfied. Being contented does not mean that a person enjoys discomforts, hardships, narrow circumstances, sufferings. That would be unnatural. To be contented is to accept one's condition and circumstances, whatever they may be for the time, without complaining or fretting, making the best of them.

In another place Paul speaks about his own experience in attaining this grace. He says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." He had learned to be independent of conditions. He had in his own heart the resources for quiet and peace, so that in the barest circumstances he did not fret. It is interesting to notice that Paul says he had learned to be content. This suggests that it did not come to him naturally, but with something he had to learn. He intimates to Timothy that he who is contented is rich, though he have only godliness. Discontent is poverty, though a man have millions.

1 Timothy 3:15 - ...that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. - Octavius Winslow

God has been graciously pleased to appoint His church the great conservator of His truth, and His truth the especial medium of sanctification to His church; there is a close and beautiful relation between the two. The church may be compared to the golden lamp which contains the sacred oil, which, in its turn, feeds the flame of its light and holiness. The church is to guard with a jealous and vigilant eye the purity of the truth, while the truth is to beautify and sanctify the ark which preserves it. Thus there is a close relation, and a reciprocal influence, between the church of Christ and the truth of God.

Every individual believer in Jesus is himself a subject, and therefore a witness, of the truth; he has been quickened, called, renewed, and partially sanctified through the instrumentality of God's revealed truth: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." "For the truth's sake which dwells in us." "You are my witnesses, says the Lord." Here is unfolded one of the most solemn and affecting truths touching the character and individual responsibility of a child of God. He is a subject of truth, he is a repository of the truth, and he is a witness for the truth; yes, he is the only living witness to the truth which God has on earth. The world he lives in is a dark, polluted, God-blaspheming, Christ-denying, truth-despising world. The saints, who have been called out of it according to His eternal purpose and love, and by His sovereign, distinguishing, and free grace, are the only lights and the only salt in the midst of this moral darkness and corruption. Here and there a light glimmers, irradiating the gloomy sphere in which it moves; here and there a spot of verdure appears, relieving the arid and barren desolation by which it is surrounded. These are the saints of the Most High, the witnesses of the Divine character, the omnipotent power, and the holy tendency, of God's blessed truth. Let the saints of God, then, solemnly weigh this affecting fact, that though the written word and the accompanying Spirit are God's witnesses in the world, yet they are the only living exemplification of the power of the truth, and, as such, are earnestly exhorted to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." Let them be careful to maintain good works, and so walk in all the holiness of the truth they profess; let them see that by no carelessness of deportment, by no want of integrity, by no worldly conformity, yes, by no inconsistency whatever, they bring a slur upon the holy doctrines they avowedly maintain and love; but let them show that, with the truth in their judgments, they possess grace in the heart, and unspotted holiness in the life.

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1 Timothy 3:16a And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness - - Octavius Winslow

The doctrine of the Incarnation presents a gospel mystery, if possible, more astonishing than that of the Trinity. We can more easily understand that there should be three people in a unity of subsistence, than that God should be manifested in the flesh. The analogy of the one meets us everywhere; turn we the eye within ourselves, or turn we it without upon the broad expanse of God's creation-from every point of observation, a trinity of existence bursts upon our view. But, of the other, in vain we search for anything approaching to resemblance. It was a thing so unheard of and so strange, so marvelous and so unique-that there was nothing in the sublime or the rude, in the bold or the tender, of nature's varied works, to prepare the mind for, or awaken the expectation of, a phenomenon so strange, so stupendous, and so mysterious. Not that the possibility of such an event astonishes us. With Jehovah all things are possible. "Is anything too hard for me?" is a question that would seem to rebuke the first rising of such an emotion - A God allowed, all other wonders cease.

But we marvel at the fact itself. Its stupendousness amazes us-its condescension humbles us-its glory dazzles us-its tenderness subdues us-its love overpowers us. That the uncreated Son of God should become the created Son of man-that the Eternal Word should be made flesh and dwell with men-that He should assume a new title, entwining in the awful letters that compose His divine name, others denoting His inferior nature as man, so revealing Himself as Jehovah-Jesus! Oh wonder, surpassing thought! Before this, how are all others infinitely outshone; their luster fading away and disappearing, as stars before the advancing light?

The mystical union of Christ and His church is also declared to be one of the mysteries of the gospel. "This is a great mystery;" says the apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and His church." That Christ and His people should be one-one as the head and the body-the vine and the branch-the foundation and the house-is indeed a wondrous truth. We cannot understand how it is; and yet so many, palpable, and gracious are the blessings flowing from it, we dare not reject it. All that a believer is, as a living soul, he is from a vital union with Christ. As the body without the soul is dead, so is a sinner morally dead without union to Jesus. Not only His life, but his fruitfulness is derived from this source. All the "beauties of holiness" that adorn his character, spring from the vital principle which his engrafting into Christ produces. He is skillful to fight, strong to overcome, patient to endure, meek to suffer, and wise to walk, as he lives on Christ for the grace of sanctification. "Without me you can do nothing." Is it not indeed a mystery that I should so be one with Christ, that all that He is becomes mine, and all that I am becomes His. His glory mine, my humiliation His; His righteousness mine, my guilt His; His joy mine, my sorrow His. Mine His riches, His my poverty; mine His life, His my death; mine His heaven, His my hell? The daily walk of faith is a continuous development of the wonders of this wondrous truth. That in traveling to Him empty, I should return from Him full. That in going to him weak, I should come away from Him strong. That in bending my steps to Him, in all darkness, perplexity, and grief, I should retrace them all light, and joy, and gladness. Why marvel at this mystery of the life of faith? My oneness with Jesus explains it.

1 Timothy 3:16 ...God was manifest in the flesh - Octavius Winslow

Viewed as a medium of the most costly blessings to the church of God, how precious a mystery does the incarnation of our Lord appear! The union of the Divine and the human in Immanuel, is the reunion of God through the second Adam with fallen man. The first Adam severed us from the Divine nature-the second Adam reunites us. The incarnation is the grand link between these two extremes of being. It forms the verdant spot, the oasis, in the desert of a ruined universe, on which God and the sinner can meet together. Here are blended in marvelous union the gloomy clouds of human woe, and the bright beams of Divine glory-God and man

united! And will you, O theist, rob me of this truth, because of its mystery? Will you yourself reject it, because reason cannot grasp it? Then might I rob you of your God (whom you ignorantly worship), because of His incomprehensibility, not one attribute of whom can you understand or explain. No! It is a truth too precious to part with so easily. God in my nature-my God-my Brother-my Friend-my Counselor-my Guide-my Redeemer-my Pattern-my all! God in my nature, my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, my redemption!

But for this heaven-descending communication, of which the patriarch's ladder was the symbol and the type, how could a holy God advance towards me, or I draw near to Him? But He takes my nature that He may descend to me, and He gives me His nature that I may ascend to Him. He stoops, because I could not rise! Oh mystery of grace, wisdom, and love! Shall I doubt it? I go to the manger of Bethlehem, and gaze upon the infant Savior. My faith is staggered, and I exclaim, "Is this the Son of God?" Retiring, I track that infant's steps along its future path. I mark the wisdom that He displayed, and I behold the wonders that He wrought. I mark the revelations that He disclosed, the doctrines that He propounded, the precepts that He taught, the magnanimity that He displayed. I follow Him to Gethsemane, to the judgment-hall, and then to Calvary, and I witness the closing scene of wonder. I return to Bethlehem, and with the evidences which my hesitating faith has thus collected, I exclaim, with the awe-struck and believing centurion, "Truly this is the Son of God!" All the mystery of His lowly incarnation vanishes, and my adoring soul embraces the incarnate God within its arms. We marvel not that, hovering over the spot where this great mystery of godliness transpired, the celestial choir, in the stillness of the night, awoke such strains of music along the plains of Bethlehem as were never heard before. They left the realms of glory to escort the Lord of glory in His advent to our earth. How gladly they trooped around Him, thronging His wondrous way, their benevolent bosoms dilating in sympathy with the grand object of His mission. And this was the angel's message to the astonished shepherds: "Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men." Shall angels rejoice in the incarnation of the Son of God, and our hearts be cold and unmoved? Forbid it love, forbid it gratitude, forbid it, O my soul!

1 Timothy 3:16 The Man On The Cross

By Dave Branon

In today's anything-goes world, it should be no surprise that there's a group called Atheists for Jesus. They claim to believe in Jesus' moral teachings but not what He said about God.

They are not alone. Others who may not consider themselves atheists fail to see that it's impossible to accept Jesus' words without also accepting His divinity.

Stand at the foot of the cross, and your only possible conclusion is that Jesus is divine. Listen to Him forgive those who sought to destroy Him, and you realize that only God can forgive with such grace. Overhear Him speak hope to the dying criminal at His side, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:43). Catch His words above the wails of the mourners as He does what no human can—He commits His spirit to God the Father, in effect releasing Himself to death (Lk. 23:46; Jn. 10:17-18).

This was no mortal hanging below a sign with the mocking words that underestimated His identity (Lk. 23:38). This was God Incarnate, doing the work He alone could do—by becoming Immanuel, God with us (Mt. 1:23).

Jesus was not just a man who was blessed with wisdom. Never think of Him as anyone less than God the Son. His words and work on the cross prove His divinity.

Eternal with the Father, One,

Is Jesus Christ, His own dear Son;

In Him God's fullness we can see,

For Jesus Christ is deity. —DJJ

Jesus is God spelled out in language we can understand.

1 Timothy 3:14-4:10 A Good Church

By Herbert Vander Lugt

A television documentary showed several types of worship services in American churches. I liked some of what I saw but was

troubled by an emphasis on being entertained instead of being led in worship. The focus of many services was on having fun rather than on worshipping the Lord.

This is more than a matter of differing styles. I've been enriched in highly liturgical as well as in less formal services. I have also been edified in gatherings marked by spontaneity and freedom. But in all of these there was a genuine sense of worship.

The one indispensable element of a good church service is the celebration of God's great redeeming acts in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. These saving events were the theme of an early church hymn quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16, and they were to be central in the message Paul urged Timothy to proclaim (4:6-10).

We ought to praise God joyfully for all of His blessings, both spiritual and temporal. But we must also be good listeners to the instruction and challenges of God's Word. This combination of the inflow of God's Word and the outflow of worship is what makes for a good church service.

The quiet hush of reverent hearts

Prepares us for God's Word,

And brings a stillness to our lives

That lets His voice be heard. —DJD

In some churches there is more commotion and emotion than devotion.

1 Timothy 3:16 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Homily)

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.

It is more than likely that this is a fragment of one of the earliest hymns of the Church. In her hymns, and maintenance of the ordinances, she thus becomes the pillar and ground of the truth. The words "mystery of godliness" are probably a general heading which is further unfolded and expanded in the six following sentences, which may have been sung antiphonally:—

"God was manifest in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit. Seen of angels, Preached unto the Gentiles. Believed on in the world, Received up into glory."

The Extremes of Manifestation. — The Eternal Word was manifested in the flesh. But it was not simply a physical manifestation; we cannot forget the descent of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, or the authentication of his words which the Spirit gave in signs and wonders, and convinced hearts, and converted lives.

The Extremes of Created Intelligence. — Angels worship Him; and Gentiles, sunk in heathen darkness, hear the story of his wondrous love. Jesus is the centre of all worlds: from heaven's bright spaces they come to Him on the one hand; from earth's dark sins they come on the other. In Him meet angels and men.

The Extremes of Space. — Glory is above: "He was received up into glory." The world is but a speck, a mote in the beam of eternity. How great the space between the two! But the feet of our Emmanuel have trodden its low pavement, and He has now taken to Himself his former glory. Like Jacob's ladder, He links earth with the throne of God.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 Church Leaders

Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. - 1 Timothy 3:13

During President Bill Clinton's impeachment hearings, some people questioned the fairness of judging public officials for their "weekend" behavior. Could they not fulfill the duties of their public office despite their private moral failures?

As Christians we know that the conduct and character—whether public or private—cannot be separated. God sees and knows all, and He's as concerned with our attitudes as He is with our actions. The list of qualifications for overseers and deacons reveals this. It includes both the public and private dimensions of life. That's why the standard for a leader's conduct is set high. It must be evident that Jesus Christ has taken hold of his life from the inside out if he is to be selected for this ministry.

Tomorrow we'll look more in depth at the actual specifications for overseers and deacons, most of which are the same, a few of which are different. Today, however, we'll consider some of the implications for leadership that we see in this passage: examination, responsibility, accountability, and reward.

The first three elements should sober anyone who would aspire to this noble task. The first, examination, means that his life and

family should be scrutinized (1Timothy 3:10). The reason for this is not for the purpose of fault-finding but for the purpose of understanding whether someone fulfills the requirements of the position. Secondly, leadership in the church is an enormous responsibility. Leading a family is challenging; leading a church requires that much more wisdom and grace from God (1Timothy 3:5).

Third, leaders are accountable to a scriptural standard of behavior. Not only must they meet these requirements to become a leader, they must also continue to live uprightly. The good news is that the task is well worth it. The fourth point reminds us that the reward will be great for those who lead well in the church (1Timothy 3:13).

If you are a leader in the church, reflect on this passage in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to examine your life and ministry. If you are not in a position of church leadership, spend time praying for your pastor and others who lead your church. Pray especially for their families, as they are included here as a vital part of God's blessing and responsibility for a pastor. Pray, too, that those serving faithfully will experience God's rich rewards.

1 Timothy 3:1-13a Do As I Do!

My way of life in Christ Jesus ... agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. - 1 Corinthians 4:17

"Do as I say, not as I do," is one of the worst kinds of parenting. Children left with no clear example to follow don't know what to do or who to be! The angry retort of a child infuriated by his parents' hypocrisy is: "Practice what you preach!"

The example of leaders is powerful in the church, whether for good or for bad. When leaders make bad choices, churches are deeply wounded by their hypocrisy, sometimes even causing people to doubt the gospel. But when leaders make good choices and lead exemplary lives, this inspires all those watching. That's why the issue of personal conduct is the root of many of these qualifications for overseers and deacons. Surprisingly, this list in 1 Timothy has little to say about what leaders should believe. But it has much to say about how they should live. While it's often easy to assert what we believe, it's much harder to prove it by our actions.

The code of conduct here for elders and deacons is like a series of concentric circles. All of the areas overlap, but they begin at the very center of a man's life: his character. What kind of control does he have over his body and mind? Is he given to addictions? Is he about momentary pleasures and impulses, or sober-minded service to Christ?

The next circle out is the arena of the family. Is he loyal to his wife? Is he raising his children according to biblical principles? Or are things out of control in his home?

After family responsibilities come ministry responsibilities. Elders are required to exercise more spiritual authority and responsibility than deacons; their responsibilities include hospitality, teaching, and oversight of the church's congregation. Deacons, whose name is from the word meaning "servant," gladly give themselves to the practical matters of church life.

The final circle of qualification is the most public: reputation. Are they known to be trustworthy and respectable?

Whether you're a man or woman, leader in the church or not, the four areas of character, family, ministry, and reputation provide a helpful start for prayerful self-examination. Are you living differently in private than in public? Are you living lovingly and in harmony with your family? How are you serving Christ with the gifts and opportunities that you have? Last, does your reputation in the neighborhood and workplace reflect the reality of a Christlike life?

1 Timothy 3:14-16 Character Ethic

God has chosen to make known ... the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. - Colossians 1:27

Steven Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, researched over 200 years of "success" literature to find common principles for personal success and fulfillment. What he immediately noticed was the "character ethic," the principle that he says emphasizes who we are matters most in what we do.

Personal change does not happen solely as the result of the integration of good habits into one's life. While important, habits cannot make us into the person we want to be. Today's passage gives us the real "secret" for godliness.

Godly conduct is rooted completely in our identity in Christ. This passage reveals the primary purpose for Paul's letter to Timothy, that "you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household" (1Ti 3:15). There is an imperative for personal holiness in the church.

We are called to godliness because we belong to the family, or household, of God. We are the church of the living God, which emphasizes the personal and active presence of God in our lives. We don't serve mute idols. We don't serve an impersonal force.

We serve a God who speaks to us and who listens to us. And we are a people who represent the truth. We represent steadfast, eternal realities that do not shift with cultural tides. Our calling is to represent the God we serve to a world that prefers not to acknowledge Him.

We are pressured on every side to forsake this high calling, and we will fail in it if we do not understand “the mystery of godliness.” We cannot depend upon ourselves, our habits, our energies, and our abilities to get the job done. The secret of the Christian life is about our union with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit within us. The mystery entails what Christ has done and who He is (v. 16). And that also is what matters most. By allowing Him to live His life through us, we have our ultimate “hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

If we want to be completely united with Christ, we need to confess and repent from deliberate sin. When we persist in deliberate sin, the Bible says that we “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (Eph. 4:30). Thankfully, our confession and repentance will be met with forgiveness (1 John 1:9). As the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, He also guides us to the truth of forgiveness through the work of Jesus. As He works in our lives, we can expect nothing less than change as dramatic as resurrection (cf. Rom. 8:11).

1 Timothy 3:14-16

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. - Matthew 16:16

TODAY IN THE WORD For hundreds of years, various denominations have used manuals of Christian instruction known as catechisms to instruct believers in the basic truths of the faith, usually in preparation for baptism. The term 'catechism' is taken from a Greek word that means 'to teach' or 'to instruct,' and many of the catechisms achieved that goal in admirable ways.

The method often included a question-and-answer format that required the student to answer the instructor's question concerning a particular spiritual truth or article of Christian faith. The catechetical method also involved much memory work, especially before the invention of printing when written texts were scarce. The genius of the church's great catechisms, such as the Westminster Larger Catechism of 1647, was the way in which they captured the Bible's teaching in a concise and memorable way.

The writers of the catechisms had a good model for this method. Today's reading shows that the early church also used concise summaries of truth to train and instruct believers. Some believe this confession Paul recorded was part of an early hymn, composed to capsule the basics of Christ's life and ministry: His incarnation, resurrection (His vindication 'by the Spirit'), and ascension.

Summaries like this are another proof of how much theology mattered to Paul and the first-century saints to whom he ministered. Years earlier, he had warned the elders from Ephesus that after his departure, the church would be attacked by 'savage wolves' who would tear at the body of Christ (Acts 20:29).

Sadder still, 'Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth' (v. 30). Paul lived to see it happen in the churches he founded (see yesterday's study), and it's still happening today.

The good news is that knowing the truth is still the best defense against heresy. The not-so-good news is that as a whole, modern-day Christians aren't big on the idea of the systematic learning of truth. We need to take a cue from our ancestors. When even the shepherd boys were armed with theological truth through catechism, the wolves had a harder time getting to the flock.

1 Timothy 3:17 (Read: Esther 1:9-15)

TODAY IN THE WORD Princess Diana was frequently considered one of the most beautiful, desirable women in the world. Men wanted to be with her; women wanted to be her. She seemed to have it all—a fairy-tale wedding, beauty, and access to one of the greatest fortunes in the world. Yet, as Diana told friends, she was deeply unhappy, partly because her husband was in love with someone else. All of her beauty and charm and wealth could not guarantee her the love of someone else.

King Xerxes discovered this same limit to his power in today's reading. At the end of the lavish feast he'd been throwing, he was completely drunk and “in high spirits” (v. 10). He had been a tremendous host to the entire kingdom, winning their affection with food and wine. And by his lavish hospitality, he was ensuring their loyalty as royal subjects. His final boast concerned the beauty of his wife, Queen Vashti. Nothing was missing from this picture of power and prominence: he had the greatest political influence of that time, wealth beyond measure, and now a wife for all to envy.

There was only one problem—she snubbed him! After King Xerxes went to such great lengths to display his power, he felt sure to be mocked for his impotence to rule in his own household. Little wonder he “became furious and burned with anger!” (v. 12). This was no simple domestic quarrel—it threatened to damage the image of power he worked so hard to create. And that's why today's reading ends with a council of the experts in law and justice. Queen Vashti had to be punished for her insubordination to the king.

Yesterday we talked about “drawing back the curtain” on human power in the book of Esther. Today's reading shows us that no human being, not even a powerful king like Xerxes, has absolute authority or control. We discover a great theological treasure here

in Esther. King Xerxes provides a contrast for the one true King “eternal, immortal, invisible” (1 Tim. 1:17). It is He alone who has true power over all of creation.

APPLY THE WORD Job declares of our God, “He stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases” (Job. 23:13). Because it's true that God's power and plans cannot be thwarted, it would be foolish to attempt life without Him. A symptom of this tends to be our own prayerlessness. Make a new habit to begin your day by prayerfully naming each item on your to-do list and calendar. Pray for wisdom in what you have planned, grace for the interruptions, and faithfulness to the Spirit's unexpected leadings.

1 TIMOTHY 4

1 Timothy 4:1-10 Legalism

We have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe. - 1 Timothy 4:10

Some rules have changed on many Christian college campuses over the past few decades. There was a time when few Christian colleges permitted students to watch movies, play cards, or leave campus in the evening. Most enforced a stricter dress code. Now many colleges have relaxed these policies, and some lament a creeping moral laxity among Christians. Others celebrate the move away from what they call legalism.

Christians struggle to define the “gray” areas of Christian conduct. We easily commit errors of either permitting too much or too little. Today we read about one of those extremes, the tragic consequences of legalism in the church.

Chapter four begins with a reference to “later times,” but Paul obviously believes these problems have begun in the Ephesian church. False teachers have told believers to avoid marriage and certain foods in order to grow spiritually (1Ti 4:3). And that's usually the formula of legalism: restrictions of external behavior without regard for the sins of the heart.

The effects were devastating. When we are tempted to think that legalism is a minor error, we should be warned that it's one of Satan's greatest strategies in the church. The teachers had become desensitized to sin. Those who followed their teaching had and would soon “abandon the faith” (1Ti 4:1). Legalism keeps us from many of God's blessings that He intended us to receive with thanksgiving (1Ti 4:4). And it fails to ensure greater holiness!

Timothy received instructions from Paul to avoid these errors and keep his hope in Jesus. By Christ and in Christ, we are saved and sanctified. This is the message of Scripture where we find the sum of all “the truths of the faith” (1Ti 4:6). We must stick with the message of the Bible, avoiding formulas or rules and restrictions as a method to get us closer to God, instead embracing a living faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 4:1-11

Faith And Medicine

By Dennis J. De Haan

Several years ago a young boy died of an illness because his parents refused to call a doctor. They believed that to use medicine implied a lack of faith in God. After the boy's death, they said, “It is God's will.”

In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul advised Timothy to take wine for his stomach's sake and for his “frequent infirmities.” Bible scholars aren't sure what Timothy suffered from. Some say he had a nervous condition. Others say that Paul advised wine as a substitute for unsafe drinking water. Whatever the problem, Paul was recommending that Timothy take wine as a remedy for a physical or emotional condition.

Earlier Paul had told Timothy that every created thing is good and is not “to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4-5). This assures us that God approves of our using available means to promote health, including medicine. But there is one important requirement: We must pray about it and receive it with thanksgiving.

How grateful we can be for medical advances that improve the quality of our lives and give us more years to serve Him! But let's always remember that with or without medicine, God is the source of all healing.

The God who graciously imparts the skill

To hands that practice healing arts is still

The solitary source of every breath,

And He alone delivers us from death. —Gustafson

Asking God for miracles is no substitute for using God-given means.

1 Timothy 4:1-5a

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure. - Hebrews 13:4

TODAY IN THE WORD In a recent issue of Worldwide Challengemagazine, Mike Clapper tells of a decision he made before his marriage in August 1999. "As I grew in my faith, I developed a strong desire to honor the woman I would marry. What would make my wife feel special? I would think. It occurred to me that saving my first kiss for my wife (not just my fiancée) would make her feel special. I came to believe that unless I actually committed myself to a woman for life, I had not earned the right to kiss her." Clapper kept his pledge; his wedding-day kiss to his wife Lauri was their first.

A commitment like this is certainly out of the ordinary, yet we need to see this young man's deep desire before God to honor his marriage and his future partner. This desire reflects God's will concerning the value of marriage. God wants all of His people to give a high degree of honor to the marriage covenant.

Paul affirmed the honorable nature of marriage in the middle of a serious warning to his spiritual son, Timothy. Although marriage was not the apostle's main subject here, he used it as a prime example of a gift that God had ordained and blessed and that false teachers tried to distort.

These pseudo-disciples picked out marriage as something to be renounced for no reason other than their attempt at self-righteousness by replacing God's standards with man-made regulations. This kind of false religion is useless; it carries no weight with God.

The Bible affirms that marriage is one of God's good gifts, to be enjoyed with thanksgiving. The people about whom Paul was writing denigrated and dishonored marriage by their teaching. It's fair to say we are living in the "later times" (v. 1), and we have seen this brand of false spirituality in several cults over the past few years.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Know Your Limits

By Dennis J. De Haan

Dogs are intelligent, but Charles Medley of Rockford, Illinois, had some doubts about his dog Bullet. Whenever Bullet heard a squirrel, a rabbit, or a person, he would take off like a shot in the direction of that sound. It didn't matter that he was tied up. By the time he reached the end of his rope, he'd be traveling at maximum velocity, heading straight for his target. But in an instant, his strong rope would pull taut and jerk Bullet to a jarring, sprawling halt. That beagle never learned his limits.

God has built into us a moral tug on the soul whenever we go beyond what is good for us. It's called conscience. Unlike Bullet's rope, however, it doesn't stop us from going too far. Furthermore, conscience can be deadened when we violate it repeatedly, and it can be programmed with wrong information so that we may feel guilty when no real guilt exists, or we may be guilty and not feel it.

We must learn the moral limits God places on us for our own good and then choose to live within them. By reading God's Word and trusting His Spirit to teach us, our conscience becomes attuned to God's standard of right and wrong. This helps us to know our limits and to experience the freedom and joy that living within them brings.

My conscience must be well-informed From God's own sacred Word; For conscience may be much deformed When standards pure are spurned. —Fraser

Conscience can be our compass if the Word of God is our chart.

1 Timothy 4:1-11

Training For Life

By David C. McCasland

When Dean Karnazes completed the 26.2-mile New York Marathon in November 2006, it marked the end of an almost impossible feat of endurance. Karnazes had run 50 marathons in 50 states in 50 days. This exceptional athlete's ultra-endurance feats include: running 350 continuous miles, mountain biking for 24 hours straight, and swimming across San Francisco Bay. That level of fitness requires relentless, dedicated training.

Spiritual fitness, Paul told Timothy, also takes much more than a relaxed approach to live a God-honoring life. In a culture marked by false teaching, along with extreme forms of self-indulgence and self-denial, Paul wrote: "Exercise [train] yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

Our bodies and our minds are to be dedicated to God and prepared for His service (Rom. 12:1-2). The goal is not spiritual muscle-flexing but godliness—a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Vigorous study of the Word, focused prayer, and bodily discipline are all part of the process.

How well we train greatly affects how well we run our race of life.

Just as the body grows in strength

With exercise each day,

Our spirit grows in godliness

By living life God's way. —D. De Haan

Godly exercise is the key to godly character.

1 Timothy 4:1-5b

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. - Psalm 24:1

TODAY IN THE WORD On March 26, 1997, police discovered the dead bodies of 39 people in a large mansion in southern California, all of whom had apparently committed suicide. For most people, news of this horrific event was the first time that they'd ever heard of the Heaven's Gate cult and its bizarre leader, Marshall Applewhite. He taught that the earth was about to be wiped clean and the presence of the Hale-Bopp comet in 1997 was the sign that his followers had to leave "their earthly containers." The cult stressed hatred of this world, including one's own body. They practiced extreme forms of self-denial, including giving away most of their possessions and renouncing anything considered to be indulgent.

Although the final events of the Heaven's Gate cult shocked many people, their grotesque practices and strange beliefs aren't new. Apparently some in Ephesus were teaching similar ideas. This explains the context of Paul's comments to Timothy, who was shepherding the Ephesian church. In his letter to the young pastor, Paul indicates clearly that the source of all such teaching is ultimately demonic. The individuals who teach these deceptions have completely rejected the truth and their consciences have become seared.

No doubt these heretics taught that their fanatical practices, including the prohibition of marriage and severe dietary restrictions, were the path to true spiritual knowledge and life. But Paul exposes this deception for what it truly is—a fundamental denial of God's creation. As we saw at the beginning of our study, the Garden of Eden is a depiction of God's perfect provision of humanity's need. Paul affirms this truth in verse 4. True spirituality can never come from denying any part of God's good creation. All that God has created is to be received gratefully. This truth is related to what we read in Romans 1 at the beginning of our study. Those who refuse to give thanks to the Creator God end up in deception and perversity.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Today's passage reminds us to receive gratefully all that God gives. Perhaps you regularly give thanks before meals. This is an excellent way to remind ourselves that everything comes from God. If you've let this habit slip in the midst of a hectic schedule, today would be a good time to start it up again. Why not consider thanking the Lord after each meal as well! As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1 Timothy 4:1-8 (See also devotional below)

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. - 1 Timothy 4:4

TODAY IN THE WORD Washington D.C.'s famous cherry trees gloriously signal the coming of spring. Every year at the end of March or the beginning of April, the National Cherry Blossom Festival attracts thousands of visitors, who come to see the annual profusion of pink and white blossoms on the city's 3,700 cherry trees.

This incredible beauty was a gift. In 1912, Japan presented a gift of cherry trees to the United States--more than 3,000 cherry trees from twelve different strains. The first two trees, which are still standing today, were planted on the north bank of the Tidal Basin, near what is now Independence Avenue.

Today's reading shows that all genuine pleasure and beauty are gifts from God. In thinking about the Christian life, we sometimes gravitate to the ideas of suffering and sacrifice, but there are other truths that complete the picture. "God's will" is not some nasty medicine we must swallow--He has prepared pleasures for us in the here-and-now as well as eternity. Ecclesiastes advises, "I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun" (Eccl. 8:15).

Paul warned Timothy about legalists and gnostics who rejected this truth. For example, God gave sexual pleasure as a gift within marriage, but some taught against it. And He gave food as well, but some had made rules about it. Such people are condemned in very strong language here!

APPLY THE WORD Paul exhorted us, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children" (Eph. 5:1).

1 Timothy 4:1-8

TODAY IN THE WORD Working in the early 1970s, engineers Irwin Lachman, Ronald Lewis, and Rodney Bagley designed a catalytic converter for automobiles. The ceramic converter, with which almost all cars today are equipped, turns toxic fumes into water vapor, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide. In the last 30 years, this device has kept an estimated three billion tons of pollutants out of the atmosphere. Last spring, President Bush awarded each of the men a National Medal of Technology. Fighting environmental pollution is part of our stewardship of creation. Analogously, the Bible fights spiritual pollution in our lives as believers.

Since God's Word is true, anything that deviates from it is false. Through Paul, the Spirit warned the church about false teachers, who "follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (v. 1). Clearly, part of spiritual warfare is discerning truth from error. These false teachers earned a harsh description—"hypocritical liars" with hardened consciences (v. 2). What teachings deserved such strong words? Legalistic prohibitions against marriage and certain foods (v. 3).

Since God's Word is holy, it consecrates not only marriage and food, but also "everything God created" (vv. 4-5). God's purpose is that we enjoy His created blessings, receiving them as blessings with thankful hearts. We believe and know the truth that He is the giver of all good gifts (James 1:17). To reject this is not merely a "lifestyle choice," but blasphemous opposition to His purposes. This truth is integrally connected to a godly life and must be clearly taught by pastors and elders (vv. 6-8).

Despite the Fall and gnostic heresies, God's material creation remains "good" and "very good" (Gen. 1). The truth of the Word gives us the right orientations: first, a grateful focus on the Giver rather than the gift; and second, a submissive attitude to the King rather than a possessive or self-centered attitude toward His world.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Thanks

By Haddon W. Robinson

A small boy visited his friend's home for dinner. When the youngster sat down at the table, he bowed his head and waited for someone to give thanks for the meal. The others at the table, however, began passing the food. The boy looked up and said, "You guys are just like my dog. You start right in!"

Writing to counter false teachers who prohibited the eating of certain foods, the apostle Paul told Timothy that all food is to be received with appreciation to God (1 Tim. 4:4-5). Food has been given to us for our nourishment and enjoyment. Our expression of thanks acknowledges that what we eat is a gift from God.

When Paul wrote to his friends in Rome, he singled out the sin of ingratitude among the pagans. He said, "Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful" (Rom. 1:21).

What does it say about our society when people sit down to a full table, while pictures of starving masses flicker on their TV screens, and never bow their heads to express appreciation for their food?

A word of thanks is always appropriate for those of us who know that our daily bread comes not only from the grocery store but ultimately from God.

The world says, "I've earned all these delights!"

By my own hand I'm clothed and kept well-fed";
But Christ our Lord looked up to loftier sights
And gave His Father thanks for daily bread. —Gustafson
Gratitude is a mark of godliness.

1 Timothy 4:2

A Cleansed Conscience

By David H. Roper

The much-loved children's story Pinocchio is about a wooden puppet whose nose grows long when he tells a lie. His friend Jiminy Cricket chirps, "Let your conscience be your guide." Pinocchio follows his advice, repents, and returns to Geppetto his creator, where he is given a heart of flesh and is freed from his strings.

There's a principle in this story for God's children. If we don't listen to that voice deep down inside that tells us what we should and should not do, we live in bondage. But a cleansed conscience brings freedom.

Some people have no strong basis for making godly decisions. Their conscience is weak, and they can be easily swayed by the behavior of others. Then there are those whose conscience is defiled. The standard by which they measure good and evil is corrupted, polluted, and impure (Titus 1:15). But saddest of all are those who have a "seared" conscience (1 Timothy 4:2). They have resisted that inner voice for so long that they no longer hear what it has to say.

But you ask, "How can we have a cleansed conscience?" We must repent of our sin and return to our Creator. We must ask Him to conform our desires and behavior to His Word and then be careful to obey it.

There is a treasure you can own
That's greater than a crown or throne;
This treasure is a conscience clear
That brings the sweetest peace and cheer. —Isenhour
Conscience is a trustworthy compass when God's Word is your true north.

1 Timothy 4:4 Earthworms And Fruit

Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused. —1 Timothy 4:4

Have you ever wondered why God made a particular creature, like mosquitos or snakes? I've often wondered about earthworms. Why did God form such creepy crawlers?

Actually, worms have an indispensable function to fulfill. Amy Stuart, in her book *The Earth Moved: On The Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms* tells us that in an average acre of ground there are countless earthworms continually breaking up the soil. Their silent and invisible activity is absolutely essential—no worms, no vegetation.

What, then, can we learn from earthworms? Not only in nature but also in our lives there are invisible forces at work. There is the silent and unseen work of prayer by those who are concerned about our well-being. There is the work of our own spiritual discipline, as we pray and meditate on God's Word. And there is the vital work of the Holy Spirit, breaking up the clogged soil of our souls and producing in us the Christlike fruit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering ..." (Galatians 5:22, 23).

In our lives and in our world, God has ordained unseen influences that bear fruit. Whether it's the lowly earthworm or the crown of God's creation—the human race—there is so much more at work than meets the eye. —Vernon C Grounds ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all. —Alexander

God's unseen work in our hearts produces fruit in our lives.

1 Timothy 4:4 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Homily)

Every creature of God is good ... if it be received with thanksgiving.

We must be very careful in applying these words. Intoxicating liquor, for instance, is sometimes described as "a good creature of God." But surely that term is not legitimate. Whatever grounds there may be for defending its use, can this text be alleged as one? For there is a great deal of human manipulation in its preparation. Before it reaches our lips, it is greatly altered by the process of fermentation. It can hardly be called God's good creature.

When we are quite sure that we are dealing with one of God's pure and unadulterated gifts, such as human love, friendship, the beauties of nature, wholesome food, fresh young spirits, the innocent mirth of the Christmas home-gathering; we must distinguish between God's gifts and our abuse of them; between his creation and our distortion of it, There are things in our lives which are not his creation or gift, and which we must resolutely refuse and put away. There are others which come to us clearly and absolutely from his hand.

Rejoice in every good thing which the Lord gives. — Rejoice! Do not enjoy things as though under the sword of Damocles, suspended by a thread.

Be careful to maintain the spirit of thanksgiving and prayer. — What you can thank God for or use in his name and for his glory; what lifts you from the gift to the Giver, or is capable of being prayed over, with no shadow of misgiving, is innocent and healthy.

Watch only against the intrusion of self. — Whatever you place between yourself and God, or rest on apart from God, or make the aim and centre of your life, is hurtful and must pass through the fire. The way to rid yourself of its poison is to insist on making it a subject of thanksgiving.

For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. - 1 Timothy 4:5 - Octavius Winslow

It is the natural tendency of Divine truth, when received into the heart, to produce holiness. The design of the whole plan of redemption was to secure the highest holiness and happiness of the creature; and when the gospel comes with the power of God unto the salvation of the soul, this end is preeminently secured. The renewed man is a pardoned man; the pardoned man becomes a holy man; and the holy man is a happy man. Look, then, at God's word, and trace the tendency of every doctrine, precept, promise, and threatening, and mark the holy influence of each. Take the doctrine of God's everlasting love to His people, as seen in their election to eternal life. How holy is the tendency of this truth! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Let not my reader turn from this glorious doctrine, because he may find it irreconcilable with others that he may hold, or because the mists of prejudice may long have veiled it from his mind; it is a revealed doctrine, and therefore to be fully received; it is a holy doctrine, and therefore to be ardently loved. Received in the heart by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, it lays the pride of man in the dust, knocking from beneath the soul all ground for self-glorying, and expands the mind with the most exalted views of the glory, grace, and love of Jehovah. He who receives the doctrine of electing love in his heart by the power of the Spirit bears about with him the material of a holy walk; its tendency is to humble, abase, and sanctify the man.

Thus holy, too, is the revealed doctrine of God's free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace. The tendency of this truth is most sanctifying: for a man to feel that God alone has made him to differ from another—that what he has, he has received—that by the free, distinguishing grace of God he is what he is—is a truth, when experienced in the heart, surely of the most holy influence. How it lays the axe at the root of self! How it stains the pride of human glory, and hushes the whispers of vain boasting! It lays the renewed sinner where he ought ever to lie, in the dust; and places the crown, where it alone ought to shine, bright and glorious, upon the head of sovereign mercy. "Lord, why me? I was far from You by wicked works; I was the least of my Father's house, and, of all, the most unworthy and unlikely object of Your love and yet Your mercy sought me—Your grace selected me out of all the rest, and made me a miracle of its omnipotent power. Lord, to what can I refer this, but to Your mere mercy, Your sovereign and free grace, entirely apart from all worth or worthiness that You did see in me? Take, therefore, my body, soul, and spirit, and let them be, in time and through eternity, a holy temple to Your glory."

All the precepts, too, are on the side of holiness. "If you love me, keep my commandments;" "Be you holy, for I am holy;" "Come out of the world and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing." "God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness;" "That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Holy precepts! May the eternal Spirit engrave them deep upon our hearts.

Not less sanctifying in their tendency are the "exceeding great and precious promises" which the word of truth contains. "Having, therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Thus holy and sanctifying are the nature and the effect of Divine truth. It is in its nature and properties most holy; it comes from a holy God and whenever and wherever it is received in the heart, as the good and incorruptible seed of the kingdom, it produces that which is in accordance with its own nature - HOLINESS. As is the tree, so are the fruits; as is the cause, so are the effects. It brings down and lays low the high thoughts of man, by revealing to him the character of God; it convinces him of his deep guilt and awful condemnation, by exhibiting the Divine law; it unfolds to him God's hatred of sin, His justice in punishing and His mercy in pardoning it, by unfolding to his view the cross of Christ; and taking entire possession of the soul, it implants new principles, supplies new motives, gives a new end, begets new joys, and inspires new hopes-in a word, diffuses itself through the whole moral man, changes it into the same image, and transforms it into "an habitation of God through the Spirit."

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

SPIRITUAL GYMNASTICS - "Exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come."-- 1 Timothy 4:7-8

THE RELATION of the body to religion has always engaged the attention of thoughtful religious men. Human opinion has oscillated between two extremes. On the one hand, some have considered that the body was the seat of sin, and have set themselves to degrade and debase it with every indignity and torture. This conception has influenced devoutly-intentioned people in the East, and also in Western monasticism. But sin must be dealt with in the heart and soul, where it has its inception and spring. It is easy to macerate the body, whilst the pride of self-mortification is undetected. If we deal with bad thought and evil suggestion, we shall not have so much trouble with the body, which is only the dial-plate, registering the workings within. The other extreme was represented in the Greek religion. The temples that stand in ruins: the superb works of art which have survived the wreck of centuries; its poetry and literature, sustain and illustrate the supreme devotion of the Greek mind to beauty. The Christian position differs from both. To us the body is the temple, the instrument, the weapon of the soul. The Holy Spirit quickens our mortal body by His indwelling, and in the faces and lives of holy men and women we may trace the growing results of the inward power and beauty of pure and undefiled religion. It is good to care for the body, but only as we should care for a complex and fine piece of machinery which is to serve us. There are gifts in us, which we must not neglect, or it will go hard with us when we meet our Master, who entrusted them to our stewardship. Probably the trials and temptations of life are intended to give us that inward training which shall bring our spiritual muscles into play. In each of us there is much unused force; many moral and spiritual faculties, which would never be used, if it were not for the wrestling which we are compelled to take up with principalities and powers, with difficulty and sorrow. The Apostle bids us take heed to ourselves, and to live in the atmosphere of uplifting thought and of self-denying ministry (1Ti 4:13, 14, 15).

PRAYER - Mould us, O God, into forms of beauty and usefulness by the wheel of Thy providence, and by the touch of Thy hand. Fulfil Thine ideal, and conform us to the image of Thy Son. AMEN.

1 Timothy 4:7

TODAY IN THE WORD Health officials in an affluent American suburb were recently alarmed to discover that sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers in their community were rising at an alarming rate. When a full-scale investigation was launched, it was discovered that two factors played into the crisis. First, the teenagers themselves had little or no knowledge of how to resist sexual temptation. Second, their parents were, for the most part, uninvolved in their children's moral development. What was true in that one American suburb is probably true nationwide. The question persists, as to what we can do to escape the moral and spiritual corruption that seems so prevalent.

During the month of May we are going to discover that God has provided for every Christian a way of escape. And the centerpiece of our study will be the seven virtues that the apostle Peter describes for us in 2 Peter 1:5-7. The context that precedes those seven virtues is very significant. Peter states that we are without excuse. Christians cannot say, "I couldn't help myself and just wasn't strong enough to resist the temptation." Neither can we respond the way a well-known comedian often did by saying, "The devil made me do it."

APPLY THE WORD Perhaps there has been some particular temptation that you have been facing in recent days, the kind of challenge that almost makes you believe you cannot escape. If so, read today's text one more time. Then thank God that He has

given you everything you need to live the godly life that He requires. You might also want to write these two verses out on a three-by-five card and refer to it throughout the day. Remember that God doesn't want you to make excuses for falling into sin. He wants us to be His virtuous people.

1 Timothy 4:7 Keep The Goal In View

Bible scholar William Barclay tells of his walks through the meadow with his bull terrier Rusty. Whenever his dog came to a shallow creek, he jumped in and started removing stones, one by one, dropping them haphazardly on the shore. This pointless activity would go on for hours.

Barclay says that Rusty's strange behavior reminds him of some self-proclaimed experts on the Bible. They expend enormous energy and countless hours trying to interpret obscure passages, but all their effort does nothing to edify themselves or others.

Through the years I have received long letters from people like that. Some show me how to know exactly who the Antichrist will be. Others claim to have found the key to certain Bible mysteries by studying the meaning of names in the lists of genealogies.

Apparently there were some teachers in Ephesus who were trying to impress the believers by weaving myths and fables into their interpretation of the Bible. But what they taught did nothing to promote godliness. It was therefore as pointless as Rusty's stone removal project.

Paul said to Timothy, "Exercise yourself toward godliness." That's the most important goal to keep in view as we study the Bible. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Oh, grant us grace, Almighty Lord!
To read and mark Thy holy Word,
Its truths with meekness to receive,
And by its holy precepts live. —Boddome

Don't study the Bible to be able to quote it; study it to obey it.

1 Timothy 4:7 Waiting For The Weekend

Exercise yourself toward godliness. —1 Timothy 4:7

"Good morning! Only 1 more day until Friday!" Our local traffic reporter counts down to the weekend for his morning radio audience. Many in his audience are likely thinking all week about hitting the bike trail, heading for the beach, or teeing off in the morning mist.

Paul told Timothy that physical exercise does profit us "a little" (1 Timothy 4:8). Regular exercise and recreation can help to restore our perspective, to tone up our muscles, and to recharge our batteries. But Paul said that "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (v.8).

The trouble is that many Christians today emphasize physical exercise almost to the exclusion of spiritual exercise. Paul also said, "Exercise yourself toward godliness" (v.7). Regular spiritual exercise such as prayer, Bible study, walking in the Spirit, sharing Christ with others, serving others, and living a pure and holy life are "profitable" for both time and eternity.

Looking forward to the weekend is fine. And there's nothing wrong with biking, swimming, golfing, or other forms of recreation. But remember, the greatest profit comes from exercising "toward godliness." —D C Egnor ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

A healthy body, healthy mind,
Should be the Christian's goal;
But it is more important still
To exercise the soul. —Bosch

To keep spiritually fit, feed on God's Word and exercise your faith.

1 Timothy 4:7 Godly Exercise

Exercise yourself toward godliness. —1Timothy 4:7

Fitness advocate Jhannie Tolbert says you don't need a treadmill or specialized equipment to get a great physical workout at home. Tolbert uses a toolbox for stepping exercises, lifts soup cans to work his shoulder muscles, and employs other common household items in his daily training. He says you can stay fit at home using a low-tech approach. Other trainers agree and encourage people to use jump ropes, chairs, brooms, and even bags of groceries in conditioning routines. They see exercise as a matter of will, not wealth.

The same principle holds true with spiritual fitness. While Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and other books are helpful, we can begin spiritual training with nothing more than the Bible and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Paul urged his protégé Timothy: "Exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1Timothy 4:7, 8).

It requires no money to study a Bible passage or memorize a verse. We don't need special equipment or materials to pray for a friend, give thanks to God, or sing His praise. We just need to begin where we are, with what we have, right now. —David C. McCasland ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Just as the body will grow strong
With exercise each day,
So too, we grow more like our Lord
By living life His way. —D. De Haan

Godly exercise is the key to godly character.

1 Timothy 4:8

Charles Colson tells the story of his days as Special Counsel to former President Richard Nixon. There were times when various labor leaders would request a meeting with the Chief Executive. Prior to the meeting, they would often state how they were going to tell the President exactly how they felt about some of his economic policies. But once inside the Oval Office those same leaders were so caught up with the elegance of the place that they said very little. It's amazing what we do when we find ourselves in places of power and authority.

Every Christian should constantly live life with a sense of dignity and reverence because Christians always live in the presence of God. There's no place to which we can travel or escape that takes us away from God's presence (Ps. 139:7-12). When we embrace the reality of God's total presence in our lives, we are well on our way to developing the fifth virtue of 2 Peter 1:5-7, the virtue of godliness.

Godliness can be translated as "devoutness" or "reverence." This word was originally used by pagan worshipers and had the idea of standing outside of the perimeter of a temple. Awe and reverence were to characterize the worshiper who came to one of the pagan temples to sacrifice to the various gods.

The apostle Paul picks up on this imagery, especially in his exhortation to Timothy to train himself to be godly (v. 7). He uses the word godliness (or godly) eight different times in 1 Timothy alone. In the context of today's reading Paul is not discrediting physical exercise. But in contrast to the false teachers, he wanted young Timothy to know that godliness had greater value than any physical or ascetic practice that one might undertake--contrary to the false teachers' emphasis. And the text is very clear that godliness was something that Timothy and others could acquire. From Paul's perspective, an attitude of awe and reverence holds promise for this life and for the life to come (v. 8). When we stop and think about it, the reality that we are in God's presence should influence everything that we say

APPLY THE WORD Your day may be filled with many different activities, everything from doing laundry to meeting with a variety of people. To prepare for your day, determine ahead of time to set apart three areas as havens to practice godliness. It might be your car, the dining room, your office, or some other frequently visited place. On three-by-five cards write, "GOD IS PRESENT." Then place one card in each of your chosen places. We trust that when you see the cards you will remember to practice godliness--the virtue of living in the presence of God.

1 Timothy 4:8

An Exercise In Godliness

By David H. Roper

The New Year is often the time when we resolve to take better care of ourselves—to exercise, eat right, and perhaps shed some of the pounds we gained over the holidays. Paul says, “Exercise profits a little” (1 Tim. 4:8), so I struggle to be as fit as I can be. I try to eat right, more or less, though I do love fried chicken. I lift weights and walk, but I know that my body is not long for this world. Its strength is fading.

It’s better to concentrate on godliness, because it holds promise for this life and the life to come (v.8). Contrary to the old adage, we can take something with us after all.

Godliness may sound dull, scary, and unattainable, but the essence of godliness is simply self-giving love—caring more for others than we care for ourselves. This kind of love is hard to come by, but it’s one that grows in the presence of love. We grow loving and more lovely by sitting at Jesus’ feet, listening to Him, talking things over—gaining in likeness to the One who is love (1 John 4:8).

Life is a journey into love, it seems to me, and there’s nothing so beautiful as a godly soul. Physical exercise is good, no doubt, but there is something far, far better: It is to love.

That I may love Him is my soul’s ambition— Love Him with all my mind and strength and heart, Seek out His will and choose it, in submission, And with the joy He only can impart. —Anon.

Love is godliness in action.

1 Timothy 4:8

Getting In Shape

By Dave Branon

Getting in shape can be dangerous. According to one report, the two most hazardous methods middle-age Americans use to stay in good condition are riding a bike and playing basketball. In one year, 201,000 people were hurt on their bikes and another 164,000 were sidelined with an injury they sustained on a basketball court.

Why do people risk injury to stay or to get physically fit? Because they see some benefit, like feeling better, maintaining the body structure they want, or living longer. They are willing to endure the sweat and tears it may take to get that heart pumping and those weak muscles working.

The Bible says bodily exercise profits us a little, but it also says our greater responsibility is to exercise spiritually (1 Timothy 4:8). Do we have the same determination as those bikers and hoopsters who are risking pain and injury to get in shape?

The real danger comes when we don’t get in shape spiritually. Unless we experience some gain in our relationship with the Lord, we’ll know the pain of broken fellowship and lack of spiritual effectiveness.

The good thing about spiritual exercise is that it helps us in this life and in the life to come (v.8). —JDB

Thinking It Over

What steps can you take to get in shape spiritually?

What food makes for a healthy spiritual diet?

How can you exercise your faith today?

Spiritual fitness comes from "working out" your faith.

1 Timothy 4:8

Lasting Rewards

By C. P. Hia

Ukrainian gymnast Larisa Latynina held the record of 18 Olympic medals. She won them in the 1956, 1960, and 1964 Olympics. The 48-year-old record was surpassed when Michael Phelps swam for his 19th gold in the 4 x 200-meter freestyle relay in the 2012 London Games. “[Latynina] kind of got lost in history,” the publisher of the International Gymnast magazine said. When the Soviet Union broke up, “we had forgotten about her.”

Paul, the apostle, reminds us that sometimes hard work is forgotten. Athletes subject their bodies to great discipline as they train to win perishable medals for their effort (1 Cor. 9:25). But it is not just that the medals are perishable. Over time, people's memory of those achievements dim and fade. If athletes can sacrifice so much to achieve rewards on the earth, rewards that will eventually be forgotten, how much more effort should followers of Christ exert to gain an imperishable crown? (1 Tim. 4:8).

Athletes' sacrifice and determination are rewarded with medals, trophies, and money. But even greater, our Father in heaven rewards the discipline of His children (Luke 19:17).

God will never forget our service done out of love for Him who first loved us.

I thank You, Lord, for the opportunities to use

the gifts You have given me for Your service today.

Help me to do so in obedience, expecting nothing

more than Your "well done" as reward.

Sacrifice for the kingdom is never without reward.

1 Timothy 4:8

Wise Buy

By Mart De Haan

I read with interest the newspaper ad about a thermostat that automatically adjusts the temperature of a house to the appropriate level, day or night. If what the ad claims is true, the thermostat will pay for itself in energy savings within 1 year. When I multiply that savings by the projected life of the unit, it is obviously to my advantage to buy it. Yet interestingly enough, I find that I'm hesitant to spend the money today to purchase the unit. But why, if it is such a value?

This question has a spiritual counterpart. I find that at times I can be slow to expend the faith needed to make wise long-range spiritual investments. Even though I know God stands behind every claim He makes, my reluctance to trust Him reveals how self-centered I can be.

Because even believers in Christ can become spiritually shortsighted and unwilling to pay the price of commitment to the Lord, Paul reminded Timothy to make every effort to be an example to the believers "in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (v.12). That requires effort and discipline, but the apostle was convinced that anyone who chooses to invest in godliness will find that his decision more than pays for itself both in this life and in the life to come (v.8).

What holds me back? Some earthly tie? A thirst for gain?

A strange entanglement with life? A pleasure vain?

Dear Lord, I cast it all aside so willingly;

The path of true discipleship I'll walk with Thee. —Adams

Following Jesus costs more than anything — except not following Him.

1 Timothy 4:11-16

A Clear Testimony

By Richard De Haan

As we listened to the radio on the way to church one Sunday, my wife and I heard a broadcast from a local congregation. The pastor was announcing special meetings with a guest preacher. He mentioned that a question-and-answer period would follow each service. Then he said, "Even if you don't have any questions, come anyway. I'm sure that after you've heard our speaker, you will have some!"

Now, I know what he meant, but the way he expressed himself seemed to suggest that the guest speaker would raise more questions than he would answer.

Sometimes that's what happens when a Christian tries to explain Bible truths to new believers or witness to unsaved people. He

confuses them more than he helps them. The problem is not with the truth he is trying to explain but with his poor communication. His failure may be due to a lack of Bible study and prayer.

We are obligated to study the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13,16). Then, when questions are raised about spiritual issues, or when we have an opportunity to witness to the lost, we will have the right answers and will give a clear testimony that's true to the Bible.

Lord, help me make my witness clear,

And labor faithfully,

So friends and neighbors turn to Christ

Through what they hear from me. —Anon.

Never substitute your views for the Good News.

1 Timothy 4:12

Just Kids

By David C. McCasland

After high school, Darrell Blizzard left the orphanage where he grew up to join the US Army Air Corps. World War II was in full swing, and soon he faced responsibilities usually given to older and more experienced men. He told a reporter years later that a four-mule plow team was the biggest thing he'd driven before he became the pilot of a four-engine B-17. Now in his late eighties, he said, "We were all just kids flying those things."

In the Bible, we find accounts of many people who followed God courageously when they were young. In a situation of corrupt spiritual leadership, "Samuel ministered before the Lord, even as a child" (1 Sam. 2:18). David faced the giant Goliath in spite of being told, "You are not able to go against this Philistine ... for you are a youth" (17:33). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was most likely very young when she was told she would bear the Son of God. She responded to the angel's announcement by saying, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). Paul told the young pastor Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers" (1 Tim. 4:12).

God values each one in His family. In His strength, the young can be bold in their faith, while those who are older can encourage those who are "just kids."

O Lord of all the upward road,

Keep strong our youth, we pray;

May age and youth together seek

To follow in Thy way. —Nidermeyer

Encouraging the young should never become old.

1 Timothy 4:12

In Your Footsteps

By Richard De Haan

A father and son were walking along the beach. The boy was lagging behind and suddenly shouted, "Look, Daddy, I'm walking in your footsteps!" This prompted the man to think about his responsibility to provide spiritual leadership for his son.

Second Kings 13 records a sad period in the history of God's people. The kings of Israel were not obeying the Lord but were following in the footsteps of their evil fathers. The sinful practices of one generation were repeated by the next, and the blessing of the Lord was withheld from the nation.

Whether they are aware of it or not, parents set an example for their children. An unknown author wrote:

A careful man I ought to be;

A little fellow follows me.

I do not dare to go astray
For fear he'll go the selfsame way.
Not once can I escape his eyes;
Whate'er he sees me do he tries.
Like me he says he's going to be—
That little chap who follows me.
must remember as I go
Through summer sun and winter snow,
I'm molding for the years to be—
That little chap who follows me.
Parents, be careful where and how you walk! Someone's following in your footsteps!
A child may not inherit his parents' talents, but he will absorb their values!

1 Timothy 4:12 A Walk In The Woods

By David H. Roper

A friend of mine wrote to me about certain “reservations” in his life—areas of secret sin that he reserved for himself and into which he frequently withdrew.

These “reserves” are like the large tracts of wilderness in my home state of Idaho. It may sound exciting to wander around these untamed regions by oneself, but it's dangerous.

So too, each journey into sin takes its toll. We sacrifice our closeness with God, forfeiting His blessing (Psalm 24:1-5), and we lose our influence on others that comes from purity of mind and body (1 Timothy 4:12).

The wild areas in us may never be fully tamed, but we can set up perimeters that keep us from wandering into them. One perimeter is to remember that we are dead to sin's power (Romans 6:1-14). We do not have to give in to it.

The second perimeter is to resist temptation when it first attracts us. Initial temptation may not be strong, but if we entertain it, it will in time gain power and overwhelm us.

The third perimeter is accountability. Find a person who will commit to ask you each week, “Have you ‘taken a hike in the wild’? Have you gone where you should not go?”

Impurity is ruinous, but if we long for holiness and ask God for help, He will give us victory. Press on!

O Lord, help us to recognize

When we begin to compromise;

And give us strength to follow through

With what we know is right and true. —Sper

Beware—the more you look at temptation, the better it looks!

1 Timothy 4:11 TODAY IN THE WORD

Although Jill believes in having family devotions, they never seem to turn out the way she thinks they should. She easily identifies with the mother whose daughter once asked, “Mommy, when are we going to get together and have family commotions?”

“Family commotions” seem to be a good description of what happens when Jill suggests that it's time for her family to study the Bible. “Can't we do it later?” someone will ask. “I'm watching television” another will complain. All too often the children seem bored, the dog barks, or the phone rings.

Spending time together in God's Word is a challenge for most families today. How good to learn, then, that God's plan doesn't limit the family's spiritual life to a single method. Instead, it prescribes a holistic approach to training children in spiritual matters. God does indeed command Christian parents to pass on the truths of the faith to their children, but the strategy He prescribes is a flexible one. Parents are called to explain spiritual truths to their children in the context of ordinary life. Instead of demanding that family devotions be observed at a specific time, this subject is to be the focus of family discussion throughout the day. Biblical principles should be so naturally woven into the fabric of our daily lives that it seems as if they were written on the doorframes of our houses and inscribed on our gates (Deut. 6:9).

APPLY THE WORD When was the last time you discussed God's Word together as a family? If you have a plan for family devotions, try not to limit your spiritual conversations to just these formal occasions. If your approach to your family's spiritual life is more informal, be careful not to let the subject of God's truth become pushed aside by the rush of the day.

1 Timothy 4:11-16 Knute Rockne on Practicing

We who teach will be judged more strictly. - James 3:1

Knute Rockne, head coach of the Notre Dame football team from 1917 to 1931, once said, "One player practicing sportsmanship is far better than fifty preaching it." He understood that integrity on the playing field demands a certain behavior, not just nice-sounding words.

In our passage today we read Paul's admonition to Timothy about integrity in ministry, exhorting him to "watch your life and your doctrine closely" (v. 16). The Ephesian elders who had loved and respected Paul (see Acts 20:17-38) seemed skeptical of young Timothy and unreceptive of the message he had to bring to the church. That's why Paul instructed Timothy to not only preach the Word but to live it. A godly life can be a more persuasive tool in ministry than even the most powerful sermon.

In order to fulfill his call to the ministry, Timothy needed to keep in mind four aspects of effective leadership. The first, as we've mentioned, is the importance of example. Timothy would gain credibility for his teaching to the extent that he practiced what he preached. As Kent Hughes says in his commentary on 1 Timothy, "Godly character creates moral authority." Second, Timothy was called to remain faithful to Scripture, which was to serve as the content for all his preaching and teaching (v. 13). Unlike the false teachers who had strayed from faithful instruction found in God's Word, Timothy was to speak God's Word to God's people. Third, Timothy had to use his spiritual gift (v. 14). When he needed reminding that he could do the job to which he had been called, he needed only to think back to the time when the elders laid their hands on him.

Receiving a gift isn't enough—it needed to be exercised and nourished, not neglected. That's why Paul's final thoughts challenge Timothy to work hard in his ministry. "Be diligent," "give yourself wholly," "watch," and "persevere" were all words to remind Timothy that ministry doesn't happen simply because one is gifted, but rather because one is committed!

It's not just preachers who need to watch their "life and doctrine." Parents need to set an example of godly character before their children. Teachers should extend the respect they demand from their students. Employers have to model conscientiousness and integrity for their employees. Also, young people need to consider the example they set before their friends. No matter what your age or life circumstance, your integrity matters to God and others!

1 Timothy 4:12 Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

TODAY IN THE WORD Last November, Dutch scientists created the largest digital panoramic photo in the world. They began by programming a camera to take 600 individual pictures of their city, Delft. Then they fed the results into five PCs that worked over three days to stitch the photos together into a seamless whole. The result was a single 2.5 billion-pixel panorama of the Delft skyline.

Talk about "seeing the big picture"! In today's reading, Paul wanted to give Timothy the "big picture" of what the Christian life is all about. We've skipped forward in time to about 65 A.D. Timothy, then in his 30s, was a pastor in the church at Ephesus. Paul had seen his young protégé grow from a godly teenager into a gifted church leader, and they logged many ministry miles together. Within this friendship and their shared passion for Christ, Paul wrote as a mentor to encourage Timothy and summarize the key points of a life well-lived.

One key was the necessity of truth. We cannot live a purpose-filled life without it! Timothy was to live out the truth and guard doctrinal purity against, for example, false teaching that failed to accept thankfully the blessings of God's creation (vv. 4-5). This extended beyond his individual life, for as a minister he was to exercise his gift of preaching and teaching in order to serve and edify the church. Another key was the necessity of training. Godliness doesn't just happen—one must pursue it in the same way an athlete trains to win a gold medal. Timothy was in fact commanded to set the pace, serving as an example for the other believers (v.

12). As a leader, he lived in a glass house, which meant that his actions would be seen by all. A final key was the necessity of holding on to hope. As believers, our trust is in a living God who is the Savior of the world. Living in this hope takes courage—we must “fight the good fight of faith” (6:12).

If you persevere in these God-given purposes, Paul told his friend, “you will save both yourself and your hearers” (v. 16).

APPLY THE WORD Storing the treasure of God's Word in your heart is always a wise application (Ps. 119:93). Today, make it your goal to memorize two verses—any two verses you choose—from 1 Timothy 4. Verses 4-5 might be a good choice to build up our thankful hearts, or verse 8 as an exhortation to godliness, or verse 10 as an encouragement to hope in the Lord. If you're feeling ambitious, you could memorize this entire short chapter during the coming week or month.

1 Timothy 4:12 Walk The Walk

By Bill Crowder

The preacher was speaking tongue-in-cheek when he complained, “My wife is absolutely unreasonable. She actually expects me to live everything I preach!” It's so much easier to tell someone what is right than to practice it personally.

When my son and I play golf together, I can tell him exactly how to play the hole and hit the shots. But my own ability to hit those shots is sadly limited. I suppose this is what is meant when we refer to athletes who “talk the talk, but don't walk the walk.” Anyone can talk a good game, but actually performing well is far more difficult.

This is particularly true in the challenge of following Jesus Christ. It is not enough for us to talk about faith—we must live out our faith. Perhaps that is why Paul, after giving instructions to his young protégé Timothy about how to preach, included this reminder: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them” (1 Tim. 4:12,15).

As Christ's followers, we do not have the luxury of just talking a good game—we must live lives of exemplary faith in Jesus Christ. We must walk the walk.

Do others know from how we act At home, at work, at play, That we have Jesus in our heart And live for Him each day? —D. De Haan

We please God when our walk matches our talk.

1 Timothy 4:12a Preaching With Your Life

Be an example to the believers... in love, in spirit, in faith, hi purity

Believers exert a positive influence on others by setting a good example with the consistency of their lives. Will Houghton, president of Moody Bible Institute during the 1940s, was such a person.

Before Houghton became president of Moody, he pastored a church in New York City. An agnostic living there was contemplating suicide, but he decided that if he could find a minister who lived what he professed, he would listen to him. Since Will Houghton was a prominent figure in the city and a pastor, the man chose Houghton for his case study. He hired a private detective to watch him. When the investigator's report came back, it revealed that Houghton's life was above reproach. The agnostic went to Houghton's church, accepted Christ, and later sent his daughter to Moody Bible Institute.

Nehemiah was another believer who dramatically affected the lives of those around him. Even rich nobles and high officials listened respectfully as he rebuked them. Why? Because of the quality of his life. Whatever he asked of others, he was willing to do himself. And because Nehemiah joined in the hard work and refrained from using his position to accumulate wealth, the leaders couldn't help but listen to what he said.

An exemplary life awakens spiritual and moral sensitivity in those who observe us, and it gives power to our words of witness. —H V Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

**We can preach a better sermon with our lives
than with our lips.**

1 Timothy 4:12-16 The Sarah Winchester Legend

CAVEAT - WHILE THE FOLLOWING STORY IS FREQUENTLY QUOTED, IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT MOST

OF THE STORY IS LEGEND AND NOT TRUTH. FOR A REVISED ENTRY SEE "WE WILL ALL FACE DEATH."

SARAH Winchester's husband acquired a fortune by manufacturing and selling rifles. After he died of influenza in 1918, Sarah moved to San Jose, California. Lonely for her husband, Sarah consulted a medium to help her contact him in the afterlife. The medium told her, "As long as you keep building your home, you will never face death." Sarah believed the advice, so she bought an unfinished seventeen-room mansion and started to expand it. The project continued until she died at age 85. The mansion has 150 rooms, 13 bathrooms, 2,000 doors, 47 fireplaces, and 10,000 windows. In addition, Mrs. Winchester left behind enough materials so that workers could have continued building for another eighty years. Today that house stands as more than a tourist attraction. It is a silent witness to perseverance of the wrong kind. Sarah Winchester's perseverance was motivated by the fear of death. The Christian's motivation is the love of God. "For the love of Christ compels us, ... that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2Corinthians 5:14, 15). The only way to avoid the fear of death is to live for the one who has overcome it.—V C Grounds ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

1 Timothy 4:12 Be An Example

By David C. McCasland

A high school senior honored as one of the "Best & Brightest" in our community has provided a forceful demonstration of integrity. When his school team was given the word auditorium in a regional spelling bee, Brady Davis glanced down to ponder his response and noticed that the word was printed on the microphone stand. He called this to the attention of the judges who responded with a more difficult word. Brady did what he knew was right whether others noticed or not.

We don't know when our actions might become an example to others. But if we live each day to honor Jesus, our behavior will model His righteousness, no matter who is watching.

Idealism and enthusiasm are often best expressed by the young. But uprightness and honor should be goals for Christians of every age. Paul told his young protégé Timothy: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

Brady Davis says his goal in life is to change the world around him while never compromising himself. We would do well to join him in that pursuit of life, integrity, and exemplary behavior.

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;

I would be pure, for there are those who care.

I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;

I would be brave, for there is much to dare. —Walter

A good example always makes a good sermon.

1 Timothy 4:10-16

Impact For Christ By Dave Branon -

Over the past several years, I've been privileged to travel with teenagers on eight mission trips. One thing I've learned in those excursions is that teens are not too young to make an impact for Jesus—either on me or on others whose lives they touch.

I've also noticed that the teens who make the biggest impact for Christ match the characteristics Paul told Timothy about in 1 Timothy 4:12. Trying to convince Timothy that his relative youth did not have to be a deterrent to his ministry, Paul told him to "be an example to the believers" in several areas.

In word: Young people who make a difference for Christ control what they say, avoid negative talk, and speak words that honor God. In conduct: Teens who practice discretion in their behavior shine for all the world to see. In love: By taking heed of Jesus' words to love God and their neighbor (Matt. 22:37-39) teens please Jesus and touch hearts. In faith: Those who put their faith into action change lives. In purity: It's tough to be morally pure and doctrinally sound, but kids who are can set the bar for the rest of us.

Paul's words aren't just for the young generation. All of us should be an example in word, conduct, love, faith, and purity. That's how we make an impact for Christ.

O Christians, remember, you bear His dear name, Your lives are for others to view; You're living examples—men praise you or blame, And measure your Savior by you. —Anon.

The most valuable commentary on the Bible is a godly life.

1 Timothy 4:13 Read It Aloud

Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. —1 Timothy 4:13

We are blessed with many wonderful translations of the Bible these days, so it's hard for us to realize that for more than 350 years one version was used by much of the English-speaking world. Today some people recoil at the King James' "thees," "thous," and "verily." Yet there is something beautiful about hearing it read aloud, especially familiar passages like the 23rd Psalm.

In God's Secretaries, author Adam Nicolson chronicles the King James translators' sensitivity to sound. He says that the 12 men sat around the room listening to the text being read aloud. They felt that what governed the acceptability of a particular verse was not only accuracy to the original language, but a pleasant sound of the words.

Paul understood the power of the spoken Word. To the young pastor Timothy he instructed public Bible reading: "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13).

The Word of God stirs the heart when it enters the believer's ear. So whatever version you're reading in your quiet time, in family devotions, or in a church service, remember the power of the spoken Word. Look for opportunities to read it aloud. —Dennis Fisher ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

We need to take the time each day
To read God's Word and pray,
And listen for what He might say
To guide us on our way. —Sper

God speaks through His Word—take time to listen.

1 Timothy 4:13, 14, 16, 6:11 (Oswald Chambers)

Keep Bright by Use: General Maxims

- (a) If you lack education, first realise it; then cure it.
- (b) Beware of knowing what you don't practise

Cultivate Mental Habits

1 Timothy 4:13 Give attendance to reading)

If we wish to excel in secular things, we concentrate; why should we be less careful in work for God? Don't get dissipated; determine to develop your intellect for one purpose only—to make yourself of more use to God. Have a perfect machine ready for God to use. It is impossible to read too much, but always keep before you why you read. Remember that "the need to receive, recognise, and rely on the Holy Spirit" is before all else.

Constantly Aim at the Highest

1 Timothy 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine

Remember that preaching is God's ordained method of saving the world (see 1 Corinthians 1:21). Take time before God and find out the highest ideal for an address. Never mind if you do not reach the ideal, but work at it, and never say fail. By work and steady application you will acquire the power to do with ease what at first seemed so difficult. Avoid the temptation to be slovenly in your mind and be deluded into calling it "depending on the Spirit." Don't misapply Matthew 10:19, 20.

Carelessness in spiritual matters is a crime.

Concentrate on Personal Resources

1 Timothy 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee.

In immediate preparation don't call in the aid of other minds; rely on the Holy Spirit and on your own resources, and He will select for you. Discipline your mind by reading and by building in stuff in private, then all that you have assimilated will come back. Keep

yourself full to the brim in reading; but remember that the first great Resource is the Holy Ghost Who lays at your disposal the Word of God. The thing to prepare is not the sermon, but the preacher.

Constrain Yourself to Be Spiritually Minded

1 Timothy 6:11 Follow after righteousness

It is possible to have a saved and sanctified experience and a stagnant mind. Learn how to make your mind awake and fervid, and when once your mind is awake never let it go to sleep. The brain does not need rest, it only needs change of work. The intellect works with the greatest intensity when it works continuously; the more you do, the more you can do. We must work hard to keep in trim for God. Clean off the rust and keep bright by use. ([Chambers, Oswald: Approved Unto God: The Spiritual Life of the Christian Worker. Discovery House. 1997](#))

1 Timothy 4:14

Use Your Gift!

By Richard De Haan

God never gives a person a task without also providing him with what's necessary to perform the responsibility.

W. W. Dawley, referring to this truth, says, "God gave Moses a rod, David a sling, Samson the jawbone of a donkey, Shamgar an oxgoad, Esther the beauty of person, Deborah the talent for poetry, Dorcas a needle, and Apollos an eloquent tongue—and to each the ability to use that gift. In so doing, every one of them did most effective works for the Lord."

Our heavenly Father has given at least one spiritual gift to each of us as believers, and He provides all we need to carry out our individual responsibilities (1 Cor. 12:6-7). We are all essential in the body of Christ (vv.14-27). Acknowledging these truths is not only a source of comfort and encouragement, but it is also a sobering reality, for it places before us an important obligation. God's gifts to us must not be squandered! They must be fully used, because someday "each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12).

What has the Lord given you? Are you using your spiritual gift for His glory and the blessing of others? Don't waste your gift! Use it!

Lord God, I humbly ask of You

The strength to do Your will;

I give to You my talents now

Your purpose to fulfill. —Bierema

God's call to a task includes His strength to complete it.

1 Timothy 4:14-15 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk)

SERVICE FOR OTHERS - "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Be diligent in these things."-- 1Ti4:14, 15 (R.V.).

"Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands."-- 2 Timothy 1:6 (see note)

MOST YOUNG people are fond of athletics, and the Roman and Greek youth were specially addicted to them. The Divine Spirit does not under-value any of these means for keeping our physical health vigorous. But if we pay such earnest attention to these things we ought, all the more, to give attention to godliness, which disciplines the soul for Eternal Life. We all know what it is to discover and bring into play certain muscles of the body which we had not previously used. Are we equally keen to discover the hidden properties and resources of the soul and spirit?

Timothy was gifted in various ways, but specially for public ministry; and in this Epistle and the next, the Apostle bids him stir it up, i.e. stir into flame (marg.). The fire may be well provided with coal, the heat and light may be present, but the poker needs to be used to let in the air. We may have gifts, but we must carefully practise the duties in which they can be used for the benefit of others. It becomes us all to give ourselves to the duties which lie immediately to our hands, not shirking or scamping them. We must not give part of our thought and care to our appointed tasks, but give our whole selves. What our hands find to do must be done with our might. Just as men build arches of brick over slight structures of wood, and when these are taken away the substantial Material

remains, so on the passing duties of an hour we are building up habits and character which will live for ever. What we do is comparatively unimportant, but how we do what we do is all-important. We must always be on guard, always on the alert, for we have in our hands the interests of others as well as our own (1Ti 4:16).

The grace of God can so reveal itself in a young man or girl, that he or she will become an example in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity (1Ti 4:12).

PRAYER - Prosper us, O God, we pray Thee, in all that we put our hands unto. May our hearts be filled with Thy love, our lips with gentle, helpful words, and our hands with kind, unselfish deeds. May Thy Holy Spirit in all things direct and rule our hearts. AMEN.

1 Timothy 4:15 A LETTER FROM J. EDGAR HOOVER

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. 1 Timothy 4:15

The chief of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has often stressed the importance of family Bible reading. Some years ago in a letter to the American Bible Society he said, "Inspiration has been the keynote of America's phenomenal growth ... and the backbone of its greatness... This inspiration has been from faith in God ... and in the belief that the Holy Bible is His inspired Word. Reading the Scriptures within the family circle is more important today than ever before. As a small boy I sat at my mother's knee while she read the Word to me and explained its meanings with stories as we went along. It served to make the bond of faith between us much stronger. Then there were those wonderful nights when my father would gather all the children around him and read aloud verses from the Bible. This led to family discussions which were interesting, lively, and informative. Those wonderful sessions left me with an imprint of the power of faith and ... prayer which has sustained me in trying moments throughout my life."

Regrettably, family altars are fast disappearing from the American scene. People are too busy. The family is seldom together long enough to enjoy such sweet moments of fellowship — and the world is much the poorer for it! The Word of God constantly admonishes us to meditate upon its contents, for only as we absorb its teachings, believe its promises, and hide its precepts in our hearts can we prosper spiritually and live the "more abundant life."

Take a cue from the letter of J. Edgar Hoover; and if you have not yet established a definite time for Bible study in your home, start now — even if you can devote only five minutes a day to this necessary task. Man cannot live by bread alone. He must find sustenance for his spirit by appropriating the truths of God through the avenue of prayer and careful meditation.

*How precious is the Book divine,
By inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its precepts shine,
To guide our souls to Heaven.*

— J. Fawcett

A Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to a person who is not! [Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#)

1 Timothy 4:16

TODAY IN THE WORD When navigating a ship, an error of one degree seems miniscule, but continued travel in an errant direction will lead the vessel miles off course. Similarly, false belief about Jesus, even if seemingly slight, has increasingly deleterious effects upon orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxy (right practice). Today's text warns against such false belief leading to idolatry.

Nothing in 1 John readies us for 5:21, as nothing explicit is said about idols up to this point in John's letter, though he does call Jesus "true God" (v. 20). John may be speaking of the actual idolatry of his day (cf. Acts 17:23; 1 Thess. 1:9), but it is more likely that the "idols" are those conjured by the false teachers. Idolatry is the worship of false gods. The antichrists' false claims about Jesus are idolatrous, because false belief leads to worship of something that is not God. In contrast, John exhorts us to maintain right belief about Jesus, "the true God and eternal life" (v. 20). Those who truly know Jesus completely avoid idols and those who endorse them.

First John 5:18-21 summarize John's major themes. As our study of 1 John ends, let's review one edifying thread woven through John's letter: assurance for believers in Jesus Christ, God's Son. First, assurance is grounded in obedience to the command to love and live like Jesus (2:3-6; 3:14). Second, confidence on the day of judgment is based on righteous living and loving in Christ (2:28-29; 4:17).

Third, certainty in prayer results from living and praying according to God's will (3:21-22; 5:14). Fourth, God's testimony about Jesus resides in our hearts (5:9-13). Lastly, all assurance is guaranteed through God's Spirit living in us (3:23-24; 4:13). As one New Testament scholar states: "The grounds of assurance are ethical, not emotional; objective, not subjective; plain and tangible, not microscopic and elusive."

APPLY THE WORD Sometimes Christians read God's Word piecemeal, one verse or passage at a time, often without connecting the small portion to the larger context, namely, the chapter, book, Testament, and Bible as a whole. Today, take time to read 1 John in its entirety. This is a good practice for any Bible study: at the end of a study, take some time to re-read the entire book. If you need a resource to encourage you, read Gordon Fee's *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*.

Pay Attention!

Joe Stowell

1 Timothy 4:16

I would love to have a dollar for every time I heard my Mom say, "Joe, pay attention to what you're doing!" As I was growing up, there was always something more fun to distract me from the task at hand.

To be honest, I still need reminders like that, particularly in my desire to become more like Jesus. I suspect that all of us do. We want to follow and serve Him more effectively, but there are so many distractions along the way: A little pursuit of materialism here, a little power trip there. And ooh, there's an opportunity to chase pleasure for a little while. Before long, we're spiritually disoriented, frustrated, and perplexed about how to get back on track in our pursuit of Jesus.

We need to take Paul's instruction to Timothy to heart. He says, in essence, "Timothy, pay attention!" He tells Timothy where his attention should be: "Watch your life and doctrine closely"

(1 Timothy 4:16). Let's talk about those two words "life" and "doctrine."

By God's grace, I have had the opportunity to invest a major part of my life in preaching. A lot of my ministry has been sharing God's Word in a variety of contexts. But, for a long time now, I have been keenly aware that those moments in the pulpit are only the tip of the iceberg. Scripture reminds me over and over that my life has to match up with what I am preaching. If I am proclaiming the joy of freedom in Christ, then my life needs to show that I am walking in the freedom that He offers. If I am calling God's people to greater levels of commitment and sacrifice for kingdom causes, then I need to be stepping out in faith, seeking to grow in my commitment and willingness to sacrifice. Timothy is reminded of this when Paul tells him to "set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Nothing hinders our witness for Jesus more than a lack of authenticity. We need to pay attention to the way we live.

Paul also tells Timothy to pay attention to his doctrine. He starts chapter 4 with the warning that "in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). Since the early days of the church, the enemy has been consistently attempting to distract God's people by leading them away from the core truths of Scripture. A key responsibility of Timothy, the young pastor, was to "command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer" (1 Timothy 1:3).

Satan continues to sow seeds of doubt in our minds about the authenticity and authority of Scripture—one of our bedrock doctrines. Some well-meaning but misguided churches promote the notion that other religions and belief systems, if sincerely held and practiced, may offer an alternative means of reconciliation with God. This flies in the face of Jesus' words when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Teaching which tells us that we need to do good works to be saved is a frontal attack on the grace of the gospel.

So, what's in it for us?

Paul assures us that the payoff in paying attention to our life and doctrines is huge. "If you do," he writes, "you will save both yourself and your hearers." So take my Mom's advice: Pay attention to what really matters!

YOUR JOURNEY...

What pursuits have recently distracted you from following Jesus wholeheartedly?

What areas of your life might need a little more attention today? What has God spotlighted, even as you've been reading?

What about paying attention to your doctrine? How is your time in God's Word shaping your ability to think biblically and to differentiate between truth and error?

1 TIMOTHY 5

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. - Proverbs 12:18

TODAY IN THE WORD It has often been said that 10 percent of communication is verbal (actual content) and the other 90 percent of communication is nonverbal (tone and body language). Learning to communicate effectively means learning not only how to phrase a message but also how to communicate it nonverbally in one's tone, inflection, posture, and facial expressions.

Timothy had a difficult message to communicate to the Ephesian church. He was young and timid, but he had been commissioned by Paul to exercise authority over those older than him, the elder-teachers of the church. We saw in Paul's instructions in yesterday's reading, that Timothy had to begin to lead by example. But example alone can't get the job done of "command[ing] certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer" (1:3). A confrontation was brewing, and Timothy needed to know what to say and how to say it.

We should note that today's verses don't indicate what Timothy should say as much as how he should say it. First, Timothy should "not rebuke an older man harshly." Several Greek words can be used for rebuke in the New Testament, many of them meaning to warn, to refute, or to expose. But the Greek word used here is much stronger. It actually comes from the Greek word meaning "to strike at."

Paul is clearly forbidding any kind of rebuke that is meant to inflict harm or pain. It's not Timothy's responsibility to berate the elders for their spiritual density. He shouldn't speak rash words of anger or hostility. He's not to enter the blame game for what's been happening at Ephesus.

Rather, Timothy needed to "exhort" those elders. This word has a sense of gentle asking, pleading, and encouraging. It is a word indicating that one is looking toward the future, not the past. Timothy needed to get the elders and teachers back on the team, encouraging them back to orthodox belief and teaching. The way that he was to go about this is important.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Remember one of Paul's reasons for writing this letter to Timothy? "I am writing you these instructions so that ... you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household" (3:15). Today's reading helps us to see that in the church we must continue to show proper respect to those older than us, whether or not we're in a position of leadership. Furthermore, we need to practice charity and love toward all. We're in the same family!

1 Timothy 5:2

TODAY IN THE WORD An anonymous humorist defined the honeymoon as "a short period of doting between dating and debting." Honeymoons may be short, but few are as short as Carla Dunford's. According to a British newspaper, Dunford left her husband Pete for Chris Herbert after she had been married for less than three weeks. Her husband was away on a trip when she met her new love interest.

"He'd only been gone a couple of days," Carla said, "when I walked into the newsagent's and there was this gorgeous man there. It was Chris, although all I knew at the time was that he was young, smart, good-looking and sexy." Claiming "love at first sight," Dunford announced her decision to end the marriage when her husband returned home.

The phrase "the honeymoon is over" implies that the initial fire of romance will diminish over time. To some extent this is true. The nature of the love relationship changes—but it does not have to grow cold. In our passage today, the bride longed to see the passion they experienced during their honeymoon continue into the marriage.

Her wish that the groom would be like a brother who had been nursed at her mother's breasts probably sounds a little strange to modern ears, if not perverse. It must be understood in light of ancient Hebrew culture, where it was unusual for a husband and wife to show affection to one another in public. If he were her brother, however, she could embrace him publicly without stigma.

Technically, she does not say that she wishes that her groom were actually her brother, but rather that he would be to her "like" a brother. This simile is used in the New Testament to characterize the relationship between men and women in the church. As we see in today's verse, Paul urged Timothy to treat the women in the church with the same respect found in family relationships.

APPLY THE WORD If you are a married person, why not plan a "honeymoon" weekend with your spouse? If you cannot afford to get

away for the weekend, plan a romantic dinner at home.

1 Timothy 5:3-16

If anyone does not provide for his relatives ... he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. - 1 Timothy 5:8

TODAY IN THE WORD Of the many health-care concerns today, care for the elderly is among the most important. Life spans have increased dramatically over the past century, and Americans age 85 and older are now the fastest growing segment of the population. As people are expected to live longer, long-term care will be needed for them. Who will provide that kind of care, and how will it be funded?

Deciding how to care for widows was one of the earliest concerns in the New Testament church (cf. Acts 6:1-7). Throughout Scripture, God reveals His heart of compassion towards needy people, including the orphan and the widow (cf. Ex. 22:22, 23). God wants to see that these people receive their daily necessities, and the burden of responsibility falls not upon the government but the people of God. The church cannot care for everyone, however, and that's why families must understand their obligations to one another.

Our key verse sounds a warning for believers. It's a rallying cry to look first to the needs of our own family in order to "put [our] religion into practice" (v. 4). No doubt there are needs everywhere: refugee families on the evening news, homeless beggars at the corner, and needy children in social services. We cannot and should not be indifferent to these problems. When allocating our money and time to help others, though, we must first make sure we have provided for our own families.

Adult children have a biblical mandate to care for their aging parents, honoring their years of sacrifice for us and in a sense "repaying" them (v. 4). The circle reaches beyond those considered "immediate family." Verse 16 encourages all women to care for any widow in her family, likely even family by marriage. Families have to do their job of providing for their own. The church can then dedicate itself to helping "those widows who are really in need" (v. 3).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY We need wisdom discerning what will be most helpful for our family members in need. It may not be best to bail someone out time and time again from the financial mess caused by foolish and extravagant spending, or to help someone support a destructive habit. We are required to have compassion for our family members and do our best to make sure their needs are met. Caring for our family may not always be glamorous, but we are bringing glory to God through our service.

1 Timothy 5:3-16

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. - 1 Timothy 5:3

TODAY IN THE WORD Since the Protestant Reformation, Christians have embraced many church models. Churches have sometimes emphasized strict adherence to doctrinal principles, sometimes focused on social activism to combat cultural ills, sometimes devoted energy to forms of worship. To find the balance for the church, we must often re-examine the biblical purposes of the church and realign ourselves when necessary.

The church of Jesus Christ is called by God to fulfill many redemptive purposes, including the unapologetic proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Proclaiming the gospel, however, is not just the work of the evangelist. The gospel is announced every day as Christians live out their love for one another (cf. John 13:35). No wonder the care of widows was and should continue to be of great concern to the church. Helping the needy among us visibly demonstrates the love that has transformed us and that forms the basis of our commission from Christ.

In today's text, Paul calls on the church to assume financial responsibility for those widows who are distinguished by certain qualifications. First, the widow should be a believer and member of the church body. She should not be looking to earn her living by any illicit means, but she should actively and visibly live out her faith and trust in God.

Older widows participate not only in receiving help but also in offering help to others. (This is most likely the list of widows referred to in verse 9.) Because Paul has in mind that the purpose of gathering the women is to serve, he notes that older women will be less likely to be distracted by marriage proposals and idle gossip (vv. 11, 13).

God's Word consistently exhorts God's people to care for widows as a way of demonstrating love for Him. Just as God has provided salvation for us when we could do nothing on our own to gain it, we bring glory to Him by meeting the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Consider the truth that God often uses His own people to meet the needs offered up in prayer. Think back to recent prayer requests that you've heard shared in your church. Have financial needs been mentioned? Is there a family crisis requiring childcare? Is someone facing joblessness? As you think about the specific prayer requests, consider whether or not

you could meet a need that has been mentioned. Ask God to guide you, and wait expectantly for Him to use you.

1 Timothy 5:5 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Homily)

She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God.

Art thou desolate indeed, because the light of thine eyes has passed from view, leaving thee im measurably lonely? Dear soul, do not look down into the grave which has received the precious mortal frame, but up into the face of God.

He lent thee thy beloved. From the tune of the first knitting of soul with soul he was but a loan for a specified time; and wouldst thou not rather have had him for so short a time than not at all? Wouldst thou not have said, had God asked thee, "I would rather have a year or a month of such love as his than none?" "Do not be angry because God has done as He always intended.

Besides, that beloved one is still thine. Thy love so entered into his heart that it could not be eradicated, though ages should pass. Do not suppose that death is so mighty a magician as to alter the very nature of those who pass for a moment beneath his wand.

And God will care for thee. Trust Him for society, that thou be not lonely; for the provision of what is necessary to thy support; and for the protecting love which thy shrinking nature calls for. Thy Maker will be thy husband.

Wouldst thou be comforted, continue in prayers and supplications for others night and day. Cease to shut thyself up with thy sorrow, and go out to minister comfort to those who sorrow as without hope. A Hindoo story tells of a bereaved mother, who was advised to obtain a handful of corn from a house where there was no trouble, and was so occupied in seeking it, and in comforting the inmates of the various homes she visited, that her own grief was assuaged.

1 Timothy 5:5NIV The widow who is... left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help.

Even when we're all alone, the Lord is near to help us—and what a wonderful little four-letter word is that term help, appearing more than two hundred times in the Bible. A couple of years ago, I put together a booklet listing many of the great "help" passages.

Here's a sampling for today's devotion:

"Lord, help me!"... I rise before dawn and cry out for help....

Hurry to help me, Lord... for human help is worthless.

Since He Himself was tested and has suffered, He is able to help those who are tested.... Will not God grant justice to His elect who cry out to Him day and night?

Will He delay to help them?

Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.... The Lord helps all who fall.

For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand and say to you: Do not fear, I will help you.

Happy is the one whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, the Maker of heaven and earth.... Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time. ([My All in All - Robert J Morgan](#))

1 Timothy 5:1-8 Lifework

By David H. Roper

Some of our friends have chosen to curtail or leave their ministries this year. They did so in order to care for family members—for aging parents, ill spouses, siblings, or children with special needs. All were involved in fruitful works for which they were uniquely gifted. All believed that there was much to be done.

Some have chosen to reduce the time and energy they spend on those ministries; others have left their work completely. These adjustments have been difficult because ministry has been their lifework—a work for which they spent years in preparation and had many years yet to serve.

It occurs to me, however, that they have not given up their lifework but rather have assumed another. Loving and caring for others is our life's work, and caring for those of our "own house" is the highest and holiest work of all. To deny love is to align ourselves with a cold, uncaring world.

Not everyone can leave a career or calling to care for others. Financial realities and obligations may dictate otherwise. But is not such love the mark of one who does the work of God? Did not Jesus promise that one who gives a cup of cold water to one of His children "shall by no means lose his reward"? (Matt. 10:42).

Thinking It Through

Paul says we are to help those who “are really widows” (1 Tim. 5:3-5). What does he mean by this? (vv.9-10). Who should help before the church does? (v.16).

True love is doing, not just feeling

1 Timothy 5:8

The Country Of Old Age

By Dennis Fisher

In the book *Another Country*, author Mary Pipher met with people in their seventies, eighties, and nineties who were confronting many different life situations.

“I wanted ... to understand the country of old age,” Pipher writes. “We are not organized in a way that makes aging easy.” The root problem, she observed, is that young and old have become segregated, to the detriment of both groups.

This social trend is not necessarily intentional. But many people do ignore and shirk their responsibilities for the elderly. In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees found creative ways to avoid their family duties. In Mark 7:9-13, Jesus rebuked their common practice of dedicating their material possessions to God (declaring them as Corban) rather than using their assets to provide for their parents. Their tradition had violated the commandment to honor their father and their mother.

Our children, work, and church activities can pull us in many directions. But that doesn’t excuse us from honoring our aging parents by making provision for their needs, as much as we are able (1 Tim. 5:8). When the time comes for us to enter the country of old age, let’s hope we’ve set the right example for our own children to follow.

Providing for our parents’ needs

With loving words and selfless deeds

Is what the Lord expects of those

Who try to follow where He leads. —Sper

Honoring our parents is learned by example.

1 Timothy 5:8-16

Drones

By Mart De Haan

As I sat looking at my beehives, I was especially interested in the activities of a considerable number of bees that seemed to be busybodies. They were always buzzing, going in and out of the hive, but doing no apparent work. These nonproductive ones are called drones. They are male bees—much larger than a worker or even the queen. Their only function is to fertilize a queen and then die.

While waiting for a new queen to emerge, the drones spend their time visiting one hive after another. But they do no work; they make no honey; they build no comb; they can’t even sting. And they’re noisy! You should hear them buzz, but it’s all bluff.

For a while drones are privileged characters, but when fall comes and the honey flow slackens, the worker bees will kill every drone! Not a one lives through the winter. The time of reckoning comes, and they are denied the reward of the workers.

In the apostle Paul’s letter to Timothy, he warned about people who are active in the wrong kinds of activities—going from house to house as busybodies, stirring up trouble instead of serving others (1 Timothy 5:13).

Don’t be a drone if you want to share in the heavenly treasures reserved for the faithful.

In service true of any kind,

Lord, happy I shall be,

If by my help some soul may find

The path that leads to Thee. —Anon.

God's house should be a hive for workers—not a nest for drones.

1 Timothy 5:17 Getting Rid Of The Pastor

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor. —1 Timothy 5:17

A Christian leader told about some church members who came to him for advice. They wanted to know of a way to get rid of their pastor. Sensing that they were not being fair, he gave them these suggestions:

Look your pastor straight in the eye while he is preaching and say "Amen!" once in a while. He'll preach himself to death.

Pat him on the back and tell him his good points. He'll work himself to death.

Rededicate your life to Christ and ask your minister for a job to do. He'll die of heart failure.

Get the church to pray for him. Soon he'll become so effective that a larger church will take him off your hands.

If your pastor faithfully preaches God's Word and tries to live an exemplary life, do all you can to support and encourage him. Of course, no pastor is perfect, and sometimes a loving rebuke may be needed (1 Timothy 5:20). But a pastor carries a big responsibility (Hebrews 13:17), and a faithful man of God is worthy of respect and generous financial support (1 Timothy 3:1; 5:17,18).

By the way, when did you last say to your pastor, "I'm grateful for you and all you've done for me"? —Richard De Haan [Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

A pastor leads best when his people get behind him.

1 Timothy 5:17a

Respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. - 1 Thessalonians 5:12

TODAY IN THE WORD In his inspiring book, *Too Soon to Quit*, former MBI President, Dr. George Sweeting, includes a warm tribute to his boyhood pastor in New Jersey, Herrmann G. Braunlin. Pastor Braunlin served the Hawthorne Gospel Church for sixty-two years, impacting countless lives by his godly example and ministry. More than a thousand people attended Pastor Braunlin's memorial service in 1995, a testimony to the love that people had for their pastor.

Many of us have been deeply influenced by a pastor, missionary, Christian club leader, campus ministry director, or some other person whose life's work was the work of Christ.

We can't do a complete study on the subject of work without taking time to consider the men and women whom God has called into His service. The Bible urges and cautions the church not to forget God's workers, because they also deserve a good return for their hard work.

When this topic comes up, most Christians think of the passages of Scripture that teach us to take care of God's workers. First Timothy 5 is one of those passages. Ever since the law of Moses, God's plan has been that His people use part of their crops or herds or income to pay those whose full-time work is serving in His house.

But there's more to it than making sure that the preacher gets a decent paycheck every week, or that the missionaries have adequate support to meet their needs. The issue of honor and respect, which was obviously of great concern to Paul, is very important.

The various churches that the apostle either established or ministered to were still in their early stages when most of the New Testament was written. Believers like those in Thessalonica and Ephesus (where Timothy served) were just getting used to the idea that some people's work was taking care of the church, and that God wanted them to support the workers He sent to them.

1 Timothy 5:17b

TODAY IN THE WORD Jerry was unhappy when he learned that his church had called a new pastor. "There's only one reason he decided to leave his old church and come to ours," he complained. "He came here because we offered him more money!" Many

people agree with Jerry that salary should not be a factor in a pastor's decision to serve a particular church. Interestingly, they would feel differently about a Christian whose vocation was in a "secular" field, like engineering or retail sales.

The Bible warns the church's leaders of the danger of serving for material gain. Paul emphasized that an important qualification of one appointed to the office of elder in the New Testament church was that he not be a "lover of money" (1 Tim. 3:3). Yet the Scriptures also teach that God's people have an obligation to provide for those whose full-time calling is to minister to them. Those who served the tabernacle under the Law of Moses—the priests and the Levites—were not given an allotment of land like the other tribes. They were permitted to live in towns and to own individual plots of land, but their primary source of support came through the offerings brought by God's people. They lived off a portion of the tithes and sacrifices brought there.

Although the methods have changed, this same principle has been carried over to the church. Paul appealed to this Old Testament practice when he spoke of an apostle's "right of support" (1 Cor. 9:12–13). Jesus affirmed this when He declared that "the worker is worth his keep" (Matt. 10:10; cf. 1 Cor. 9:14). Although Paul did not choose to utilize this right while ministering among the Corinthians, he did accept financial help from other churches (2 Cor. 11:8).

APPLY THE WORD Most churches make their pastor's salary a matter of public record by publishing it in their annual report. Does your pastor's compensation indicate that your church feels that he is "worth his keep?"

1 Timothy 5:17-18

Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. - Galatians 6:10

TODAY IN THE WORD Today's generation of grandparents can tell stories of the hardships they endured during World War II as supplies were rationed and people did without some necessities to contribute to the war effort. One reason for those sacrifices was the necessity of feeding and equipping the troops. No one expects soldiers to pay their own way to the front lines or buy their own gear. As Paul put it, "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?" (1 Cor. 9:7).

This self-evident truth helps set the stage for a very important principle the Bible teaches us in our reading for today. If God cares enough to make sure a work animal benefits from its own work, how much more does He care about the welfare of His servants?

This has to be a tough topic for pastors to address. No matter what the approach, the message comes out as "pay the preacher."

Our response to this should be, "Amen!" Forget all the jokes about keeping the preacher poor and humble. Those who provide spiritual leadership to the body of Christ and work hard at preaching and teaching His Word "are worthy of double honor" (1 Tim. 5:17). That means both respect and fair financial treatment. Come to think of it, that's what we want at our places of work, too.

The way the church takes care of its leaders says a lot about our obedience and the value we place on Christ's work. Anyone can cite a handful of examples in which spiritual leaders' right to "receive their living from the gospel" (v. 14) has been abused. But the exceptions only prove the rule that when people are spiritually blessed, they have an obligation to return the blessing in a material way.

That was the guiding principle for Paul (1 Cor. 9:11). He refused to take support from the Corinthians because he knew that some would use that as the basis for an accusation of greed. But when it came to the open-hearted Philippians, Paul gladly received the support they sent (Phil. 4:18).

Most of us don't have any qualms about taking care of our own needs. Let's show the same enthusiasm in taking care of the dedicated people who regularly feed us God's Word. Jesus said that without shepherds the sheep will be scattered.

APPLY THE WORD We often urge Today readers to write their pastors and other spiritual leaders notes of encouragement. Why not do that this weekend for your pastor, Christian education director, worship leader, or other church staff members? Let the person know how much you appreciate this ministry in your life, and offer your continued prayer support. Also, try to include several specific ways in which this leader's ministry is making a difference in your life.

1 Timothy 5:17-25

Roughing The Pastor

By Joe Stowell

I was at my grandson's eighth-grade football game when the referee indicated there was a penalty and stopped play. Apparently, after the ball was thrown, the boy who passed it was tackled, prompting a penalty flag. The announcer from the press box said: "There is a flag on the field. The penalty is roughing the pastor ... I mean, roughing the passer." As soon as he said it, I thought to myself, God could give that penalty to some churches today!

It's not that pastors are perfect. If that is what we are looking for, then pastorless churches would be the norm. It's that God calls on us to honor those who lead us spiritually, particularly "those who labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim. 5:17 ESV). In my opinion, pastoring is one of the hardest occupations on the planet. We live in a sophisticated, fast-paced, and complex world, and our expectations for "high-performance" pastors often set the bar at unattainable heights.

So, let's switch the focus and become high-performance church members who honor our pastors with words of encouragement and prayer. A supportive note or a "thank you" in the foyer will go a long way to stimulate pastors to serve with joy and efficiency.

Lord, help us to appreciate The work that others do, The service given from their hearts, Their sacrifice for You. —Sper

Don't be rough on your pastor— pass along some encouragement today.

1 Timothy 5:17

Getting Rid Of The Pastor

By Richard De Haan

A Christian leader told about some church members who came to him for advice. They wanted to know of a way to get rid of their pastor. Sensing that they were not being fair, he gave them these suggestions:

Look your pastor straight in the eye while he is preaching and say "Amen!" once in a while. He'll preach himself to death.

Pat him on the back and tell him his good points. He'll work himself to death.

Rededicate your life to Christ and ask your minister for a job to do. He'll die of heart failure.

Get the church to pray for him. Soon he'll become so effective that a larger church will take him off your hands.

If your pastor faithfully preaches God's Word and tries to live an exemplary life, do all you can to support and encourage him. Of course, no pastor is perfect, and sometimes a loving rebuke may be needed (1 Timothy 5:20). But a pastor carries a big responsibility (Hebrews 13:17), and a faithful man of God is worthy of respect and generous financial support (1 Timothy 3:1; 5:17-18).

By the way, when did you last say to your pastor, "I'm grateful for you and all you've done for me"?

A pastor leads best when his people get behind him.

1 Timothy 5:17c

TODAY IN THE WORD Warren Wiersbe, well-known Bible teacher and former pastor of Moody Memorial Church here in Chicago, writes that when it comes to the giving of Christians, "Our first obligation is to our local church... Our own pastor is our shepherd, and he ought to have our spiritual and financial support." Dr. Wiersbe goes on to say, "We should put our church first and then, as the Lord directs, share with those ministries He has laid on our hearts."

Dr. Wiersbe's advice is solidly biblical, as usual, and he expresses well the commitment of our hearts at the Moody Bible Institute. Paul drew on every example possible to prove the principle that Jesus taught when He said, "The worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). The Lord made this statement in the context of sending the disciples out to minister and to receive support from their hearers.

Paul himself did not use this privilege in Corinth, but that was because of the Corinthians' attitude problems, not because he didn't deserve the support. Taking care of the pastoral staff in the local church is another basic obligation we need to fulfill as the managers of God's resources.

God has always taken pains to take care of His servants. As Paul reminded his readers, the Old Testament law taught the same principle, because "those who work in the temple get their food from the temple" (1Cor. 9:13).

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul added the concept of "double honor" for elders, or pastors, whose work is "preaching and teaching." This is a reference to the respect we are to give our spiritual leaders (Heb. 13:17), and to the financial support they deserve for their ministry.

The word translated "work" is a strong one. The idea is "laboring to exhaustion," a picture of a pastor who gives all his energies to teaching the Word to his people. Pastors can't give full attention to the work of God when they are distracted by having to earn a

living on the side.

It's obvious to Paul that this is the way things should be in the church (1 Cor. 9:11). It's not ""too much"" for a spiritual leader to expect a fair salary. After all, the rest of us expect to get paid for our work.

APPLY THE WORD First Timothy 5 gives us two ways we can help take care of the leaders God has given to the church as His ""gifts."" The first is the respect we mentioned above. Don't worry about ""overspending"" on prayer and encouragement for your pastor! In fact, God says our pastors are His gifts to us--and when you receive a gift, it's good manners to say ""Thank

1 Timothy 5:17-25

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor. - 1 Timothy 5:17

TODAY IN THE WORD In the 1970s, Chrysler Corporation made headlines when it had to ask the federal government for loans to keep the company running. But its amazing turnaround was owed largely to Lee Iacocca, the CEO, who rescued the company from near financial ruin. Iacocca is proof of how important leadership is to any enterprise.

The church in Ephesus was suffering tremendously because some of their leaders had abandoned faithfulness to God. Timothy had been appointed by Paul to address these critical leadership issues, not only regarding how he himself must lead but how he should appoint and supervise other leaders. If the leadership of the church impacts matters of salvation and condemnation (4:1, 2, 16), choosing leaders is a heavy burden that should not be approached hastily (v. 22).

Once leaders have been chosen, the church has the right and responsibility to evaluate how they are leading. The staff of the church who serve faithfully deserve both respect and pay (v. 17). Respect is a necessary protection, for these servants are exposed to critical appraisal—they live in ministerial “glass houses.”

While pastors are accountable to their churches, they should not be subjected to the shame and destruction that can result from idle, isolated accusations. No pastor should be accused apart from a plurality of voices within the church (v. 19). Furthermore, pastors deserve a fair salary. If the ox can eat while he works and the laborer deserves his pay after a long day in the sun, the minister of God's Word should rightfully earn his living from his work of preaching and teaching. This isn't a grudging hand-out or “charity,” but fair compensation for his hard work as a laborer in God's fields.

If respect and pay are due to the faithful servants in the church, public rebuke is owed to those who are unfaithful in their roles of leadership (v. 20). They should know that flagrant violations of the ethics of leadership will not and cannot be tolerated by the church.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Take time this week to pray for your pastoral staff and write them a note of encouragement. Consider how heavy the responsibility must be to care for the people of God. How can you make their burden lighter? You might affirm the strengths you see in their leadership, and we should all be on guard against gossip and complaining about what the pastor does and does not do. You might even want to offer them a small gift of thanks this week as a token of your appreciation for their hard work.

1 Timothy 5:22

Stay Out Of It!

By David C. Egner

A Christian man in our community received a promotion that greatly increased his income. His fellow salesmen urged him to upgrade his life through large credit card purchases. Whatever the others did, he did—family skiing vacations, cruises, new furniture, expensive shopping trips.

Then sales dipped, and he fell behind in his payments. The pressure put his marriage under tremendous strain. His buddies suggested that he do what they did: pad his expense accounts and turn in inflated sales reports. He did, but he became consumed with anxiety and guilt.

A wise Christian friend observed the strain he was under and prayed for him. He then counseled him to face the reality of his situation. The anguished believer finally cried out to God in shame and repentance. He confessed his sin, made things right with his company, and talked about it with his wife. Peace eventually returned to his life.

Paul's instructions to elders in today's passage apply to all believers in Jesus Christ. When so many cultures in the world are driven by pride and greed, the apostle's command not to “share in other people's sins” (v.22) is timely.

When enticed to join others in wrongdoing, stay out of it!

Sin's pleasures have such great appeal,

They truly look like bargains rare;

But seldom do we clearly see

The hidden cost that we must bear. —D. De Haan

No one who follows Christ will ever stray from God

1 Timothy 5:22 Pure As Snow

A writer who visited a coal mine noticed a perfectly white plant growing by the side of the entrance. He was astonished that there, where coal dust continually blew and settled, this little plant would be so pure and white. As the author watched, a miner took some black coal dust and threw it on the plant, but not a particle stuck. Nothing could stain the plant's snowy whiteness.

Enoch lived in the days before the flood, a time when "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Yet the Bible tells us that "Enoch walked with God three hundred years" (Genesis 5:22).

It is our mission to be pure and unspotted from the ungodly influences in the world. How is this possible? If the Lord can keep a plant white as snow amid clouds of black dust, can He not by His grace keep your heart pure in this world of sin? (**See related devotional below**) —M. R. De Haan ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

The Ermine - In the forests of northern Europe and Asia lives little animal called the ermine, known for his snow-white fur in winter. He instinctively protects his white coat against anything that would soil it. Fur hunters take advantage of this unusual trait of the ermine. They don't set a snare to catch him, but instead they find his home, which is usually a cleft in a rock or a hollow in an old tree. They smear the entrance and interior with grime. Then the hunters set their dogs loose to find and chase the ermine. The frightened animal flees toward home but doesn't enter because of the filth. Rather than soil his white coat, he is trapped by the dogs and captured while preserving his purity. For the ermine, purity is more precious than life. - H G Bosch ([Our Daily Bread](#))

1 Timothy 5:22

Keeping Clean

By M.R. De Haan

A writer who visited a coal mine noticed a perfectly white plant growing by the side of the entrance. The author and the other visitors with him were astonished that there, where coal dust continually blew and settled, this little plant would be so pure and white.

As the people watched, a miner took some black coal dust and threw it on the plant, but not a particle stuck. The visitors repeated the experiment, but the dust would not cling. Nothing could stain the plant's snowy whiteness.

This illustrates what every Christian life should be like. We live in an evil world, surrounded by ungodly influences. It is our mission to be pure amid all this dirt and remain unspotted from the world. How is this possible?

Enoch lived in the days before the flood, a time when "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Yet the Bible tells us that "Enoch walked with God three hundred years" (5:22).

If the Lord can keep a plant white as snow amid clouds of black dust, can He not by His grace keep your heart pure in this world of sin?

Let me walk with You, dear Savior,

Side by side and hand in hand;

Keep me clean and pure and faithful

Till I reach the heavenly land. —Hess

We live in the world, but the world must not live in us.

1 Timothy 5:24-25 Nothing Hidden

Some men's sins are clearly evident ... Likewise, the good works of some ... and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden. — 1Timothy 5:24, 25

A woman had been maligned and misrepresented by an envious co-worker. She was frustrated because her attempts to confront her in private had only made matters worse. So she decided to swallow her pride and let the matter go. She said, "I'm glad the Lord knows the true situation." She expressed a profound truth that both warns and comforts.

Paul pointed out that nothing can be concealed forever (1Timothy 5:24, 25). This serves as a solemn warning. For example, a news report told about a highly respected person who was arrested for crimes he had been secretly committing for years.

Yet the fact that nothing can be hidden can also be a great consolation. I have known people who never held a position of honor, nor were they recognized for their service. After they died, however, I learned that in their own quiet way they had touched many lives with their kind words and helpful deeds. Their good works could not remain hidden.

We can hide nothing from God—that's a solemn warning! But it's also a great comfort, for our heavenly Father knows about every encouraging smile, every kind word, and every loving deed done in Jesus' name. And someday He will reward us.—Herbert Vander Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Be strong and to the will of God be true,
For though your book of life be sealed,
God knows what lies ahead awaiting you,
He knows when it should be revealed. —Anon.

Neither vice nor virtue can remain a secret forever.

1 TIMOTHY 6

1 Timothy 6:1 Respect

Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor. —1Timothy 6:1

As a schoolteacher, my wife has noticed that behavior seems to be deteriorating with each successive class of students. Many children show little respect for older people.

First Timothy 6 reveals that disrespect is not unique to our generation. Paul, who ministered to a culture built on slavery, highlighted this concern. He wrote, "Those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren" (1Ti 6:2). Paul knew that slaves, whose welfare depended on their master's goodwill, were capable of being disrespectful.

We may say that people need to show themselves worthy of respect before we can respect them. But respecting another person is much more about who we are than about who the other person is.

Paul gave the main reason believers should excel in respect: "So that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed" (1Ti 6:1).

Sadly, the worst cases of disrespect are sometimes found among those who claim to follow Jesus. But when believers excel in all they do, God's name is lifted up. All of us are to bring honor and glory to the Lord's name.

Excelling in respect for others honors God. —Albert Lee ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

O help me, Lord, to show respect,
To always honor You;
And may I bring You highest praise
In everything I do. -Sper

One who would be truly respected must first respect others.

1 Timothy 6:1-2

[Be] self-controlled and pure ... so that no one will malign the word of God. - Titus 2:5

TODAY IN THE WORD In the past five years more companies have turned to “guerrilla” or “viral” marketing strategies. The concept is simple: try to spread excitement about a particular product by having regular people be seen using the product. From beverages to MP3 players to razors, companies have tried to create “buzz” and increase sales through this technique.

Just as these companies try to market their products by those who use them, so too Christianity is “marketed” by those who believe it. A clear and consistent testimony for Christ is persuasive.

Paul's letter to Timothy is full of teaching about the proper conduct for believers: for men (2: , for women (2:9-15), for leaders (3:1-13), and now for slaves (6:1-2). What's ultimately at stake when it comes to how we conduct ourselves as God's people isn't our reputation but God's. A godly life brings credit and glory to Christ; a hypocritical or impure life invites slander upon the name of Christ.

Some have used this passage to justify American slavery. In light of that abuse of this text, it's important to note several points. First, Roman slavery was unlike the terrible practice of American slavery from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Fifty percent of Roman slaves were freed by the age of thirty. Many slaves were able to own property, and selling oneself into slavery was sometimes a method used to gain Roman citizenship.

Second, the fact that Paul directly addresses slaves would have been shocking in its day. While Roman slaves were rarely treated as badly as many American slaves, they still were marginalized and rarely directly addressed in formal correspondence.

Third, the point that Paul wants to stress in this passage is that our testimony in our relationships can win others to Christ (see 1 Peter 3:1-2). Protecting the name of Jesus Christ means more than even winning personal freedoms.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY As believers, we often must surrender our personal rights when the name of Jesus Christ is at stake. Believers should instead forego their “rights” and choose rather to be wronged and cheated (1 Cor. 6:7). When your rights are under assault, pray through Psalm 37; you may want to memorize verses 5 and 6 to remind you that God does not forget us when we suffer from injustice.

Read: 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. - Romans 12:2

TODAY IN THE WORD In 1816, Mary Shelley wrote the novel, Frankenstein, the story of an ambitious young scientist who creates a man in his laboratory. His creation is monstrous and turns into a savage killer. His final words reveal his regret: “Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility, and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries.”

Frankenstein reveals what happens to a man with unrestrained ambition and conceit, the same character we see in the false teachers in Ephesus.

Their egotism motivated them to reject sound instruction and godly teaching. Like so many people today, the false teachers decided that the teaching of Christ didn't really suit their desires. It wasn't progressive enough. They could be a little bit more forward-thinking.

Jesus taught that no one could serve both God and money (cf. Matt. 6:24); they taught that godly living was a means to financial success (v. 5). Jesus emphasized that no one could pursue both earthly treasure and eternal treasure; the false teachers insisted that these were complimentary goals. They promoted a bigger bang for your spiritual buck: get Jesus and get rich! They failed to understand the emptiness of selfish ambition, especially compared to the wealth found in “godliness with contentment” (v. 6).

While this false teaching might seem like a slight detour from sound instruction, it was actually a U-turn from faith. The disastrous result: “Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (v. 10).

This challenges our perspective on Scripture's teachings: do we, like the false teachers in Ephesus, stand above Scripture, judging for ourselves which parts of its teaching we embrace or reject? Or do we allow Scripture to stand above us, submitting fully to all of

its teaching?

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Our passage today is especially convicting for us in the United States where selfish ambition and striving for financial success is admired and rewarded. Consider today how eager you are to get rich. Have you compromised financial integrity in the workplace? Have you cheated God from generous and cheerful giving of your tithes and offerings? Seek to hold onto your money with an open hand, realizing it is God who gives it to you and expects you to use it in His service for His glory.

1 Timothy 6:6–8 - Contentment

Matthew Henry well said, "The necessities of life are the bounds of a true Christian's desires. Truly, the secret of contentment is not having much but wanting little. This is not to say we cannot have more than food and clothing. It means that having more than these presents a temptation (1 Tim. 6:9). May we, as God's children, refuse to let the world squeeze us into its mold, and refuse to imitate it as it seeks everything to live with and nothing to live for.

1 Timothy 6:6 - Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

According to a recent report, the wind carries elements such as dust and pollutants farther than scientists ever thought possible. The results of this are both good and bad. On the good side, it is estimated that some thirteen million tons of windblown dust fall on the Amazon region every year. Most of this dust comes from Africa's Sahara Desert, and it contains valuable nutrients. But the wind has also carried pesticides such as DDT as far as Antarctica, and the Arctic skies are often clouded by pollution.

The wind and its effects are similar to money and its effects. Like the wind, money is by itself morally neutral. But money is also such a powerful force that it sweeps a lot of things along with it, and produces some good and bad effects. People can use money to spread good around the world. But it can also poison the lives of people who have it or want it. (Today in the Word)

1 Timothy 6:6a The Winning Combination

Godliness with contentment is great gain. —1Timothy 6:6

I have often been encouraged by people without their realizing it. I remember walking through the main lounge of a Christian retirement community late one evening. The residents had gone to their rooms for the night, except for one elderly woman. Unaware of my presence, she patiently worked on a jigsaw puzzle and joyfully hummed to herself. She seemed to be quite content.

I began to wonder, "How can people find true contentment, no matter what their circumstances?" The apostle Paul addressed this issue in 1 Timothy 6. He warned against corrupt people who see godliness as a means for financial profit (1Ti 6:5). A more subtle error among Christians is the belief that godliness-plus-money is life's winning combination. Paul corrected both errors by stating the real winning combination: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Ti 6:6). He urged believers to be satisfied with food and clothing (1Ti 6:7, 8). "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1Ti 6:10), but loving and trusting God is the root of all contentment.

How about you? Are you experiencing the joy that comes when godliness is combined with contentment? If so, you've got the winning combination. —Joanie Yoder ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

O Lord, give me the grace to be
Content with what You give to me.
No, more than that, let me rejoice
In all You send, for it's Your choice! —Anon.

True contentment is not in having everything, but in being satisfied with everything you have.

1 Timothy 6:6b The Rich And The Poor

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! --Psalm 68:19

My wife and I think of ourselves as neither rich nor poor. When we consider people living in poverty, struggling just to get by, we can

feel guilty because of our comfortable lifestyle. But when we see others who live in luxurious houses, drive expensive cars, and take exotic vacations, our lifestyle seems unpretentious and humdrum.

Actually, how much we possess is not as important as our attitude toward our possessions. Paul wrote that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Ti 6:6). Regardless of our status, we should be content, neither coveting more nor resenting those who have more than we do.

Although we as Christians may enjoy God's blessings without feeling guilty, we must also heed Paul's admonition not to be haughty but to trust in God (1Ti 6:17). We must humbly acknowledge Him as the source of all we have, and share willingly and generously with others (1Ti 6:17, 18). Such generosity has eternal value (v.19). Since God measures our giving by the degree of our sacrifice (Mk. 12:42, 43, 44), many who have little to give in this life will be immensely rewarded in the life to come.

Whether we are rich or poor, let's be sure to invest in eternity. --H V Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

If we've been blessed with riches,
We must be rich in deeds;
God wants us to be generous
In meeting others' needs. --Sper

**Our value is determined not by what we have
but by what we do with what we have.**

1 Timothy 6:6c Great Gain

Over the past 15 years, a New Jersey businessman has anonymously given away more than \$600 million to universities, medical centers, and other beneficiaries. When a legal complication forced him to reveal his identity, he explained his generosity by saying,

"Nobody can wear two pairs of shoes at one time. I simply decided I had enough money"

A friend of the donor described him as a man who doesn't own a house or a car, flies economy class, wears a \$15 watch, and "didn't want his money to crush him."

Few people seem able to treat their resources as a servant instead of a master. It seems so natural and sensible to grasp rather than to give. Even as followers of Christ, we may mistakenly believe that "godliness is a means of gain" (1Ti 6:5). But the apostle Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain... And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1Ti 6:6, 7, 8).
—D. C. McCasland ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

MONEY IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT—A MASTER OR A SERVANT.

1 Timothy 6:6d Be Content

Confusing our wants with our needs goes to the heart of coveting and explains why we are so often driven by the desire for more and more. We fail to see that life's greatest fulfillment is not found in accumulating things but in knowing God.

The tenth commandment may seem like an add-on compared to such big-ticket items as murder, stealing, lying, and adultery, but it is foundational to all the other commandments and ensures peace and contentment. It is the only command that zeroes in on a forbidden attitude rather than an action. Yet it is a safeguard against the temptation to break the other nine commandments.

David's covetous desire for another man's wife led to adultery, stealing, and murder (2 Sam. 11). And a desire for more and more pleasure, power, or possessions can destroy family relationships and cause us to lie to others. And because covetousness is idolatry (Col 3:5), it also keeps us from having and maintaining a right relationship to God. Lord, help us to be content in You. --D J De Haan ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

When we would covet more and more
Of this world's gold, of earthly store,
Help us, O God, to look above
And draw upon Your matchless love. --DJD

**Contentment is wanting what you have,
not having everything you want.**

1 Timothy 6:6e A Good Surrender

Surrender is not a very popular word. We use it in reference to the humiliation that accompanies defeat. When a nation loses a war, it may be forced to surrender unconditionally, and has no say in the terms of defeat.

Yet there is a type of surrender that is dignified and appropriate. Paul understood it in two aspects. First, it means surrendering our desires and will to the heavenly Father. Jesus is our example, for He did the Father's will in everything (Jn. 6:38).

The second aspect is our acceptance of God's supreme sovereignty. This is marked by our realization that things do not always go our way as God works out His will on earth. Our business goes through good times and bad. Our health may suffer. Loved ones will hurt us, or leave us, or even die. Our fondest dreams may never be realized.

In the spiritual sense, to surrender means that we trust God to do what is best. It is, as Paul said, choosing to be content "in whatever state I am" (Phil. 4:11, 12), and knowing by faith that God will take care of our needs (Php 4:19). That kind of faith isn't easy. But it's the only way to overcome dissatisfaction and anger about uncontrollable circumstances.

Perhaps it's time to say "I surrender" to the Lord and to His perfect will and plan. --D C Egner ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Take my love--my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself--and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee. --Havergal

Surrender is victory when we yield to God.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 Battle for Contentment

LIFE in an affluent society can be frustrating, I thought, as I walked through a local mall. On display for a special show was an astounding array of recreational vehicles. Campers and mobile homes bore signs, "Yours Today for Only \$25,000." They were so inviting I realized I was envying people who could afford one of these beauties.

Our battle to be content doesn't involve just big-ticket items. Imagine the struggle of a single mother who can barely make her rent payments. How difficult it must be to not covet a car that is rust-free or to not envy a woman who doesn't have to send her children to school in hand-me-downs. How can someone who struggles to stretch a paycheck across two weeks be content in a world of wealth and affluence?

In 1 Timothy 6:5, Paul warns us to beware of people who think that being godly will bring them riches. It is contentment plus godliness that makes us truly rich, he says. But how do we become content? By recognizing that we brought nothing into the world and that we will carry nothing out—that everything we have is from God.

When waves of envy and covetousness are pulling us under, there is one thought that can keep us from being swept away in the current: Godliness—not gold—brings contentment. —J D Brannon ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

1 Timothy 6:6-11 WHAT WE DON'T NEED

Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. - 1Timothy 5:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

In the fifth century, a man named Arsenius determined to live a holy life. So he abandoned the comforts of Egyptian society to follow an austere lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need.

Those of us who live in a society flooded with goods and gadgets need to ponder the example of that desert dweller. A typical supermarket in the United States in 1976 stocked 9,000 articles; today it carries 30,000. How many of them are absolutely essential? How many superfluous?

It's hard for us to say sincerely with the apostle Paul, "Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1Ti 6:8). In our constant battle against seductive materialism of our culture, let's follow the example of Arsenius. As we walk through the markets and shopping malls, we too can rejoice at the sight of all the things we don't need.

That's only the first step, however. The next step is to become much more wise in our spending, more generous in our giving to others, and more sacrificial with the resources God has given to us. - V C Grounds

*Lord, make me truly wise, I pray,
Contented with my lot;
Help me to shun all earthly things
That soon will be forgot.*

- Henry G. Bosch

Contentment isn't getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have. ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

1 Timothy 6:6-12

Money Talk

By Dave Branon

Marilyn and Steven had been married just a few years, and money was tight. But as she looked at their threadbare bedspread, she wanted to replace it. So she decided she would buy a new one with a credit card—hoping to somehow find the money to pay it off.

Her devotional reading for the day surprised her when it pointed her to Proverbs 22:27, "If you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you" (niv). Marilyn decided not to go into debt for a new bedspread that day.

Decisions about the way we spend our money are a personal matter between us and the Lord and can be difficult to make. But God hasn't left us without help. He tells us: "Honor the Lord with your possessions" (Prov. 3:9), and "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt. 6:24 niv).

With such truths in mind, we look further in His Word for help to use money wisely. We find this: "Beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15). Another says, "The borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7). And in 1 Timothy we read, be "ready to give, willing to share" (6:18).

Money is a big issue. God, who provides for all our needs, can show us how to use it to bring Him honor.

Lord, sometimes money and finances are
overwhelming. It's hard to know what decisions
to make, so please lead me and give the wisdom
to use my finances in a way that pleases You.
Never let gold become your god.

1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19

Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. - 1 Timothy 6:6

TODAY IN THE WORD According to a recent report, the wind carries elements such as dust and pollutants farther than scientists ever thought possible. The results of this are both good and bad. On the good side, it is estimated that some thirteen million tons of windblown dust fall on the Amazon region every year. Most of this dust comes from Africa's Sahara Desert, and it contains valuable nutrients. But the wind has also carried pesticides such as DDT as far as Antarctica, and the Arctic skies are often clouded by pollution.

The wind and its effects are similar to money and its effects. Like the wind, money is by itself morally neutral. But money is also such

a powerful force that it sweeps a lot of things along with it, and produces some good and bad effects. People can use money to spread good around the world. But it can also poison the lives of people who have it or want it.

We have already talked about the dangers of falling in love with money and material things, but let's look again in the context of what we do to make a living. The vast majority of people make their money from their jobs or some other form of income-producing activity.

Paul's precaution against attaching our hearts to our bank accounts takes on an added urgency in a culture that tempts people with the dream of instant wealth by buying a lottery ticket or hitting it big at the casino. Books have been written and films made about the grief that has pierced the lives of people who fell into the destructive trap of a get-rich-quick fantasy.

That particular danger may seem like a stretch from where you live every day--and we hope it is. But the danger of letting money become our first love can also reach us in the ordinary daily routine of making a living.

APPLY THE WORD Just as the wind leaves visible evidence of its power, so too does money. If you look back on the events of your life, you can probably see the benefits--and perhaps some hard lessons--that money has provided you over the years.

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Do The Hard Work!

By Herbert Vander Lugt

After living more than 80 years, I know that any claim that offers an effortless way to develop a lean, well-conditioned body is a hoax. So is any sermon title that promises an easy way to become like Christ.

Author Brennan Manning tells of an alcoholic who asked his minister to pray over him to be delivered from his drinking problem. He thought this would be a quick and easy way to overcome his addiction. Recognizing his motive in asking for prayer, the minister replied, "I've got a better idea. Go to Alcoholics Anonymous." He counseled the man to follow the program diligently and read his Bible daily. "In other words," the minister concluded, "do the hard work."

Do the hard work—that's what Paul was saying to Timothy when he told him how he should order his life so he could teach believers how they should live. Notice the action verbs: "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:11-12).

Just as there is no easy path to being delivered from alcoholism, so too, there is no effort-free route to Christlikeness. If we really want to become like Jesus, we must keep on doing the hard work.

O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,

This is my constant longing and prayer;

Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,

Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear —Chisholm

Conversion is the miracle of a moment; becoming like Christ is the work of a lifetime.

1 Timothy 6:6-10,17-19

The Challenge Of Riches

By David C. McCasland

While our family was living in Kenya in the 1980s, we drove a young woman from Nairobi to visit her parents who lived near Lake Victoria. On the way, we stopped in the city of Kisumu to leave our luggage at a hotel where we would stay after taking her home. When our friend saw our hotel room that we considered an average-size room with two beds, she said, "All this for only five of you?" What we considered ordinary, she saw as luxurious. Riches are relative, and some of us who live in prosperous nations have a tendency to complain about a standard of living that others would gladly embrace.

Among the followers of Christ in Ephesus, some had more money than others. To Timothy, their pastor, Paul wrote, "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" (1 Tim. 6:17). Paul urged them to "be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (v.18).

Our natural tendency is to grasp what we have instead of freely giving to those in need. The challenge of riches is living with thankful

hearts to God and open hands to others.

One grace each child of God can show

Is giving from a willing heart;

Yet, if we wait till riches grow,

It may be that we'll never start. —D. DeHaan

We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.

1 Timothy 6:6-11

TODAY IN THE WORD Coming down the stairs one morning, a British gentleman by the name of Lord Congelton overheard his cook conversing with one of the other servants. "I would be perfectly content," the woman declared, "if I just had five pounds!"

After pondering the matter, Lord Congelton decided to help his long-time employee. He pulled her aside later in the day and gave her a five-pound note--a fairly substantial sum, worth about \$25 at the time. The surprised cook thanked her employer profusely, whereupon Lord Congelton departed.

But once outside the door, Congelton paused to see what, if anything, the woman would say. Surely, he reasoned, she would express her thankfulness to God.

A second or two passed and Congelton heard the woman cry out, "Oh, why didn't I say ten pounds?!"

Like Lord Congelton's cook, many Christians find it difficult to be content. Typically we focus, not on what we do have, but on all that we lack. It doesn't help matters when we are bombarded daily by advertisers whose sole purpose is to make us dissatisfied with our current possessions and hungry for their newest products and latest models. Even our children are targeted on Saturday mornings with commercials designed to make them want the latest toy.

In his first epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul warns us about the dangers of discontent. He reminds us that possessions and riches are temporal (v. 7). No matter how much we accumulate, we will leave it behind when we die. He reminds us that the desire for more leads to "ruin and destruction" (vv. 9-10).

APPLY THE WORD How do you treat the other members of your family? Today, take a moment to consider. If you find it difficult to be content, it may be that you are filling your mind with too many materialistic temptations. Many Christians have found relief (as well as a renewed joy) by shutting off the TV (or tuning out commercials); avoiding unnecessary shopping; and refusing to peruse mail order catalogs.

1 Timothy 6:6-12

If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. - 1 Timothy 6:8

TODAY IN THE WORD The magazine Campus Journal reported on a recent survey that asked people to name the salary they thought they would need to achieve that elusive standard of happiness known as ""the American dream.""

The results were interesting because the study had segmented the people based on their actual incomes. Two examples tell the story. People who earn about \$25 a year estimated they would need about \$54 to be happy. And on average, people in the \$100 income range said it would take about \$192 to reach the stated goal of the study.

Do the math and you'll see that most of the people surveyed said it would take about twice their current income to make them happy. What we don't know is whether these people, and others like them, actually live as if they're only halfway content.

Judging by some of the unwise and spiritually harmful things some people do to acquire more money, the answer to that question has to be yes. Many people live with a mindset of discontent.

The first sentence of today's reading is the biblical alternative to this mindset. Paul says contentment is worth a great deal when it enables us to pursue God's real goal for us--""godliness,"" becoming like Him.

To some people, discussing money and godliness on the same page may seem like trying to go in two different directions at once. That's because of a common misinterpreting of verse 10 by saying the love of money is the root of all evil. Some people even shorten that to: ""Money is the root of all evil.""

That's not what Paul was saying. A desire for money that's so consuming it turns us away from God is a source of many evils, but not all.

Thank goodness for that, because the dangers that the love of money brings are bad enough. They include ""many foolish and harmful desires"" that bring ""ruin and destruction"" (v. 9). No need to ask Paul what he really thought about the problem!

What a refreshing break we have in verse 11. If we want to become men and women of God, we need to put sin behind us and pursue the valuable virtues Paul lists there.

APPLY THE WORD Here's a test to measure your CQ (contentment quotient). Write the three or four material possessions you consider most valuable. Then ask yourself some questions in relation to these items. If you lost them, would you no longer be content? Could you serve God just as well without them? Would you still be a giver instead of a taker? And finally, would the loss of these things in any way dull your desire to pursue those qualities that please God?

1 Timothy 6:6-12 Almost Content?

By Bill Crowder

As I stepped into the restaurant parking lot after lunch, I saw a pickup truck speeding through the parked vehicles. While observing the driver's reckless behavior, I noticed the words on the truck's front license plate. It read, "Almost Content." After thinking about that message and the sentiment it tried to communicate, I concluded that the concept "almost content" doesn't exist. Either we are content or we are not.

Admittedly, contentment is a tough needle to thread. We live in a world that feeds our desire for more and more—until we find it almost impossible to be content with anything. But this is nothing new. The book of Hebrews addressed this issue, saying, "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'" (13:5). The only remedy for hearts that "want it all" is the contentment found in the presence of the living God. He is sufficient for our needs and longings, and He alone can bring us the peace and contentment we'll never find in the pursuits of this life.

Almost content? There is no such thing. In Christ we can know true contentment.

I find contentment in His wondrous grace,

No cloud or shadow can obscure His face;

When great temptations I must bear,

I find the secret place of prayer. —Dunlop

Contentment is not getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.

1 Timothy 6:6-19 Profit Sharing

By David C. McCasland

A businessman who sold his road construction company stunned his employees by dividing a third of the profit among them. Each of his 550 workers received a share of the \$128 million, with some of his long-term associates getting bonuses of \$1 million each—tax free.

"It's sharing good times, that's really all it is," the owner said. "People work exceedingly hard for us... I wanted to go out doing the right thing."

A friend once said to me, "Sometimes God doesn't entrust us with money, because we want to keep it while He wants us to give it away." I pondered this statement in light of the generous business owner and the words of Scripture directed toward those "who are rich in this present age" (1 Timothy 6:17). Paul said, "Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (v.18).

It's easy to say, "Well, if I had millions of dollars, I'd be happy to share what I have with others." But would I? What riches of time, talent, or treasure am I hoarding today? What has God given me that I am unwilling to share?

In whatever way God blesses us, He longs for us to be joyful and generous as we pass it on.

Help us, Lord, while we are living

To be faithful, kind, and true;

Jesus, bless our humble giving

So that others may find You. —Johnson

The Lord sees not only how much we give, but also how much we keep.

1 Timothy 6:6 Advantage In Adversity

By Haddon W. Robinson

Adversity tests us. It's one thing to study the game sketched out on the blackboard in the locker room; it's quite another to take the field where adversity tackles us and bloodies our noses. Adversity tests whether we will turn tail and run or stand up to life's challenges as people of faith.

We may think that the opposite of adversity is prosperity. Not so. Prosperity is a character test in disguise. Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist, understood this when he wrote, "Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man, but for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity. Precious few are those who can keep their moral, spiritual, and financial equilibrium ... while balancing on the elevated tightrope of success."

Most of us can handle a demotion better than a promotion. Why? Because when adversity strikes, life becomes rather simple. We have no choice but to stand up to it or quit. Prosperity, on the other hand, doesn't seem like a test, yet it often creates in us a sense of discontent. We crave more and more of what we have enough of already.

The Bible says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). That's much harder to come by than mere prosperity.

Thinking It Over

Where do I turn when adversity strikes?

Do I remember the Lord as much

in my successes as I do in my failures?

Prosperity may be a greater test of character than poverty.

1 Timothy 6:6-16 Forever Joyful

By Vernon C. Grounds

Wall Street Journal columnist Jonathan Clements offered his readers "Nine Tips for Investing in Happiness." Interestingly, one of his suggestions was precisely the same as that given in the favorite old hymn by Johnson C. Oatman, "Count Your Many Blessings." Clements urges us not to brood over the riches of our neighbors but to focus on the many blessings we actually do possess. That's wise counsel, provided that we realize our spiritual wealth in Jesus is immeasurably more valuable than any material possessions.

God didn't give us the Bible as a guidebook for happiness. Yet it tells us how we can be eternally joyful and how we can experience joy on our way to that eternal happiness. So it's enlightening to compare biblical truth with common-sense advice.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain," Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:6). The apostle wanted his protégé to understand that being grateful for the basics of life would help keep him from the trap of covetousness.

So let's focus on the wonders of God's grace, training ourselves to make a spirit of gratitude pervade our lives. That's the way to experience joy today and to be forever joyful.

When you look at others with their lands and gold,

Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold;

Count your many blessings—money cannot buy

Your reward in heaven nor your home on high. —Oatman

Count your many blessings and you'll soon lose count.

1 Timothy 6:6-12

TODAY IN THE WORD Earlier this year, Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was awarded the 1996 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. Before becoming a Christian in 1951, Bright says he was a materialistic young businessman. After his conversion, he and his wife, Vonette, made a crucial choice that allowed them to concentrate on ministry.

“We made a decision to relinquish all our rights, all our possessions, everything we would ever own,” says Vonette. For the Brights, the antidote to greed and the secret to contentment was a radical decision regarding material things. In many ways their decision is unique to their situation and their calling, but every believer must deal with the trap of wanting to get rich (v. 9).

This is really the crux of the issue when it comes to greed. Verse 10 of today’s text is a much-quoted and often misquoted warning about the allure of greed. It’s the love of money that is the root of all sorts of evil.

It’s not what you have but what you lust for that does the damage. Greedily chasing after money or anything else that takes your heart away from God is like trying to run through a twisted patch of thorns. You’ll never make it through without getting “pierced” repeatedly. In fact, you may not make it through at all.

Look at the contrast Paul describes between those who want to get rich and are eager for money and those who pursue God. The former can’t take their gold with them even if they get it (v. 7).

APPLY THE WORD When do you say “Enough”? Most people don’t say it at all. Greed is easy to spot in others but tough to pinpoint in ourselves. Here’s a brief self-test that may help focus the issue. Jot down the When the Bible tells us to be content with what we have, God is not asking us to settle for second best. On the contrary, He is asking us to let go of the temporary baubles of earth so as to claim our eternal treasures. The exhortation of Hebrews 13:5 is followed by the staggering promise of God’s never-failing presence.

1 Timothy 6:6-19 Check Your Checkbook!

SOME evening when you have a spare moment, get out your old checkbook registers and read the entries. You will be startled to learn how you spent your money. The entries will read like a family history book, chronicling every major event—births, deaths, and illnesses—and reflecting your tastes, habits, and interests.

They record vacations, travels, and other moves. They also tell much about how expensively you dress or how extravagantly you eat. The total spent in each category will pinpoint the things that make the greatest demands on your income—either due to need or choice.

This checkbook checkup might also gauge our spiritual temperature. Contributions given to the work of the Lord compared to expenditures for unnecessary things offer some clues. When we give nothing to church or to people in need but spend large sums on personal gratification, it’s time to examine our values.

A healthy checkbook checkup will show that we’ve been “rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18). —R W De Haan ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

1 Timothy 6:8 Simply Content

By David C. McCasland

A few years ago, an automaker used the tune of the old Shaker song “Simple Gifts” to promote a luxury car. To those who knew the lyrics, it seemed contradictory to use a song about finding contentment in a simple way of life to sell an expensive car. It says, “’Tis the gift to be simple, ’tis the gift to be free, ’tis the gift to come down where we ought to be.”

We often struggle to accept the Bible’s teaching that contentment has nothing to do with our wardrobe, our bank account, or whether we have steak or fish sticks for supper. It is not material prosperity but “godliness with contentment” that the apostle Paul called “great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). Timothy may have been as stunned as we are to read the words, “having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (v.8).

How many of us will pause today to thank the Lord because we have something to wear and something to eat? But how might our lives be revolutionized if we did?

That old Shaker song also reminds us that contentment is a gift that is to be enjoyed. It says, “And when we find ourselves in the place just right, ’twill be in the valley of love and delight.” In the abundance of God’s simple gifts, we can be content.

As we keep on collecting more and more stuff,

We sometimes complain that we don't have enough;

But let us be thankful for what God has sent—

With food and with clothing may we be content. —Fitzhugh

Contentment comes not from great wealth but from few wants.

1 Timothy 6:8

What We Don't Need

By Vernon C. Grounds

In the fifth century, a man named Arsenius determined to live a holy life. So he abandoned the comforts of Egyptian society to follow an austere lifestyle in the desert. Yet whenever he visited the great city of Alexandria, he spent time wandering through its bazaars. Asked why, he explained that his heart rejoiced at the sight of all the things he didn't need.

Those of us who live in a society flooded with goods and gadgets need to ponder the example of that desert dweller. A typical supermarket in the United States in 1976 stocked 9,000 articles; today it carries 30,000. How many of them are absolutely essential? How many superfluous?

It's hard for us to say sincerely with the apostle Paul, "Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Tim. 6:8). In our constant battle against the seductive materialism of our culture, let's follow the example of Arsenius. As we walk through the markets and shopping malls, we too can rejoice at the sight of all the things we don't need.

That's only the first step, however. The next step is to become much more wise in our spending, more generous in our giving to others, and more sacrificial with the resources God has given to us.

Lord, make me truly wise, I pray,

Contented with my lot;

Help me to shun all earthly things

That soon will be forgot. —HGB

Contentment isn't getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.

1 Timothy 6:1-12 Contented

By M.R. De Haan

Early one dreary, rainy morning I sat in my study and looked out the window. I watched a fat robin pull three worms from the grass, swallow them, and then fly up to the telephone wire. There, just 10 feet from me, he began to sing. For a half-hour I sat and enjoyed the robin's rendition of "Praise the Lord!"

The robin did not complain about the color or size of the worms, but he was satisfied with what he found. He was content. He was delighted with what the heavenly Father had provided.

A young girl whose father was a chronic grumbler said to her mother, "I know what everybody in this family likes. Johnny likes hamburgers, Janie likes ice cream, Willie likes bananas, and Mommy likes chicken." The father, irked because he had not been included in the list, asked, "What about me? What do I like?" The innocent little one replied, "You like everything we haven't got."

Paul could say, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11). In Hebrews 13:5 we read, "Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" That's enough to satisfy anyone!

I would be quiet, Lord, and rest content,

By grace I would not pine, nor would I fret;

With You to guide and care, my joy be this:

Not one small need of mine will You forget! —HGB

Thankfulness is the soil in which joy thrives.

1 Timothy 6:8 The Alice Tax

By David C. McCasland

Author Calvin Trillin's wife, Alice, held a unique view of income tax. She believed that "after a certain level of income, the government would simply take everything." She thought there should be a limit on how much money people were allowed to keep for themselves. Writing in *The New Yorker*, Trillin said of his wife, "She believed in the principle of enoughness."

In Mark 12, Jesus avoided a carefully laid trap by telling His questioners to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (v.17). When Jesus watched people making their offerings to the temple treasury, He commended a woman who would have been considered foolish for her extravagance. "This poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood" (vv.43-44).

Jesus placed more importance on wholehearted love for God than on wholesale concern over material needs. His tranquil attitude toward money and possessions was based on trusting His Father to supply each day's needs. "Your Father knows the things you have need of" (Matt. 6:8).

Enoughness. What a concept!

He clothes the lilies, feeds the birds;

Would He to you, then, pay less heed?

Look up to Him with prayerful heart,

He will supply your every need. —Renfrow

Contentment is not getting what we want but being satisfied with what we have.

1 Timothy 6:9 Watch Your Eyes

By David H. Roper

The ability to discern between good and evil is determined by the things on which we focus our spiritual eyes. If we set our eyes on money, for example, we may have the good life for a while, but our judgment will become clouded. We'll make choices that defy our own values—choices that may devastate our families and destroy us in the end.

The Bible warns, "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts" (1 Timothy 6:9). If we love money we'll go to any extreme to get it. And then, "How great is that darkness" (Matthew 6:23).

In C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Edmund's lust for sweets leads him to betray his beloved brother and sisters. Eustace's desire for the dragon's gold eventually turns him into a dragon. Greed overcomes Prince Caspian on Deathwater Island as he dreams of the power its magic water will bring him.

Food, money, power—wherever we focus our spiritual eyes determines what we desire, and whether our lives are filled with light or filled with darkness. Jesus said, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light" (Matthew 6:22).

Be careful where your eyes lead your desires.

No greater peace can flood our soul

Than when we choose a heavenly goal,

But when we covet worldly gain

We choose a path that brings us pain. —D. De Haan

Cure for covetousness: Think of something to give instead of something to get.

1 Timothy 6:9 Money Trouble

By Herbert Vander Lugt

When I was in Haiti, I saw a poor elderly woman at a mission station. She had walked miles for a meal, yet she was sharing her food with a young girl. When I mentioned this to “Granny,” a veteran missionary, she said, “Herb, the very poor are much more generous than the very rich.”

I think Granny was right. While some multimillionaires are godly, generous, and kind, they are the exception rather than the rule.

From the days of the Old Testament prophets until now, many of the rich have exploited the poor. James warned his generation that the wealth of those who oppress the poor “will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire” (Jas. 5:3).

Even today, the rich contribute relatively little to charitable causes. Popular author Vance Packard says that the USA has at least 800 people worth more than \$100 million. How much do they give to church and charity? Less than 2%!

I have sometimes wished I had wealth, thinking of all the good I could do with it. But would I? Paul warned that coveting riches is a snare (1 Tim. 6:9). Realizing this, we should honor the wealthy who are generous. We should also thank God for the blessings He gives us, and then give as lavishly as we can out of that abundance.

For Further Study

Compare the rich young ruler (Lk. 18:18-27)

with the believers at Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:1-6).

Who gave generously? How does this apply to your life?

He who has no money is poor; he who has nothing but money is even poorer.

1 Timothy 6:9 Happy Without

Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts. —1 Timothy 6:9

The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates (469-399 BC) believed that if you are truly wise you will not be obsessed with possessions. Practicing to an extreme what he preached, he even refused to wear shoes.

Socrates loved to visit the marketplace, though, and gaze with admiration at the great abundance of wares on display. When a friend asked why he was so allured, he replied, “I love to go there and discover how many things I am perfectly happy without.”

That type of attitude runs counter to the commercial messages that continually bombard our eyes and ears. Advertisers spend millions to tell us about all the latest products that we can't be happy without.

The apostle Paul advised his spiritual son Timothy, “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 clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Timothy 6:6, 7, 8). If we become enamored with things, Paul warned, we may wander from the faith and be pierced with the pangs of frustrated desire (1 Ti 6:9, 10).

Let's ask ourselves, “What am I truly happy without?” The answer will reveal much about our relationship with the Lord and our contentment with Him. —Vernon C Grounds ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Lord, help me not to set my heart
On things that pass away;
Make me content with what I have,
And give You thanks each day. —Sper

Contentment comes not from great wealth but from few wants.

1 Timothy 6:10 Money Talks

By Bill Crowder

As I was driving home from the office, I saw a minivan proudly displaying a bumper sticker that read: “Money Talks: Mine Says Goodbye.” I think a lot of people can relate to that sentiment.

Much of our living is spent acquiring and using money, which doesn't last. The stock market crashes. Prices go up. Thieves steal others' goods. Things wear out and break down, requiring the acquisition and expenditure of more money to replace what has been

lost. The temporary nature of material wealth makes it a poor bargain in the search for security in an insecure world. Money is much better at saying goodbye than it is at sticking around.

Nowhere does the Bible say it's wrong to have money or the things that money can buy. Where we lose our way is when money becomes the driving purpose of our lives. Like the rich man and his barns (Luke 12:13-21), we end up pursuing the accumulation of things that eventually will be forfeited—if not in life, then certainly at death.

How tragic to live our entire lives, only to end them with nothing of eternal worth to show for our labors. To paraphrase Jesus' words, it is much better to be rich toward God than to work for treasure that can't last (v.21).

Let me hold lightly things of this earth;

Transient treasures, what are they worth?

Moths can corrupt them, rust can decay;

All their bright beauty fades in a day. —Nicholson

Treasures in heaven are laid up as treasures on earth are laid down.

Grisham's Testament Joe Stowell

1 Timothy 6:10

Any John Grisham fans out there? If I were to select a favorite character from his novels, Rachel Lane would top the list.

Rachel Lane, unbeknown to her, was the illegitimate daughter of a billionaire. Before she discovered her origins, she was called by God to go into the most remote part of the jungles of Brazil as a missionary. Grisham's book, *The Testament*, follows lawyer Nate O'Riley deep into the jungle where he is assigned the task of finding and informing her that her long-lost father has died, leaving her his entire estate.

The climax of the novel, in my opinion, is when Nate finally finds Rachel in the heart of Brazil's rain-forests. As he shares the news of her windfall, he expects that she will pack up and leave to enjoy the luxuries of her newfound wealth. But she turns down the offer! Needless to say, O'Reilly is stunned by her unwavering commitment to her calling and her love for the primitive people she has given her life to help. Her unique dedication to God and people above the seduction of money then opened the door for Rachel to share the gospel with her new friend Nate.

This encounter deep in the jungle of Brazil is a powerful illustration of the principle that Paul shares with Timothy in our text today. This verse—often misquoted—does not say that money is the root of all evil. Money is, in fact, a tool that can and should be used wisely and generously for God's glory. Jesus himself often spoke about the importance of good stewardship in many of His parables, positively spotlighting good investors, wise stewards, and shrewd managers. So, it's not money that's the problem.

The problem comes when we stop managing money and, instead, money starts managing us! According to Scripture, greed is idolatry (Colossians 3:5), and as Jesus clearly warned, "You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matthew 6:24). And Paul adds that it is "the love of money" that is a root of all kinds of evil.

Interestingly, Grisham underscores the danger that money's seductions can lead us into. Woven into the plot of *The Testament* are the stories of the numerous other descendants of the billionaire. While Nate is off searching for Rachel, the wannabe heirs are "piercing themselves with many griefs" by fighting for their share of the inheritance, purchasing expensive new cars, gambling away the funds, and generally giving full vent to their greed. What a contrast to the deep and significant values that drive Rachel's love for God and people.

And though Grisham was writing fiction, he is on to something! We all know what it means to have money manage our actions and attitudes. Whether it's the lure of a newer, more prestigious car, the pull of a bigger and better house, the drive to keep up with the Joneses, or just the adrenaline rush of shopping and spending, money is a master ready to make all of us slaves.

Thankfully, Paul provides a positive alternative to the love of money. In 1 Timothy 6:6, he redefines true gain by saying that "godliness with contentment is great gain." And in 1 Timothy 6:11 he calls us to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness and gentleness."

Rachel had it right! Do you?

YOUR JOURNEY...

Has a "love of money" subtly crept into your life? In what ways?

Think back to a stage in life (perhaps it's now!) when finances were tight.

How can (and should) those seasons draw you closer to Jesus? How can we as followers of Jesus pursue contentment, even in seasons of greater material prosperity?

1 Timothy 6:10-11 - Flee!

I didn't see the movie *The Exorcist*, but I do recall its impact on my community. It left a lasting impression on many people about Satan's power. Even many Christians began to live in fear, swayed by the vivid images of evil. It seemed as if the devil was almost as powerful as God.

Is this perspective biblically sound? Of course not. God is the Creator, and all others, including demons, are just created beings. Only God is almighty.

It's easy to blame the devil when things go wrong. Although he does propagate wickedness and sin, we must be careful not to conclude that we are powerless against him. We are told in the Bible that the Holy Spirit within us "is greater than he who is in the world" (1Jn 4:4).

The Bible also says we have a role to play in overcoming evil and doing what is good. We are to "flee sexual immorality" (1Co 6:18, 19, 20), "flee from idolatry" (1Co 10:14), "flee" from the love of money (1Ti 6:10, 11), and "flee also youthful lusts" (2Ti 2:22).

James said that our attitude toward the devil should be to "resist" him (James 4:7). How do we do this? By submitting ourselves to God, allowing Him to direct our lives. Then it will be the devil who will flee from us.—Albert Lee ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

When Satan launches his attack,
We must take heart and pray;
If we submit ourselves to God,
He'll be our strength each day. —Sper

To defeat Satan, surrender to Christ.

1 Timothy 6:10 Caught By The Current

By Haddon W. Robinson

In the early part of this century, a ship was wrecked off the Scilly Isles near the coast of England. The sea had been calm and the weather clear, but the vessel was caught in a treacherous current that slowly lured it off its course. Before the captain and the crew realized what had happened, the ship had crashed onto the rocks.

In life too, powerful currents of compromise can catch the soul and carry it to shipwreck. Spiritual drifting is usually a slow and imperceptible process. We know it has occurred when we have lost the strong resistance to evil and the passionate desire for truth that we once knew.

The apostle Paul wanted to make sure this wouldn't happen to those to whom Timothy ministered. He encouraged him to be faithful in telling others what they needed to know, so they wouldn't stray from their devotion to Christ and cause their faith to be shipwrecked.

In our day, for every professing believer who succumbs to a sudden and savage assault of evil, a hundred more slowly drift away from God's truth, regular worship, and a life of faith.

We must give careful attention to what we know about Christ so that we don't drift away. —HWR

Lord, help us from Your blessed Word

All error to discern,

And by Your Spirit's truth and light

From Satan's snares to turn. —Bosch

The compass of God's Word will keep you from spiritual shipwreck.

1 Timothy 6:10 The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. Some time ago CNN carried a report of a man who was rushed to the emergency room of Cholet General Hospital in western France, suffering severe stomach pain. Doctors were awed when they viewed the X-rays. This man had an enormous opaque mass in his stomach that weighed twelve pounds—as much as a bowling ball—and was so heavy it forced his stomach down between his hips. The man, who had a history of major psychiatric illness, had swallowed 350 coins (worth \$650), along with assorted pieces of jewelry. The doctors opened his stomach and removed the contents, but he died twelve days later from complications. As grotesque as it sounds, the same illness is afflicting millions of people in another sense. A craving for money can clog our souls with tragic results; it's the root of all kinds of evils. The Bible presents a balanced view of worldly wealth. We're told to be wise stewards and to enjoy what God gives us, remembering that He's the one who gives the power to gain wealth and that we should plan wisely for future needs. On the other hand, we should give generously, tithe faithfully, and realize that money is a temporary tool God entrusts to us for our welfare, for the sake of others, and for the extending of His kingdom. It's dangerous when craved, and deadly when swallowed. Solomon got more hurt by his wealth than he got good by his wisdom.—Puritan Thomas Brooks ([My All in All - Robert J Morgan](#))

1 Timothy 6:11-16

Fight the good fight of the faith. - 1 Timothy 6:12

TODAY IN THE WORD In 1858, Dudley Tyng was 33 when he preached to a crowd of 5,000 men. "I would rather this right arm were amputated at the trunk than that I should come short of my duty to you in delivering God's message," he told them. Tragically, two weeks later, because of a farm accident, his arm had to be amputated from the shoulder. His last words were, "Stand up for Jesus, father, and tell my brethren of the ministry to stand up for Jesus." They were the inspiration for the hymn, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus": "Stand up, stand up for Jesus/ Ye soldiers of the cross; / Lift high His royal banner, / It must not suffer loss."

These words echo the concluding charge to Timothy in this letter. Paul has addressed Timothy as a soldier of Jesus Christ. He wanted him to fight hard, to fight long, and to fight well until the very end. He reminded Timothy that God is watching and God will reward.

The Christian fight begins with flight: "Flee from all this" (v. 11). Timothy needed to flee from the pursuit of money and from anything else that could offend his conscience. He must flee from the temptation to compromise on sound doctrine. It was urgent he run quickly from the allure of self-promotion that had entangled so many other leaders in Ephesus.

Not only did Timothy need to flee from these temptations, he needed to pursue what is good. We see several virtues in this passage. First, righteousness calls us to conform our life to the Scriptures. Second, godliness comes from intimate union with Christ. Next, sound faith is the content of trustworthy belief. Additionally, Timothy should seek to love God and others. He should also desire endurance through trials and opposition, keeping his eyes focused on the future hope and reward in Christ. And finally, Timothy needed to embrace the gentleness that was necessary to correct what was wrong in Ephesus.

These virtues would center his vision and keep him on target in his ministry.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY We're all called to "fight the good fight of the faith." Sometimes we focus too much on how we get started on the race, the time of our conversion. But what really counts is not how we begin but how we finish the race "at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 14). What an amazing promise of hope we find in Jude 24-25: "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority!"

1 Timothy 6:11 Disappearing Act

By Dave Branon

What if suddenly one day all followers of Christ disappeared? What if we all just vanished?

I'm not talking about Christians being removed from planet Earth. I'm talking about something that we can control.

What if suddenly all the Christians vanished from places of entertainment where we, as children of the heavenly Father, didn't belong?

For instance, what if Christians refused to watch TV programs in which immorality masquerades as entertainment? What if we all vanished from the Nielsen ratings? And what if we no longer watched movies that are ungodly or whose characters use God's name in vain and take God's standards so lightly?

Would our absence make a difference? Would the people in Hollywood notice that we were gone?

I think so, but that's not really the point. Our duty in life is to live each moment in fellowship with God. That means we don't let anything in our lives interrupt that fellowship. Our close relationship with God is at stake.

Let's vanish from the hordes who are being influenced by ungodly entertainment. And even if nobody notices but God, that's really all that matters.

More purity give me, more strength to o'ercome,

More freedom from earth-stains, more longings for home;

More fit for the kingdom, more used would I be,

More blessed and holy, more, Savior, like Thee. —Bliss

If you walk with God, you won't run with the world.

1 Timothy 6:11-16 Don't Rust Out

By David C. McCasland

On June 15, 1957, a brand-new car was buried in a concrete vault under the courthouse lawn in Tulsa. In June 2007, the car was unearthed as the city celebrated Oklahoma's 100th year of statehood. Writing in the Tulsa World, Randy Krehbiel said: "Now we know what 50 years in a hole does to a Plymouth Belvedere." Water seeping into the vault had turned the once shiny car into a rusted monument to the past. A hot-rod expert hired to start the engine pronounced it "hopeless."

Spiritual inactivity corrodes the soul like moisture acting on metal. Paul urged Timothy, his young protégé, to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness" (1 Tim. 6:11). This command had no expiration date attached to it. The spiritual disciplines require continued attention throughout our lives. If rest becomes our goal, then rust is right behind.

Oswald Chambers said: "The intellect works with the greatest intensity when it works continuously; the more you do, the more you can do. We must work hard to keep in trim for God. Clean off the rust and keep bright by use."

Our capabilities may vary with age, but pursuing the righteous life to which God has called us should never end. Don't rust out!

For Further Study

For practical advice on how to keep spiritually active as we age, you may wish to read *Finishing Well on the Web* at www.discoveryseries.org/q0713

Spiritual inactivity corrodes the soul.

1 Timothy 6:12a Do The Hard Work!

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life. —1 Timothy 6:12

After living more than 80 years, I know that any claim that offers an effortless way to develop a lean, well-conditioned body is a hoax. So is any sermon title that promises an easy way to become like Christ.

Author Brennan Manning tells of an alcoholic who asked his minister to pray over him to be delivered from his drinking problem. He thought this would be a quick and easy way to overcome his addiction. Recognizing his motive in asking for prayer, the minister replied, "I've got a better idea. Go to Alcoholics Anonymous." He counseled the man to follow the program diligently and read his Bible daily. "In other words," the minister concluded, "do the hard work."

Do the hard work—that's what Paul was saying to Timothy when he told him how he should order his life so he could teach believers how they should live. Notice the action verbs: "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:11, 12).

Just as there is no easy path to being delivered from alcoholism, so too, there is no effort-free route to Christlikeness. If we really want to become like Jesus, we must keep on doing the hard work. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer,
This is my constant longing and prayer;
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,

**Conversion is the miracle of a moment;
becoming like Christ is the work of a lifetime.**

1 Timothy 6:12b

TODAY IN THE WORD Structural engineers have long known that a triangle is the most stable shape. A three-legged object, for example, is more secure than a four-legged one. Perhaps this is true in spiritual matters as well, because one characteristic of Jude's epistle is sets of "threes."

Right away, we notice that Jude refers to Christians as those who are called, loved, and kept. To be called is to be chosen by God. Next, these called ones enjoy God the Father's great love for them. Finally, these believers are kept by Jesus, or preserved spiritually until His glorious return. Jude then prays that his readers receive mercy, peace, and love.

So who is this Jude who seems to like sets of three? His introduction offers little help. Most likely the James here is the one who wrote the epistle of James and was also Jesus' brother. That would make Jude the brother of Jesus too. So why doesn't he say so? Probably because he didn't believe in Jesus during His incarnation, but rather became a believer later. Jude focused on his spiritual status, a servant of Jesus, and not his physical connection to Jesus.

Apparently, Jude had already intended to write when he received a disturbing report and felt compelled to write the present epistle. Jude urges his readers to "contend for the faith" (v. 3), which means the basic beliefs of the Christian faith, such as Jesus' sacrificial death and His bodily resurrection. This faith was attacked by the false teachers.

We're not exactly sure who these false teachers were. Jude disdainfully refers to them as "certain men" who "secretly slipped in," and he's very clear about their evil character. First, he says that their condemnation was written about long ago; in other words, the Old Testament clearly shows that such men are doomed.

APPLY THE WORD Like the believers of Jude's day, we also live in times when evil and ungodliness seem rampant. Given this, the opening verse of Jude gives us great encouragement. The word called means that we have been deliberately chosen by God; He has a purpose for our lives and will lead us accordingly.

1 Timothy 6:12 The Battle Still Rages

By Dave Branon

The world has changed drastically since my dad stood his ground against the enemy in World War II. Back then, he and his brave comrades fought against nations that were threatening to destroy any country that dared stand in their way. Dad took a bullet in the leg and suffered the painful effects of that injury for the rest of his life.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the men and women who fought in that war. Their bravery issued from a cause they believed in—a mission they were willing to die for. They understood that if they did not go overseas, many people would lose their freedom, or even their lives, under the rule of ruthless dictators. Thankfully, the battles of those years are behind us.

A different kind of battle still rages today—a battle that we as Christ's followers must fight every day (Ephesians 6:12). Our enemy, the devil, continues to try to bring down our faith, take over our hearts, and stop the spread of the gospel. He is called "the wicked one" (6:16), and he will always be our enemy.

Are we willing to suffer for the cause? Are we brave enough to be a faithful generation of believers? Let's fight the good fight!

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,

With the cross of Jesus going on before!

Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe;

Forward into battle see His banner go! —Baring-Gould

Christ's soldiers fight best on their knees.

1 Timothy 6:12c

TODAY IN THE WORD Midrash is a Hebrew term literally meaning “to investigate” or “to study.” Midrash is an ancient method of interpreting biblical texts whereby examples from Scripture are interpreted to reflect and apply to contemporary situations. Jude employs the technique of midrash to address the situation facing his readers. His prevalent use of this Jewish tradition suggests that he and probably even his original readers were Jewish Christians (vv. 5-15).

Most New Testament scholars identify Jude as the brother of Jesus, pointing to the author's self-designation as “a brother of James” (v. 1; cf. Matt. 13:55). Jude was not a follower of Jesus during his brother's lifetime, but like James joined the Christian movement after Christ's resurrection. Verses 3 and 4 announce the purpose for Jude's letter: to expose the false teachers in their midst and to urge his readers to fight for the faith. The shepherding imagery of verse 12 identifies the “godless men” as false teachers (cf. Ezek. 34:1-10). “Faith” here is used as a synonym for the gospel of Jesus Christ; it is also depicted as something one must fight for in order to maintain.

The ungodly men who “secretly slipped among” them distort God's grace and reject Christ's lordship in exchange for immoral living (vv. 4, 8). Jude describes and condemns the false teachers (vv. 5-19). He uses numerous illustrations to thoroughly convince his readers of the threat posed by the infiltrators. Jude's point is clear: in the same way the Old Testament exemplars such as Sodom and Gomorrah and Balaam faced judgment, so too will these wicked, poisonous men. They will be like condemned creation, purposeless and unproductive. “The Lord is coming ... to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way” (vv. 14-15).

APPLY THE WORD In The Cost of Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer distinguishes between “cheap” and “costly” grace: “Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without discipline, communion without confession.” Jude says it is changing God's grace “into a license for immorality” (v. 4). Costly grace demands repentance that leads to transformation. Bonhoeffer said, “It is costly because it compels one to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him.” Let's daily count the cost of discipleship and receive God's grace.

1 Timothy 6:12 What Are We Holding On To?

By Joe Stowell

Tolkien's classic The Lord of the Rings trilogy came to life in recent years on film. In the second epic story, the hero, Frodo, reached a point of despair and wearily confided to his friend, “I can't do this, Sam.” As a good friend, Sam gave a rousing speech: “It's like in the great stories ... Full of darkness and danger they were... Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going. Because they were holding on to something.” Which prompted Frodo to ask: “What are we holding on to, Sam?”

It's a significant question, one that we all need to ask ourselves. Living in a fallen, broken world, it's no wonder that sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the powers of darkness. When we are at the point of despair, ready to throw in the towel, we do well to follow Paul's advice to Timothy: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:12).

In life's battles, let's hold on to the fact that good will triumph over evil in the end, that one day we will see our Master and Leader face-to-face, and we will reign with Him forever. You can be part of this great story, knowing that if you have trusted Jesus for salvation you are guaranteed a victorious ending!

Though weak and helpless in life's fray, God's mighty power shall be my stay; Without, within, He gives to me The strength to gain the victory. —D. De Haan

The trials of earth are small compared with the triumphs of heaven.

1 Timothy 6:15 Hope For The World

By Richard De Haan

PEACE TALKS FALL APART AGAIN. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE RISES. TORNADO RIPS THROUGH TOWN.

These newspaper headlines selected at random tend to lead us to despair. There just doesn't seem to be any hope for this world. And yet, according to the Scriptures, the dream of abolishing war is not merely wishful thinking. The idea of prosperity for all is more than a political gimmick. The Bible tells us that the eventual taming of nature is a certainty.

The hope for this world, however, is not to be found in human efforts but in the return of Jesus Christ. He alone can solve the

problems that are baffling mankind.

The prophet Isaiah said that someday “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4). This glorious prospect will become a reality when the Lord Jesus Himself returns as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15) to set up His kingdom of peace and righteousness. We are to be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Because we have this hope, we can be optimistic even in the deepening gloom of this age.

Keep looking up!

The only hope for world peace is the coming of the Prince of Peace.

1 Timothy 6:15 Our Savior And King

By Vernon C. Grounds

When Britain’s Queen Elizabeth was a child, her parents held a garden party at Buckingham Palace, but a rainstorm forced the party to move indoors. Elizabeth and her younger sister wandered into the room where the guests had gathered and were politely bombarded by questions. During a pause in the conversations, Elizabeth pointed toward a nearby wall and a painting of Jesus on the cross. She remarked, “That’s the man my papa says is really king.”

How right she was to recognize that the Savior who died for us now reigns over us as “the King of kings and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). Having risen from the dead, His kingship will one day be universally acknowledged as every knee bows to Him, either by grateful choice or by irresistible force (Philippians 2:9-11). It is possible, however, to trust in Christ to pardon our sins, yet at times fail to yield to His lordship over all that we are, have, and do.

Have you acknowledged Jesus Christ as your King? Have you accepted Christ as your Savior and Lord? Are you willing to allow Him not only to save you from sin but also to rule your life? Today, choose to bow before Him as your sovereign Lord and be His willing and grateful servant. Then you can worship Him as both your Savior and your King!

God kept His promise of the Savior's birth

That wondrous night when Jesus came to earth;

And still today the prophets' message rings:

He'll come again to reign as King of kings. —Hess

If you adore Christ as your Savior, you won't ignore Him as your Lord.

1 Timothy 6:15 An Amazing Discovery

By David C. McCasland

Astronomers have discovered what they call “the largest structure in the observable universe.” It occupies an area in the night sky about 40 times that of the full moon as seen from earth. This supercluster includes at least 11 galaxies and 18 quasars containing hundreds of billions of stars. It’s an amazing discovery made even more wondrous when we read that God “counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name” (Psalm 147:4).

But even more amazing is the Bible’s claim that the all-powerful, infinite God cares about you and me. “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (v.3).

He is the same God whom Jesus described as His Father, who holds power over death and hell, yet who sees the tiniest bird fall to the ground and numbers the hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:28-31).

He is the God of all our days and nights, the Lord of all our highs and lows. He is our Lord and King (1 Timothy 6:15).

When we marvel at the splendor of the night sky, we praise Him who created it. When we mourn the loss of life or love, we cling to Him who heals our broken hearts.

How amazing to discover that the God of great and small through His Son showed His love for all!—DCM

The God who made the firmament,

Who made the deepest sea,

The God who put the stars in place

Is the God who cares for me. —Berg

He who holds the stars in space will not let go of His promises to us.

1 Timothy 6:14-16 - Octavius Winslow

Strong is the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the word to the essential Deity of our blessed Lord. And if He has laid such amazing stress upon it, surely it should be a solemn matter with us how we think of and treat it. The great, the grand glory of Immanuel is His essential glory—the glory of His Godhead. It is only in this light that we can approach Him with the hope of pardon and acceptance. It is then we talk of Him as a Mediator—it is then we view Him as the Sin-bearer of His people—it is then we contemplate Him as their Surety, their Righteousness, their covenant Head. In vain we speak of His atoning blood, of His finished righteousness, of His mediatorial fullness, if we look not up to Him in the "glory He had with the Father before the world was." This it is that imparts such efficacy to His work, and throws such surpassing luster around it. And what is the witness of the Spirit to this doctrine? It is this; that all the names, the perfections, the works, and the worship proper only to Deity belong to Christ—thus proclaiming Him with a loud voice to be, what He really is—Jehovah Jesus.

Reader, ponder the testimony. Jesus of Nazareth, the anointed Savior of poor sinners, is emphatically styled the "great God," Titus 2:13; the "mighty God," Isaiah 9:6; the "only wise God," Jude 25; the "true God," 1 John 5:20; the "only Lord God," Jude 4. The name Jehovah peculiarly belongs to God: it is never in a solitary instance applied to a mere creature. "I am Jehovah; that is my name." And yet the very name is ascribed to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, "This is the name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness." He is then Jehovah Jesus, "God over all, blessed for evermore." Could testimony be more clear and decisive? O precious truth on which to live—O glorious rock on which to die! Jesus is Jehovah He is "Immanuel, God with us"—"God manifest in the flesh." Hold fast to this truth, reader. Let nothing weaken your grasp upon it. It is your plank, your life-boat, your ark, your all. This gone, all goes with it! You will need it when you come to die—in that solemn hour when all else fails you—when sin in battle-array rises before you, and you think of the holiness of a holy God—then you will want a rock to stand upon; and as the Spirit leads you to Jesus the Rock, testifies to your soul of His blood, witnesses to His Godhead, unfolds Him in His essential glory, you shall be enabled to shout "Victory! Victory!" as you passed safely and triumphantly over Jordan. The blood that speaks peace will be felt to be efficacious—and the righteousness that justifies will be seen to be glorious—and the Rock that sustains will be felt to be firm and immovable, just as the blessed Glorifier of Christ witnesses to the truth of His Deity. Oh then to see the Lawgiver in the character of the Law-fulfiller—to behold the God-man obeying, suffering, dying—and therefore the law honored, justice satisfied, and the Father well pleased—truly may the believing soul adopt the triumphant language of the apostle, and take up His challenge—"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died." Dear reader, set a high value on the doctrine of our Lord's Deity—guard it with a jealous eye, pray to be established in its full experimental belief; for the more you see of the dignity of His person, the more you will see of the glory of His work.

1 Timothy 6:15-16 Single Focus

Pam Sneddon was taking a class in photography. For one assignment, she chose her 6-year-old daughter as her subject and asked her to sit on a serene hillside. Close by was an apple tree in full bloom. Pam just couldn't resist. She gave the tree a prominent place in the picture.

Pam was surprised when her instructor pointed out a problem with the photo. The apple tree distracted from her primary focus, the little girl.

"See how it catches the eye," the instructor said. "It competes with your subject. You need to choose one subject and leave the other out."

This observation applies to more than good photography skills. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must center our attention only on Him. Like amateur photographers, we are often attracted to the "apple trees in full bloom." We pay more attention to our hobbies, friends, family, or work.

Christ commands our attention because He is "the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality" (1Ti 6:15, 16). That may mean relegating something we deem to be important to the background—or cropping it out of the picture altogether.

Whatever distracts us from Jesus has to go. As the preeminent One, He must be the single focus of our lives. --D C Egener

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In Christ alone the earth shall find its answer,
A refuge from its doubts, its fears, its strife;
This God-revealed-in-flesh, this precious Savior,
Forever is the Way, the Truth, the Life! --Calenberg

If Christ is the center of your life, you'll always be focused on Him.

1 Timothy 6:16 Our Eternal God

Late one afternoon I stood at the stern of a ferry boat churning its way from New York City across the Hudson River to New Jersey. As the towering structures of Manhattan receded from sight, my mind suddenly recalled these words from a poem: "These all shall perish stone on stone, but not Thy kingdom nor Thy throne."

A few years later the devastating terrorist attack on the World Trade Center left an ugly gap in that soaring skyline. Everything in the world around us is subject to decline. Beautiful flowers wither and die. Even California's towering sequoias, hardy survivors for long centuries, are gradually being eaten away by the gnawing tooth of time.

As for our bodies, we grow older daily and lose the vitality of our younger years. God alone possesses immortality in Himself, which means that He abides forever (1Timothy 6:16). The simple truth must be faced that nothing is permanent-only God is everlasting.

Yet by faith in Jesus Christ, we can receive life that will never end. He promised us, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand... and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28, 29). —Vernon C Grounds ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious—Thy great name we praise. -Smith

To give your life to Christ now is to keep it forever.

1 Timothy 6:17 On Loan

Command those who are rich ... to trust ... in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. —1Timothy 6:17

I am surrounded every day by things that don't belong to me, yet I call them mine. For instance, I refer to the computer I am using to write this article as "my Mac." I talk about "my office," "my desk," and "my phone." But none of this equipment belongs to me. It's mine to use, but not mine to keep. When RBC Ministries "gave" it to me, we both knew what that meant: It was on loan.

This kind of situation is not unique to employer-employee relationships. That's the way it is with all of us and all of the things we call our own. When we speak of our family, our house, or our car, we are speaking of people and things God has allowed us to enjoy while here on earth, but they really belong to Him. Notice the psalmist's praise to God, "The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours" (Psalm 89:11).

Understanding who really holds the title to all we possess should change our thinking. Just as I am aware that RBC lets me use its equipment to help me do my work more efficiently, so also should we be aware that everything we have is given to us to serve the Lord.

Our time, talents, and possessions are all on loan from God so that we can do His work effectively. —Dave Branon ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

God's grace sustains the gift of life,
Its labor and reward;
What we possess is not our own—
It all comes from the Lord. —D. De Haan

All we own is really on loan—from God.

1 Timothy 6:17

TODAY IN THE WORD On May 9, 2009, Ben Southall found that he was about to start a new job. But if you were thinking business suits and ties, you'd be wrong. How about shorts and sun block instead? Ben beat out nearly 35,000 other applicants to become the "caretaker" for Hamilton Island, off the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. For six months, Ben will live in an oceanfront villa on a beautiful tropical island, with a job description that includes snorkeling, exploring the island, and enjoying beautiful sunsets. For many people, this so-called job sounds like paradise!

Many people might imagine paradise to look a lot like Hamilton Island. But as beautiful and lush as this island is, it would pale in comparison with the Garden of Eden. Notice the repetition of every and all in Genesis 1 and 2 ... every seed-bearing plant, every green plant, all the beasts on the earth, all the birds in the air. This emphasis underscores God's abundance and provision.

Genesis 1 summarizes creation, focusing on the totality of God's work. Genesis 2, however, presents the creation account again, only this time focusing on God's creation of humanity. Notice how intimately God guides Adam through all creation to show him his need for human companionship. And notice how gratefully Adam received God's provision!

As we read these two accounts, it's easy to see that every human need was met in the garden. The garden's abundance guaranteed no lack of food. Intimacy with God ensured spiritual fulfillment. The gift of Eve meant companionship. What a picture of a loving God faithfully, lovingly, and generously providing all that humanity needed. How could Adam and Eve have wanted more than what they had in the garden? In our study tomorrow, we'll see that the serpent took advantage of a powerful vulnerability within humans—the tendency to be ungrateful for what they have.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY Genesis 1 and 2 make it clear that humans are created with certain needs. In addition to basics, such as food, we need to be valued, have purpose for our lives, and connect with God and others. Sometimes we try to deny these needs, especially when we can't see how they're being met. But to deny these needs is to deny our humanity! Instead, Genesis 1 and 2 encourage us to thank God for how He has created us. These passages also assure us that God does faithfully provide what we need—when we need it.

1 Timothy 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Years ago I invited British pastor Geoffrey King to preach at my church. Rev. King, now in heaven, ranks among the top expositors I've ever known, but he was eccentric. He dressed peculiarly, had odd views on hygiene, and constantly set me into spasms of laughter without meaning to. While in Nashville, he had two requests. He wanted to play all the organs in town and ride all the roller coasters. One day I took him to Opryland theme park and, despite his age, he headed right to the big coaster. As we barreled down the first drop, he turned to me and shouted, "Rob, Rob, never grow up! Remember that God has given us richly all things to enjoy!" It was my one and only sermon on a roller coaster, but I've never forgotten it. This verse doesn't give us permission to wrongfully indulge our appetites, but it means that God has given a universe of blessings for our enjoyment and welfare. Happiness isn't found in things, but in Him who helps us enjoy all things. Jesus wants us to enjoy life more abundantly. He surrounds us with goodness and mercy every day of our lives, and from the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another (John 10:10, Ps. 23:6, John 1:16). When we learn to enjoy God, we get all other joys to boot! ([My All in All - Robert J Morgan](#))

1 Timothy 6:17 What Is Secure?

By David C. McCasland

During the worldwide financial crisis of 2008, a widow lost a third of her income when her bank stocks no longer paid dividends after her trusted bank failed. The Wall Street Journal quoted her tearful response as an example of the feelings of many people who were similarly affected: "You just think, 'This can't be happening.' What is secure anymore?"

Tragedy and hard times always jolt our thinking. Our best plans and hopes can be shattered by events beyond our control. We are reminded that there is only one source of true security in a changing world. With new appreciation, we consider Paul's words: "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. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

When our resources diminish, we can grow richer in good works, generosity, and sharing with others. If financial stability returns, we can hold more loosely what we are given, trusting solely in God.

We are secure in Him alone.

Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,

Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite,

Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide:

The Scripture assures us, "The Lord will provide." —Newton

In uncertain times, our security is in God alone.

1 Timothy 6:17

In God We Trust?

By Joanie Yoder

Money is not evil, but it can lead to many temptations. Today's Bible reading highlights one common snare: trusting in money instead of God (1 Tim. 6:17).

We claim to trust in God, yet we act otherwise. A pile of money seems more secure to us than God's promise to provide, but Paul assured us that money is the uncertain part. Indeed, it's possible to run short of money, but we'll never run short of God's power to provide both essential and enjoyable things.

To appreciate God's limitless power to provide, it's useful to consider the limitations of money. A gospel tract that resembled a \$20 bill helped me to understand this. On the back of the tract were these thought-provoking words: "Money will buy: A bed but not sleep. Food but not appetite. A house but not a home. Amusement but not happiness. A cross but not a Savior. A church pew but not heaven. What money can't buy, Jesus Christ gives freely without charge."

If Christ is your Savior, you need not be dominated by worry over material things. Instead, be ruled by Christ and His spiritual riches. You'll experience a rare combination money can't buy. Paul described it like this: "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

Thinking It Over

What worries do you have about money?

Which ones can't God take care of?

Give God your financial worries right now.

The contented person is never poor; the discontented is never rich.

1 Timothy 6:17

The Pursuit Of Pleasure

By Vernon C. Grounds

The United States Declaration of Independence says that one of our unalienable rights is "the pursuit of happiness." I think we would all agree that pleasure, the agreeable reaction of our senses to some stimulus, is a king-size ingredient of happiness. Most people spend much of their leisure time pursuing pleasure in the hope of finding happiness.

Scripture doesn't say that we shouldn't enjoy life. Indeed, Paul affirmed that God has given us "richly all things to enjoy"—like food and drink and the ability to sing, laugh, and make music (1 Timothy 6:17).

Paul also warned us that excessive indulgence in God's good gifts may have a killing effect on our enjoyment of the supremely good. "[The widow] who lives in pleasure," he wrote, "is dead while she lives" (5:6). And the writer of Ecclesiastes learned that pleasure cannot satisfy (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

Anyone who makes pleasure the main goal of life becomes desensitized to earth's greatest delight—fellowship with God—which is also the abiding joy of heaven. As David wrote in Psalm 16:11, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." No pleasure can rival that of fellowship with God—a pleasure that is a foretaste of heaven.

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord,

A wonderful Savior to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
Where rivers of pleasure I see. —Crosby

Fellowship with Christ is the secret of happiness now and forever.

1 Timothy 6:17

A Balanced Attitude

By Vernon C. Grounds

Our world bears unmistakable evidences of God's wisdom, power, and goodness (Psalm 104:14-18). So do the star-studded heavens above us (19:1). And then there are all the blessings of human love and creativity, which are gifts "from above" (James 1:17).

Theologian John Calvin wrote, "The present life ... has many enticements, a great show of delight, grace, and sweetness. We ought to have such fondness for it that we regard it as one of the gifts of divine goodness which are by no means to be despised."

God's gifts to us are abundant and should be enjoyed (1 Timothy 6:17). Yet we need to have a balanced attitude—to appreciate this world and at the same time refuse to be shortsighted captives of the here-and-now.

That attitude was modeled by Jesus. He enjoyed feasts and weddings (John 2:1-2), He loved little children (Matthew 19:13-15), and He gladly provided for the needs of hungry people (Matthew 14:15-21). He promised and practiced abundant living (John 10:10). Yet, during His time on earth, He prayed longingly for His return to the joy of heaven (John 17:4-5). He was in the world, but He was not of it.

Lord, help us to follow Your example.

God gave us this earth to enjoy,

Its beauty and wonder to know;

But when the time comes to go home,

We won't miss a thing here below. —Hess

Make the most of life on earth—but know the best is yet to come.

1 Timothy 6:17

Land Of Eternal Spring

By Vernon C. Grounds

The former president of Columbia Bible College in South Carolina, J. Robertson McQuilkin, pointed out that God has a wise purpose in letting us grow old and weak:

"I think God has planned the strength and beauty of youth to be physical. But the strength and beauty of age is spiritual. We gradually lose the strength and beauty that is temporary so we'll be sure to concentrate on the strength and beauty which is forever. And so we'll be eager to leave the temporary, deteriorating part of us and be truly homesick for our eternal home. If we stayed young and strong and beautiful, we might never want to leave."

When we are young, happily occupied with all our relationships and activities, we may not long for our celestial Home. But as time passes, we may find ourselves without family and friends, afflicted with dim vision and hearing difficulties, no longer able to relish food, or troubled by sleeplessness.

Here's the advice I give myself: Be grateful that, as the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:17, "God ... gives us richly all things to enjoy" in life's summer and autumn. And rejoice too that with the onset of life's winter we can anticipate that we'll soon be living in the land of eternal spring.

There's a land that is fairer than day, And by faith we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way, To prepare us a dwelling-
place there. —Bennett

The promise of heaven is our eternal hope.

1 Timothy 6:17

Too Strict

By Haddon W. Robinson

The tempter knows his craft. After all, he has been practicing it since the world began. He tries to get us to forfeit God's blessing by urging us to ignore God's laws or by slyly getting us to add to them. He knows we can fall into a ditch on either side of the road.

In his chat with Eve, he first suggested that God didn't want her to enjoy any of the trees in the garden (Gen. 3:1). Eve jumped to God's defense, explaining that it was only the fruit of the middle tree that was off limits (vv.2-3). But then she added that even touching the tree would bring death (v.3). God, though, hadn't said anything about touching it.

Some of us try to defend God by being more strict than He is. We believe we are holier if we go beyond His commands. As a result, we miss out on the orchard because we are denied a single piece of poisoned fruit. Not only will we not touch that tree, but we also will not touch the tree next to it or a tree that looks like it. By doing so we dishonor God.

God has given us all good things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). He's not pleased when we focus on what is prohibited and fail to enjoy all His blessings. It is not only a shame but also a sin not to enjoy life.

For Further Study

What do these verses say about enjoying life?

Genesis 1:28-31; Psalm 36:7-9; Ecclesiastes 2;

Acts 14:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 2:20-23

The joy of living comes from a heart of thanksgiving.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Old Skinflint

By David C. Egner

Some people will do anything to save a buck. Like the miserly uncle I read about who invited his nephews to hunt for arrowheads in the field behind his house. Before the search could begin, however, he told the excited youngsters they had to move all the rocks out of the field and clear away the underbrush. By the time they were finished, it was too late to search for arrowheads. Later, they learned that none had ever been found on his property. When they complained to their dad, he said, "My old skinflint brother bamboozled you out of a day's work." Those boys will not soon forget how they were taken advantage of.

There's nothing wrong with being frugal. It's a matter of good stewardship. But there is something wrong with being so thrifty that you won't pay a boy what he's worth.

Stinginess at the cost of someone else's humiliation or hurt is not what our Lord wants. In 1 Timothy 6:18, we learn that we're to "do good" and be "ready to give, willing to share." We're to be fair, giving, and generous people.

God is the ultimate giver. He gave His Son, at unbelievable sacrifice, to offer us new life (John 3:16). Let's follow His example of love and generosity—then we won't be accused of being an "old skinflint."

One grace each child of God can show

Is giving from a willing heart;

Yet, if we wait till riches grow,

It well may be we'll never start. —D. De Haan

Because God gives us all we need, let's give to others in their need.

1 Timothy 6:17

The True Owner

By Cindy Hess Kasper

Did you hear about the church that didn't have enough room for parking? Fortunately, it was located right next to a store that was closed on Sundays, so a church member asked the store owner if they could overflow into his parking lot. "No problem," he said. "You can use it 51 weeks out of the year. On the 52nd week, though, it will be chained off." The man was grateful, but asked curiously, "What happens that week?" The store owner smiled, "Nothing. I just want you to remember that it's not your parking lot."

It's easy to take for granted all the material and spiritual blessings that God has given us. That's why we need to stop and remember that Scripture says the true owner of all we possess is God: "All that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all" (1 Chron. 29:11). Even our bodies do not belong to us: "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit ... and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

As 1 Timothy 6:17 reminds us: "God ... gives us richly all things to enjoy." We are so abundantly blessed with good things! Let's never take our Father for granted, but use wisely and gratefully all that He has given us.

As we all enjoy God's blessing, Oh, may we not forget Our Lord, from whom all good gifts come— In Him our needs are met. — Fitzhugh

God gives blessing to us so we can give glory to Him.

1 Timothy 6:18

Radical Generosity

By Marvin Williams

Cindy Kienow, who works at a popular restaurant in Hutchinson, Kansas, had been waiting on one of her steady customers for 3 years. He always tipped her well, sometimes leaving as much as half the tab. Then he outdid himself—he gave her a \$10,000 tip for a \$26 meal. He told her, "I want you to know this is not a joke." What an amazing display of radical generosity!

Paul advised Timothy to encourage the wealthy in his congregation to display radical generosity (1 Tim. 6:18). Timothy ministered in the prosperous city of Ephesus, where certain members of the church were wealthy. Some of these people didn't understand their responsibility to the kingdom of God. So Paul challenged Timothy to remind them that having great wealth carried great responsibility. That included being humble, finding their security in God, not in riches, and using their money to do good. How they handled their money revealed the condition of their heart.

Even if we're not wealthy, God has called us to radical generosity. We can share what we do have and be rich in good deeds. If we have a generous attitude about money, we are much more likely to be generous in other matters concerning the Lord's people and His work.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Do you want to be wise and

generous with what God has given you?

Read Read [Cultivating A Heart Of Contentment](#)

When we give ourselves to the Lord, all other giving becomes easier.

1 Timothy 6:18

Don't Forget

By Albert Lee

Some mornings as I leave for work, my wife says to me, "Don't forget to ... " Later in the day, she'll phone me and ask, "Did you forget?"

We all have a tendency to forget. I think that may be why God repeats important truths to us. Twice in Deuteronomy 24, the Lord reminded the Israelites that they were slaves in Egypt but they had been rescued and redeemed by Him (vv.18,22). Through Moses, He told them, "You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you from there" (v.18).

Because they had been redeemed, the Israelites had certain responsibilities that the Lord wanted them to remember. Moses said, "I command you to do this thing" (v.18). What was "this thing"? They were told to care for "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow" (v.19). If part of the harvest was left in the fields, they were to leave it for these needy people. He reminds them of the people in verses 20 and 21 also.

We are redeemed people through Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection. We too are told numerous times to be willing to share with those in need. Hebrews 13:16 says, "Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

For Further Study

Read the following Scriptures and determine how you might apply them to your life: Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8; Titus 3:14.

Getting gratifies, but sharing satisfies.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. - 1 Samuel 2:7

TODAY IN THE WORD A store in an affluent beach community in Florida recently offered its upscale customers a new kind of gift wrapping paper: uncut sheets of \$20 bills. The sheets contain thirty-two bills each, and are big enough to wrap a gift about the size of a shirt box. The cost for this gift wrap greenery is \$110 per sheet.

Stories such as this may give a newscaster an offbeat way to end a broadcast, but the mindset that's behind this kind of excess isn't a laughing matter. It flies in the face of the attitude God's Word commands us to take toward our financial resources.

Here's one problem with using our money and other possessions for silly excess. It helps breed--or maybe just reveals--an attitude of arrogant self-sufficiency that God rejects. The Word forbids this attitude, in fact (v. 17).

Another problem with letting our attitudes get out of hand is that we are tempted to replace trust in God with trust in our bank accounts. That's bad for two reasons. First, it's idolatry to put anything in God's place. Second, placing our trust in material wealth is like trying to grab a fistful of sand. In a great understatement, Paul says wealth is "very uncertain."

But the Bible doesn't just give us the negative side. The cure for greed and misplaced trust in money is "to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share" (v. 18).

By doing these acts of Christian mercy and service, Paul says we will "lay up treasure for [our] selves" (v. 19). He could have said "treasure in heaven," because the apostle's instruction here echoes the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21 (see the June 19 study).

Paul's reference to the "coming age" is another example of how often the Bible ties our attitude toward money to the kingdom of God and eternity. Financial counselors often advise their clients to invest for the "long haul." Paul would certainly agree with that! You can't take a longer view than to use your resources to store up for yourself eternal wealth.

There's another benefit for the God-honoring use of our money. Good stewardship helps us take hold of real life. That is, managing our assets with God's kingdom in mind helps us enjoy now the eternal life God has given us (v. 19).

APPLY THE WORD A generous, sharing spirit is a good antidote against developing a bad case of greed--the "gimmes." All of us need to learn how to give, children included. This summer is a good time to help the child in your life put together some baskets or bags of personal items and/or food to take to the local homeless shelter, crisis pregnancy center, or other ministry to hurting people. You might also suggest the project to your Sunday school class or Bible study group.

1 Timothy 6:17-19.

TODAY IN THE WORD Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), once a symbol of America's nuclear readiness during the Cold War, are now just a memory. As part of a 1991 arms reduction treaty with Russia, some 150 Minuteman II missiles housed in underground silos in Missouri have been deactivated and taken out of the ground. The empty silos are being imploded, with the craters remaining open for ninety days so Russian satellites can verify their destruction. Eventually, the land will be offered to local farmers at current market prices.

Many people disagree as to whether it was right or wrong to place our trust in nuclear weapons. Thankfully, we never had to find out whether that trust was misplaced. But when it comes to the issue of whether we should put our trust in money, Scripture clearly says to look elsewhere.

Paul's word to Timothy is so succinctly stated and so clear that we can't miss the message. It's important that the "rich in this present world" not lose their focus—so important that this exhortation is a command, not an option. Timothy was probably not among that number, but Paul told him to flee the money trap anyway (vv. 6-11). That's how strong the pull of money can be. As usual, God's Word gives solid reasons for not putting our faith in our finances.

We have already seen that wealth is uncertain (v. 17). By contrast, God is eternally the same. Besides, we don't lose when we put our trust in Him, because He still provides us with "everything for our enjoyment."

APPLY THE WORD One reason it's easy to fall into the trap of trusting in money is that it's human to trust what we can see and hold and count. How are you tempted to put your hope in wealth? Maybe it's the temptation to hold back on giving for fear of not having enough, or to relax your spiritual vigilance when things are going well.

1 Timothy 6:17-21

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. - 1 Timothy 6:20

TODAY IN THE WORD The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, killed 343 New York City firefighters. As survivors fled down the stairs of the towers, escaping the smoke and flames, the firefighters ran up the stairs to what would be their death. They did their job of seeking to rescue anyone they could help—and it cost them their lives.

Timothy was sent on a rescue mission to the church of Ephesus. False teaching threatened its collapse. His mission was to safeguard what had been entrusted to his care (v. 20). He needed to protect the truths of the faith, the church, and his personal ministry.

First, to protect truth, he had to confront false teaching, some of which included distortions of belief regarding prosperity. Paul reiterates that being a Christian doesn't mean one will automatically prosper financially. The prosperity gospel, which teaches that God always materially blesses all His people, is wrong. The Bible in no way promises wealth to believers. It is equally distorted to teach that having money is sinful. Notice that Paul doesn't insist that the rich Ephesians should give all their money away. He does, however, remind them to seek heavenly treasure by giving generously and using their money to perform good deeds (vv. 18-19).

Second, the mission to protect the church required reminding the believers in Ephesus of the clear teachings of Scripture. How easily our consciences can become seared and our minds become corrupt, as had already happened to some of the elders in Ephesus. They no longer knew right from wrong, placing the Ephesian church in danger.

Finally, Timothy must protect his own personal ministry and the spiritual gifts conferred on him. These must be protected from the negative influences—both ideas and practices—all around him.

"Grace be with you," Timothy. Paul knew he needed God's miraculous help for the mission!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY A pastor's job is to remind his congregation to "take hold of the life that is truly life" (v. 19). Our focus on eternity is so easily distracted by the problems and pleasures of today. Reflect on the fact that Jesus Christ is coming back to earth. If you need help keeping your focus on this reality, write this down and review it throughout the day: "So that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

1 Timothy 6:17

Joyful Living

By Joe Stowell

Our search for joy takes us many different directions—dream holidays, shopping, food, clothes, friends, cars—the list is almost endless.

My guess is that if you perked up at the mention of shopping, holidays, or cars, you might have felt a twinge of guilt. We often view the joy of temporal things as less than spiritual and show our discomfort by apologizing for nice things: "I wouldn't have bought this, but someone gave me a wonderful deal." As if real Christians never eat quiche, drive cool cars, or wear designer clothes!

No doubt God's greatest gift to us is our relationship with His Son Jesus. It's a gift beyond comparison. Jesus promised that when we abide in Him we will experience the fulfillment of His joy (John 15:11), and without that kind of deep, abiding joy the rest of life is mundane at best.

But Scripture also casts the joy of the Lord in terms of temporal things. The enjoyment of "things" can be a positive spiritual

experience. When we recognize that He “gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17) and that “every good gift ... is from above” (James 1:17), our hearts should be full of thankfulness and praise. This, in and of itself, is an act of worship! Enjoy the Giver and the gifts.

We thank Thee, Lord, for daily food,
For plenteous store of earthly good;
For life and health we still possess,
With house and home so richly blessed. —Mohler
Our heavenly Father delights in bringing us delight.

1 Timothy 6:17

True Wealth

By Joe Stowell

Money is a powerful force. We work for it, save it, spend it, use it to satisfy our earthside longings, and then wish we had more. Aware of its distracting danger, Jesus taught more about money than any other topic. And, as far as we know, He never took an offering for Himself. Clearly, He didn't teach about giving to fill His own pockets. Instead, Jesus warned us that trusting in wealth and using it to gain power clogs our spiritual arteries more readily than most other impediments to spiritual development. In telling the story of the “rich fool,” He shamed His listeners for not being rich toward God (Luke 12:13-21), indicating that God has a far different definition of wealth than most of us.

So, what does it mean to be rich toward God? Paul tells us that those who are rich should not be conceited about their wealth, “nor to trust in uncertain riches” (1 Tim. 6:17). Rather, we are to “be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share” (v.18).

Interesting! God measures wealth by the quality of our lives and our generous disbursement of wealth to bless others. Not exactly Wall Street insider talk, but great advice for those of us who think that our security and reputation are tied up in the size of our bank account.

If we've been blessed with riches, We must be rich in deeds; God wants us to be generous In meeting others' needs. —Sper

Riches are a blessing only to those who make them a blessing to others.

1 Timothy 6:18 People God Can Use

Be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share. —1 Timothy 6:18

Evangelist Franklin Graham wrote, "If we want to become the type of people that God can use anytime, anywhere, anyplace, we must offer ourselves, our homes, our kitchens, and our living rooms as outposts for the kingdom of God." People who practice these words are fulfilling Paul's challenge to "be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1 Timothy 6:18).

Years ago, our family sensed that the Lord was placing this same challenge before us. Believing that He desired greater access to our lives, our possessions, and our time, we prayerfully said yes to Him.

Soon we encountered a desperate drug addict and opened our home to him. Several families joined us in helping others who needed to come to Christ and come off drugs. Eventually we established a Christian rehabilitation center—a ministry that continues today. To equip us for this ministry, God used our own painful experiences. Our own troubles helped us identify with others, and enabled us to guide them to depend on Jesus for salvation and every daily need.

God also wants to use you, your possessions, and even your pain, to equip you for a life that's rich in giving and sharing. Have you said yes to Him? —Joanie Yoder ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Give me a heart sympathetic and tender,
Jesus, like Thine, Jesus, like Thine,
Touched by the needs that are surging around me,
And filled with compassion divine. —Anon.

Compassion is needed to heal the hurts of others.

1 Timothy 6:18a Willing To Share

Be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share. —1Timothy 6:18

Followers of Jesus are to be "rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1Timothy 6:18). This was demonstrated in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster in Southeast Asia. Christians quickly poured in money, materials, and manpower to bring relief to the suffering. That help has continued.

Believers show this generosity in their local communities as well. When a family lost their home and all their belongings in a fire, a flood of assistance—money, food, clothing, a temporary place to live—came from fellow believers all over the area to get them through the crisis.

When a husband walked out on his wife and three children after depleting the family's savings account and running up huge bills, the people of her church stepped in with the spiritual, emotional, and financial support she needed. And some of the women of the church faithfully encircled her with prayer and encouragement.

These believers are following the plan of God for the Christian life. There are needs all around you that you can have a vital part in meeting.

Are you "rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share"? —David C. Egener [Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#)

Love is giving for the world's needs,
Love is sharing as the Spirit leads,
Love is caring when the world cries,
Love is compassion with Christlike eyes. -Brandt

If you really care, you'll want to share.

1 Timothy 6:18b Overcoming Greed

Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share. —1Timothy 6:18

Greed — it has toppled highly paid executives, brought down giant corporations, and cost thousands of workers their jobs and retirement funds. One columnist has written that unrestrained corporate greed is a greater threat than terrorism.

Greed whispers in our ear that we would be happier if we had more money, more things, and more power. It creates discontent and a growing desire to do whatever it takes to gain position and possessions. But the Bible commands us to trust in God, not in "uncertain riches" (1Timothy 6:17).

Paul told Timothy that the way to overcome greed is to flee from it and to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness" (1Timothy 6:11). And those "who are rich in this present age," who have more than is needed, should "be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" (1Ti 6:17, 18).

Contentment and generosity are the opposite of greed (vv.6-8). As we learn to thank God for what we have and freely share it with others, we stop trying to fill the spiritual vacuum in our heart with things. And when we love Jesus more than money and possessions, we find that He is the greatest treasure of our lives. We discover that knowing Him is the source of genuine satisfaction.—David C. McCasland ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

God's riches fill up our supply,
Whatever we may need,
So we can then be generous
And not controlled by greed. —Sper

The best remedy for greed is generosity.

1 Timothy 6:17a - THE WRONG GOD

"Command those who are rich in this present age not... to trust in uncertain riches." - 1Timothy 6:17

A missionary had been witnessing faithfully to a certain man who was an idol worshiper. One day the man placed a small statue and a silver coin on the table in front of the missionary. Then he took two slips of paper and wrote something on each. On the note by the idol he wrote the words "heathen god." On the sheet next to the silver coin he wrote the words "Christian god."

From what that man had observed in the lives of some people from so-called Christian nations, he had concluded that money was the main object of their adoration and the source of their confidence.

Many people today choose to worship the god of money. They make it the object of their trust, love, and service. But how foolish! Jesus warned, "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mk. 10:24).

Who or what is the object of your worship? The psalmist advised, "Put your 'trust' in the Lord" (Ps. 4:5). Moses commanded, "You shall 'love' the Lord" (Dt. 6:5), and Joshua told his people, "As for me and my house, we will 'serve' the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

Be sure that your confidence is not in the wrong god. Place your trust in Christ.- R W De Haan ([Copyright. Used by permission of Our Daily Bread](#))

Never let Gold become your god!

1 Timothy 6:17 (F B Meyer. Our Daily Homily)

Nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.

The contrast here is very beautiful. Men, for the most part, look to riches to supply them with all they need richly to enjoy; but the apostle says that it is beyond all comparison better to look away from dead coin to a living Person, who takes pleasure in giving liberally without upbraiding.

Here is a rebuke. — Suppose you had your cellars filled with gold coin, would you not think yourself secure against all possible need and care? Almost certainly you would. But you ought to be even more at rest, since you have neither silver nor gold, and only your Heavenly Father's hand.

Here is a contrast. — Riches are uncertain at the best. A man in these difficult days finds it easier to gain money than to hold it. He who is rich today may awake to-morrow to find that some sudden turn of the market has made him poor. But God is not uncertain. He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. His covenants are certainties.

Here is an appeal. — Trust in the living God with as much restfulness as others in their lands and revenues, and be almost glad if God takes away from you what you have clung to so tenaciously, that you may drop securely into his everlasting arms. You smile at the story of the lady who was told by the captain that he had done all he could for the vessel, and they must now look to the Almighty; and who replied, "O captain, has it come to that?" But you may be nearer akin to her spirit than you suppose!

Here is an assured destiny. — Those who trust in riches are pierced through with many sorrows, and are caught in the maelstrom, which drowns souls in perdition; they who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.

1 Timothy 6:19

TODAY IN THE WORD Marcus Licinius Crassus is said to be one of the greediest men in history. Crassus, who lived just before the time of Christ, was a powerful and wealthy figure in the Roman Empire. His great riches came mainly from the slave trade, silver mines, and confiscated property. He had a reputation for political intrigue, and commanded troops that crushed the famous slave revolt led by Spartacus.

In 53 B.C., he led an invading army against the Parthians. It was a disaster, and Crassus was killed. When his head and right hand were sent to the king of Parthia, the king poured molten gold into Crassus's mouth and said: "Satisfy yourself with the metal for which in life you were so greedy."

As citizens of the kingdom, we should live in light of eternity, pursuing heavenly treasures instead of earthly ones (Matt. 6:19-21).

Jesus told His parable (Luke 12:16-21) in response to a man's demand to share a family inheritance. Instead of taking his side, Jesus warned against greed and materialism in Luke 12:15.

Since it's a warning, this parable features a negative example. A rich man has a good crop and responds by planning ahead for bigger barns. There's nothing wrong with planning ahead. The problem lies in his attitude: pride in his possessions, faith in his wealth, and selfish pleasure seeking (Luke 12:19). His confidence is misplaced, for riches are meaningless in the face of death (cf. James 1:9-11).

That the man would die that very night reminds us that God is sovereign. It's been said that how we face death determines how we live life. Since we've put our faith in Christ, the conqueror of death and giver of eternal life, we should live lives that are "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21)!

APPLY THE WORD Here's a suggestion that should be fun and educational! Choose one of Jesus' parables to act out or dramatize for your friends or family. You might put together a mime, acting out the story silently. Or you might write a dramatic monologue, from the viewpoint of a character in a parable. Or you could write a brief skit in which various people play a part.

1 Timothy 6:20

TODAY IN THE WORD John Maxwell is a former pastor in California who since 1995 has focused full-time on leadership development through books, tapes, and an institute, Injoy, Inc. Mentoring and discipling leaders takes personal risk and energy. As Maxwell told Leadershipmagazine: "The future of our ministry and our churches depends on developing others to lead ... When you understand that leadership is influence instead of position, that changes everything. You don't strive to be a leader; you strive to add value to people."

Paul had this same attitude toward Timothy. He was as a transparent, heart-sharing father teaching his spiritual son not systems or methods but godly character and passion.

He hoped to send Timothy to Philippi soon (vv. 19, 23), indicating that they were at that time together in Rome. Probably Timothy had been helping the apostle and evangelizing in that great city. But instead of keeping Timothy for himself, Paul planned to send him to minister to and return with news of his beloved Philippians.

Timothy was personally known to these believers, as he had been with Paul on both of his recorded visits to the city. That's why Paul could say that they knew "that Timothy has proved himself ... in the work of the gospel" (v. 22). The fact that Paul would send a close, valuable companion no doubt spoke volumes to the Philippians about his love for them.

Paul had specially recruited Timothy for missionary work (Acts 16:1-3). The relationship between them was like father and son, as may also be seen from the two New Testament epistles Paul wrote to Timothy. Timothy shared the apostle's heart for the gospel and for this particular church.

Paul wanted the Philippians to know that Timothy represented him. He was unable to visit them, but remained confident that he would be vindicated and released soon (Phil. 2:24).

APPLY THE WORD Imitation is a basic principle of learning. We imitate whom we admire, and admiring the right person for the right reasons is important. That's why Paul urged believers to imitate Christ and himself, and why he held up Timothy and Epaphroditus as examples at the end of Philippians 2.

1 Timothy 6:21 "SHIPWRECK"

Some have strayed concerning the faith. - 1Timothy 6:21

In the early part of this century, an American ship was wrecked off the Scilly Isles near the coast of England. The sea had been calm and the weather clear, but the vessel was caught in a treacherous current that slowly lured it off its course. Before the captain and the crew realized what had happened, the ship had crashed into the rocks.

In life too, powerful currents of compromise can catch the soul and carry it to shipwreck. Spiritual drifting is usually a slow and imperceptible process. We know it has occurred when we have lost the strong resistance to evil and the passionate desire for truth that we once knew.

The apostle Paul wanted to make sure this wouldn't happen to those to whom Timothy ministered. He encouraged him to be faithful in telling others what they needed to know so they wouldn't stray from their devotion to Christ and cause their faith to be shipwrecked.

In our day, for every professing believer who is lost to the Christian cause by a savage assault of evil, a hundred more slowly drift away from God's truth, regular worship, and a life of faith.

We must give careful attention to what we know about Christ so that we don't get caught in a drift. - H W Robinson - [Copyright.](#)
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Lord, help us from Your blessed Word
All error to discern,
And by Your Spirit's truth and light
From Satan's snares to turn.
- Henry G. Bosch

**The compass of God's Word
will keep you from spiritual shipwreck.**