

STEWARDSHIP: WHO OWNS YOUR STUFF?

3

CONTENTMENT

1 Timothy 6:6—19

By Elizabeth B. Crawford

“John D. Rockefeller was once asked how much money it would take to be really satisfied. He answered, ‘Just a little bit more!’ And that is precisely our problem—it always takes a little more; contentment always remains elusive.”

Richard J. Foster

“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.”
Proverbs 17:1

“...for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

Philippians 4:11b—13

AIM OF STUDY

- To show how contentment stems from trusting God's goodness to provide and frees us from pursuing the riches of this world in order to invest our lives in His eternal kingdom.

KEY VERSES

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. ...Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

1 Timothy 6:6-8, 17

PREPARATION

Read over the notes on "**how to teach the Bible in small group**" and "**some practical suggestions for leading a small group discussion**" in Vineyard Church of Columbus' *Small Group Leadership Training Manual*. Before you read over the Scripture, pray that God would give you direction for leading your group and teach you something relevant. Then read through the passage and the Bible study below. **You will need to go over the questions and choose which ones you want to emphasize and which you could eliminate if your time is limited.** Note that the application questions are marked with an asterisk (*). Rather than leaving these to the end of the study, ask one or two as you work through the passage so people are being confronted by Scripture's truths and applying them to their own lives. If you find you are falling behind schedule and need to move ahead, you could summarize some of the passage and then go to the final questions.

These studies contain more background material and information on the passages than any group will cover in a meeting. The authors are providing this for the leaders' benefit—to help reduce your study and preparation time; to help resource you for possible questions group members may raise; and to clarify some gray areas of doctrine that may be in your mind as you prepare. Obviously we cannot exhaust any one subject in a document like this, so you may want to do further reading and discuss doctrine with your pastor. We highly recommend *The New Bible Dictionary* or *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* as excellent resources for study.

OPENERS

What does it mean to be content? Interestingly, the dictionary gives this definition: "to appease [satisfy] the desires of; to limit oneself in requirements, desires or actions" (M-W.com). Which is it: to be satisfied or to limit what you desire? Are we to combine the two and say that contentment is being satisfied when our limited desires are met? Since we are commanded in Scripture to be content, how will we

learn to be content with what we have? We aren't born with this response to our lot in life.

The Bible says it's an attitude based on trusting God that Christians have to learn or develop. Paul, the well-educated, widely traveled, greatly gifted, and fiercely persecuted apostle of Christ wrote to his church friends in Philippi that, "...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the **secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:11b-12). What was the secret Paul learned? He continued, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (v. 13). Paul found the strength **through Christ** to remain content in all circumstances. When Paul speaks of being "in Christ" or doing something "through Christ", he is referring to our "spiritual union" with Christ Jesus (Liefeld, p. 1791). In other words, as we let Jesus' Spirit live in us, we can manifest the same gratitude and faith that Jesus demonstrated when He lived on earth and relied on His Heavenly Father for all things.

What does this look like in "real life?" If you ask God to teach you about contentment, He will! Years ago one of the members of my women's small group urged me to call a phone number she had heard on the radio while driving to our meeting. She said that the radio station had announced my name over the air, and if I called in time, I would be the winner of a brand new home! I was in shock. The house we were living in needed countless repairs and redecorating. It was a constant source of frustration and embarrassment to me that we couldn't afford to hire someone to do the work, nor did my husband and I have the skills or time to do it all ourselves. And the home being given away was located in a new subdivision about a mile from where we lived.

Of course I was tempted to call the radio station right away. As I questioned her to make sure, and debated what to do, she informed me that the stated time period to respond had just elapsed. Immediately, I recognized this was a spiritual test, since later that week I was to speak to the women of the church and their guests on the topic of **contentment**. I decided I wanted to pass the test, so I had to shrug my shoulders, laugh a bit, and then proceed with the small group's agenda. I chose to believe that if God wanted me to have a brand new home, He would give it to me without requiring me to meet the demands of a contest on a radio station I never listened to. Of course, that wasn't the last test of whether I would remain content in the Lord with what He provided. Sadly, I haven't always been His thankful child who took each day with a lighthearted attitude knowing that my Heavenly Father would lavish me with all I needed.

Note: In case the question arises regarding the radio contest: Does that mean that God never uses secular means to accomplish His purposes? Not at all. When God wanted to be sure the human parents of His Son were in the right town at the right time for Jesus' birth, God prompted the head of the entire Roman Empire to require a census of all its citizens. Thus people from all over the Jewish lands had to travel to the hometown of their family's ancestors, and King Jesus was born in the city of King David, Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7).

In this study, we'll explore how to develop an attitude of contentment, and why it is so beneficial to the life of every follower of Christ.

Pray for your group that you will find freedom from the love of money and be encouraged in your faith in God's trustworthy promises to provide as the Holy Spirit teaches you through this study.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This book is one of three letters from the apostle Paul to one of his chief assistants, Timothy or Titus. All three letters include instructions on church matters and specific exhortations to the recipients. 1 Timothy and Titus include information on selecting leaders, while all three talk about dealing with false teachers. 1 Timothy was sent to Timothy whom Paul had left at Ephesus to straighten out some church problems (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul mentions looking forward to visiting at Ephesus soon (1 Tim. 3:14). In the meantime, he wants Timothy to deal with those teaching false doctrine (1:3) somehow related to Jewish law (1:7). The result was controversies (1:4) and unwise ascetic practices such as abstaining from marriage and certain foods (4:3). We don't see the exact same heresies that Paul dealt with in Colossae (Guthrie, pp. 679-687), and for this study the nature of the false teaching is not important. Paul also talks about worship, selecting leaders, how to relate to different groups in the church, and ends with several points about our attitudes toward money. He begins talking about money because the false teachers were misusing their positions in the church as a means of getting rich (6:3-5).

STUDY THE PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

In this letter, Paul was sending instructions to his assistant, Timothy, whom he left in Ephesus to straighten out some church matters. The primary problem was some men were teaching falsehoods and trying to get rich by manipulating the congregation. Paul warned Timothy about these people, describing them as "conceited" and said they "understand nothing." Paul then wrote about the topic of money and what Christians' attitudes should be. He urged contentment rather than consumerism's mantra of "the person with the most stuff in the end wins." He also spoke to those who already had considerable wealth about how they should use their riches. This topic is very timely for our culture, which deludes us into thinking we never have enough and which promotes the rich and self-indulgent as popular role models.

1. Let's read 1 Timothy 6:6-10; 11-16; 17-19.

Instead of using ministry as a quick way to make money, what does Paul say we should see as profitable for Christians (v. 6)?

Paul says that the combination of "godliness," or godly living, and "contentment," or satisfaction with what we have, is "great gain," or profitable for the Christian (Fee, p. 143). Paul is playing on the word *gain*,

since the false teachers tried to use their leadership position as a means to get rich (vv.3-5). However, Paul is talking about intangible or spiritual wealth, not what we buy and trade here on earth.

2. Why does Paul say we “gain” if we are living a godly life and have a contented attitude (vv. 7-8)?

Paul sees great benefit to the individual and the kingdom of God when people can live in Jesus and live like Jesus. Our union with Christ through the Holy Spirit “...has given us everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Since we have the perfect, obedient life of Jesus being expressed in us as we yield to Him, we can experience all the rewards of His Holy Spirit’s fruit growing in us (Gal. 5:22-23). Who can find enough money to “buy” unconditional love? Who has a large enough stock portfolio to “purchase” peace? What item in your house or garage has delivered joy that doesn’t fade after a few months or years?

Compare our culture’s constant pursuit of material things—that many of us are not immune to—with the simple joy of giving a bag of groceries to someone truly hungry. Paul reminds us that Jesus said, “It is more blessed to *give* than to receive” (Acts 20:35b). Or consider the peace discovered in staying home, talking with a friend or reading a good book instead of rushing to the latest sale only to find nothing that satisfies your thirst for “more.” Jesus tried to warn us: “...Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). Thus being content with what we have helps us live in sync with Jesus and His kingdom.

3. What other reason does Paul give for remaining content (vv. 7-8)?

Throughout this passage, Paul has an eternal perspective in mind. He points out that we enter life with empty hands and after we die, we won’t take our wealth with us. Thus, he argues money is not something to be grasped or stored up. However, many people would disagree saying that obtaining wealth is not only for their needs and pleasure but for those they love or want to help. They may also believe it’s wise to store up money for their dependents’ care in case of an early death. We can even find verses in the Bible that encourage us to save up for hard times, for our children, or to benefit the poor (Prov. 6:6-8; 13:22; 28:8; 30:24-25).

What many of us don’t realize is that Proverbs says a great deal about giving generously to the poor—at least as much as advising us to store up wealth (Prov. 11:24-26; 19:17; 22:9; 28:2; 31:20). There are also sayings to warn us about pursuing riches over loving relationships, a balanced life, or our salvation (Prov. 11:4; 15:16-17; 17:1; 23:4-5). Also, “Jesus spoke about money more frequently than any other subject except the kingdom of God” (Foster, *Money*, p.19). And He demands a willingness to give everything up in

order to follow Him or pursue the kingdom life (Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 14:33) (Foster, *Money*, p. 28). Paul wants the church to be full of people who are willing to give generously or give it all up, since he knows that money cannot buy our way into heaven, but it can hinder us (Matt. 16:26; 19:23-25).

4. How does Paul describe his own needs in this life?

Paul states that having food and clothing is really enough for him. This is so counter to our advertising-saturated age! Where does Paul get such an idea? He probably is thinking of Jesus' statements in Matt. 6:25-33 (Fee, p. 144) where Jesus tells His followers not to worry about food or clothes since God knows we need them. Our culture would consider someone who only has one or two sets of clothes and food for a single day horribly impoverished, so Paul's standard may seem an impossible or improbable one for us to adopt today. Thinking that Paul could make do with much less because he lived in a simpler time is actually simplistic thinking! Paul's world posed many threats and insecurities—medically, economically, politically, and socially. There were neither sophisticated healthcare facilities nor prescription drugs and successful treatments for many illnesses. The Middle East in the first century didn't offer various welfare systems and agencies to care for those in need. Who among the followers of Christ had insurance plans, credit cards, or FEMA-funded shelters to fall back on when famine, unemployment, or a war arose? At times Paul lived on the edge more than any other New Testament follower of Jesus (2 Cor. 6:4-10). And yet he could say that food and clothes were enough!

Why are our needs so different than Paul's? As North Americans, many of us have adopted a set of expectations in which wealth and luxury are taken for granted. We assume a certain lifestyle and income not based on the Bible's teachings but on the messages bombarding us through TV, movies, the internet, print media, and the airwaves. This study is not against making a financial plan and living responsibly. Vineyard Columbus is not hostile to those who purchase or sell insurance. What we want to do in this study is examine the expectations we have adopted from the culture around us and challenge one another to live more contentedly instead of pursuing material goods as our main goal in life.

***What would you list if someone asked you what you needed in this life?**

5. What dangers does Paul warn us about (vv. 9-10)?

According to Paul, wanting to get rich leads to many harmful things. He lists "temptation" and "trap" in verse 9, both of which bring to mind passages in Scripture on warfare against the devil (Matt. 6:13; Matt. 26:41; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Tim. 3:7). "Foolish and harmful desires" that cause people ruin and destruction are also mentioned in Paul's warning. These also bring some teachings from the Bible to mind. The "fool" in Scripture is not used for

someone who simply lacks an education. It describes someone who has despised and rejected God's ways. The fool chooses to ignore God and His wisdom, exhibiting evil not mere stupidity (Hubbard, p. 48). Thus Jesus "...told the parable of the rich farmer whose life centered in hoarding, and called him a fool (Luke 12:16-21)" (Foster, *Simplicity*, p. 40). When Paul refers to harmful desires, he's not just thinking of our daydreams. He's talking about the longings and passions that influence our daily actions. In James 1: 13-15, we learn that it's not God but our own evil desires that lead us away from God and sometimes into sin.

6. Why does Paul associate evil with money? What is harmful about money? How did Jesus view money (Mt. 6:24)?

Money itself can be used for great good. It can help us feed the hungry and provide other material assistance to those in personal crises; supply emergency aid to victims of natural disasters; build hospitals, schools, and water treatment systems for impoverished communities; and fund teams of missionaries to carry the gospel to unreached people groups. Many Christians today hold that it is not money itself but the love of money that is evil (Foster, *Money*, pp. 24–25), and cite this passage as evidence.

However, Richard Foster believes that money is a power in the universe that "...seeks to dominate us." He says that Jesus saw it as a rival god: "No one can serve two masters. He will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt. 6:24) (Foster, *Money*, pp. 25-26). It is "...an idolatry we must be converted *from* in order to be converted *to* him" (Foster, *Money*, p. 28). Foster also points out the attributes of a deity we expect from money: security, freedom, and power, and that we can feel guilt according to our relationship with it (Foster, *Money*, p.28).

In the 1 Timothy passage, Foster thinks Paul is talking about the pull that loving money has on people so that they will go to any lengths just to get more. Paul does not say that every evil stems from money, but he does say that many evils come from greed. We are guilty of loving money when "All restraint is removed; the lover of money will do anything for it. And that is precisely its seductive character.... The person is hooked. Money becomes a consuming, life-dominating problem. It is a god demanding an all-inclusive allegiance" (Foster, *Money*, p. 30).

Fee sees a downward spiral in the lives of people who become greedy for money. Paul talks about falling—into temptation that lures them into a trap, which are those desires that lead to ruin and destruction (Fee, pp. 144-145). This picture takes us from considering temptation, to walking into its trap, and then falling to pieces. It calls to mind the person in Ps. 1:1 who progressively walks, stands and sits, i.e. increasingly associates with and becomes like the ungodly. Because of their devotion to material things, and the power to obtain

them, Paul says some people have wandered from trusting in Christ. Of course, he is referring back to the false teachers who began as leaders in the church but compromised their beliefs and practices when greed replaced God's truth as the dominating passion in their lives (Fee, pp. 144-146). Paul sees the harm not only to the church but also to the individuals who have "pierced themselves with many griefs." Paul's tone seems sad, not as harsh as when describing them as "hypocritical liars" in 1 Tim. 4:2. Tragically, in the past decades, we also have witnessed the corrupting power on ministers of the gospel when they had control over inordinate amounts of money or influence.

For some people, the pursuit of getting rich brings great harm. When casinos were established off shore in Kansas City after becoming legal in 1995, a number of social problems rose sharply.

Bankruptcies in greater Kansas City skyrocketed by 25 percent in 1996. Many of the casino victims seek help at the south Kansas City offices of Consumer Credit Counseling Services (CCCS). "Before the boats, we saw maybe one person a year because of a gambling problem," said Jeff Sheets, a CCCS vice-president. "Now about 20 people a month come in because family members frequently are unaware of the problem until it reaches crisis proportions."

Area police departments are now dealing with financial crimes in which the motive appears to be money for gambling and individuals filing false police reports in attempts to cover their casino losses. Assistant U.S. Attorney Matt Whitworth has observed a "noticeable increase" in white-collar crimes related to the casinos.

The Missouri Department of Mental Health has trained and certified 100 gambling counselors to help cope with the casino fallout. Longtime Kansas City Union Mission reports that the number of homeless people seeking shelter has risen steadily since the casinos' arrival.

Domestic violence also seems to be on the upswing. Sandra Day, who coordinates Project Protect, a four-country effort to combat domestic violence, said experiences at the casinos often trigger abusive or violent incidents. "The riverboats have two very key elements — alcohol and gambling — for someone who is prone to domestic violence," Day said. "You might as well give an addict his heroin dose" (Reno).

***What lures you to want more money and things?**

***When have you fallen into money's traps?**

7. What does Paul tell Timothy to pursue instead (v. 11)?

Paul strongly urges Timothy to run in the opposite direction of loving money. Instead, he says to pursue becoming like Jesus. He mentions a number of qualities that remind us of Jesus and that are only possible through Jesus. Righteousness encompasses not only being right with God through faith in Jesus' substitutionary death for us (Rom. 3:23-24) but also doing what's right in our relationship with God and others. Once again the word "godliness" appears as what is profitable or worthwhile for the Christian to cultivate—a God-centered, God-fearing, God-honoring lifestyle. Paul points also to faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Perhaps he might have said faith, hope and love, but endurance certainly requires hope in God—whether one is enduring persecution from without the church or putting up with opposition and immaturity within. And gentleness might be a reminder of how Timothy is to lead the people from error into the truth.

8. How does faith play a part in our attempt to be free from the world's attitudes towards money (v. 12)?

Paul indicates that living contrary to what the world values is a struggle. He uses a metaphor from athletic contests as he urges Timothy to "fight the good fight of the faith" (Fee, p. 150). When the people around you are pursuing worldly wealth and material satisfaction, it takes faith in God's goodness and trustworthiness to resist the temptation to join in grabbing for all you can get. What's key to pursuing the riches of the kingdom rather than amassing a large bank account, a sizable home, and another impressive automobile? John Piper says it takes faith to remain satisfied in Jesus no matter what idols lurk seductively around us. Only when we are so satisfied in God that we desire Him more than anything else are we able to resist the temporary pleasures that sin offers us (pp. 9-10). Only when we believe He always keeps His promises will we trust Him enough to stop striving to meet our own needs just in case He doesn't come through the way we want Him to. Most Christians would agree that we should obey Jesus when He said in Mt. 6:31-33,

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

But, we won't stop worrying or trying to amass a fortune unless we are convinced that Jesus was telling the truth when He said His Father would provide what we need if we pursue life in His kingdom. And we won't stop trying to find fulfillment through material things, people, or experiences until

we believe that “His love is better than life” (Ps. 63:3). So faith is the key to waiting on God to fulfill His promises and satisfy our longings.

9. Why is Timothy’s example important (vv. 13-14)? How is Jesus’ example helpful?

Remember that Timothy is in Ephesus to correct those who are teaching errors and misrepresenting the gospel ministry. The false teachers have been misusing their status and ministry to get rich, so Timothy must not only oppose the content of their teaching but the hypocrisy of their lifestyle. His example before the church and community must be spotless and blameless, words that are used to describe the people God longs for us to be when Christ returns (Dan. 12:10; Eph. 1:4; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:23). Paul holds out the goal of finding out what pleases the Lord, rather than our evil desires, and then putting that into practice (Eph. 5:10).

Paul pictures aiming for the prize in the athletic contest when he says to “take hold of...” (Fee, p. 150), and uses eternal life, not the things of this world, as the true treasure of Christians. Jesus defined eternal life as relationship with God the Father and Himself (John. 17:3). Status, power, money and material things we pursue cannot satisfy our soul and can all disappear overnight. But eternal life, knowing God and being known by Him, is something we can enjoy right now and throughout eternity (Fee, p. 150). Paul reminds Timothy that he began living this way when he received and confessed Christ at conversion. Since other church leaders have sold out for the things of this world, Paul knows Timothy needs encouragement to resist. So he cites God as the source of life—either the source of the life Timothy is to embrace—the one who fills Timothy daily with true life, or as Fee thinks, the one who can keep Timothy alive (p. 151). Paul also reminds Timothy of Jesus’ faithfulness even in the face of certain death in order to strengthen Timothy’s resolve to remain true to God till death or Christ’s return.

10. What inspires Paul to burst into praise at this point in the letter (vv. 15-16)?

Paul has just mentioned God as the giver of life and the Lord Jesus who made that life available to all who believe in Him. The reference to Jesus’ coming and God’s sovereignty over when that would happen moves Paul into praising the one true Ruler over all, the one true King and Lord, the ultimate judge, the immortal and invisible God who is so holy and wholly other that no one can approach Him. In other words, Paul praises some of the ways that God cannot be surpassed and then gives Him honor and attributes power or might to Him alone. Fee suggests that the reference to Jesus’ Second Coming and the praise that follows would not only encourage Timothy to remain steadfast to the gospel calling but also lift up the whole church to see whom they serve despite the false gods of the culture around them (pp. 153-154).

11. What does Paul want to say to those who already have money? What attitudes should middle class or rich Christians avoid (v. 17)?

Fee points out that those in the church who already have wealth may have felt condemned by what Paul said in vv. 9 and 10. Yet we know that Paul received gifts and hospitality from well to do believers and often spoke affectionately of those who let the churches meet in their private homes. So he takes time to give Timothy several commands for them (pp. 156-157). Paul qualifies their wealth by saying “those who are rich in this present world” since he has just remarked on the return of Christ when He will judge us for what we have done and our heavenly riches will be evident.

First, Paul addresses the attitude of arrogance. Certainly people have not changed much in two millennia since pride seems to accompany anyone with a fortune. Having wealth or the symbols we associate with it can lead us to worship our own accomplishments rather than humbly giving God thanks for His goodness. So Paul reminds the wealthy that they are no different than anyone else in receiving God’s riches since He is the true supplier of all good things, especially our salvation and eternal life.

Paul also tells those with money not to hope in it but rather to fix their hope in God, our rich provider. He states that worldly wealth is so uncertain, a contrast to the unchanging and faithful character of God.

12. Why can't wealth make us secure?

Paul mentions the uncertainty of wealth, a comment that seems very applicable to today’s economic times. Like any other created thing, wealth is not permanent. A loss of health or a job, a political upheaval, natural and national disasters can all negatively impact one’s income or worldly riches. We can lose anything—health and beauty, relationships and residences, job skills and abilities, stock portfolios and business ventures—due to factors beyond our control. Only the Lord can be our rock, our foundation, and our certainty. People with great wealth may seem to have it made, but inside may not feel secure at all. Not only are many things beyond their control, some may build their lives around guarding what they have to the point of not using or enjoying it. And they may be so focused on increasing wealth that they don’t have the freedom to focus on eternal things—people and the kingdom of God. Ironically, those without great riches may be equally obsessed with obtaining it thinking that would finally make them secure. Yet, they might end up unhappier because they never accomplish this illusive goal.

13. Why is it difficult for a ‘wealthy’ person to change these outlooks?

So often we are deceived by the appearance of control over our lives and circumstances. We are quick to take credit for the good in our lives or to misinterpret God’s gifts as rewards for our behavior. Ultimately, thinking that our own efforts have brought blessing or success burdens us with the need to remain in control or to fulfill whatever conditions we imagine keep us in favor

with God or whomever we credit with our fortune. Wanting to control is our fearful attempt to play God or use Him and others to our benefit. Attempting to control is a symptom of sin, trying to live independently of God or living without giving Him proper reverence, respect, obedience, and credit. Asking anyone to surrender control is asking him or her to die to his or her sinful self. Expecting Christians to reject worldly attitudes and to adopt the humble, servant attitude of Christ can take years to become reality.

***What makes you feel most secure? What does that say about your view of God?**

14. How does Paul describe God's track record on giving? How does that encourage us to hope in Him?

Paul points out that God "richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment" (v. 17b). Note that God not only provides, as He has said He would, but Paul describes God as providing "richly". Some might wonder what Paul means since this is the man who claimed food and clothes are enough in v. 8. What does Paul use to measure the richness of God's giving? No doubt he first thought of the gift of God's Son and the claim made in Rom. 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" But Paul also tells us that God gives for our enjoyment. This may bring to mind the sacrifices and feasts commanded by God in the Old Testament to serve as regular reminders of God's generosity and faithfulness to His covenant people: fellowship offerings, Firstfruits, Pentecost/Weeks, Trumpets, and Tabernacles (Harris and Youngblood, pp. 150, 176-177). Why would God give generously and want us to enjoy His gifts? Piper states, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him" (p. 8). So when we praise and thank God for what He has provided, rather than complaining about what we have yet to obtain, we not only make Him glad but also reveal to others how generous and merciful He is.

***How accurate is your view of God's generosity? Why do you think God has given good things to you and others?**

15. How does Paul want the "rich" people in the church to use their money (v. 18)?

Paul mentions several ways the wealthy should spend their money. Paul wants them to "do good" and making a pun, "be rich in good deeds" (Fee, p. 158) i.e., do many good deeds. He explains that this means they should be generous, giving away a lot, and have a willingness to share so that when a need arises, they are ready. Fee points out that the adjective form of "koinonia", "fellowship" in Greek, is used in the willingness to participate in sharing, so this especially applies to sharing with those who are in the church (p. 158).

16. What reward can they expect for this kind of investment (v. 19)?

Paul says that when the rich give away their wealth to help others, they are not losing but gaining. Instead of mourning the decrease in their account, they should see their gifts as “laying up treasure for themselves” in heaven. This brings to mind Jesus’ words in Matt. 6:19–21,

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Jesus’ words add to our understanding of what Paul is pointing out. What we spend our material goods on in this life reveals what we value most of all. It has been said that you can tell a lot about a person by looking at their checkbook or bank account and seeing what they spend their resources on.

***What are you investing your time, money and resources in?**

***What do you see as the key to living life to the fullest?**

APPLYING THE TEXT

***Where are you most discontent in your life? What does that reveal about what you value?**

***What most often lures you away from being satisfied in Jesus?**

***What can you do to increase your experience of being satisfied in Jesus?**

WRAPPING IT UP

Paul’s view of riches challenges our understanding in North America of “the good life.” In light of Scripture’s teaching on the life we will live when Jesus returns, many of us need to rethink how we spend our money and what we dream about. Certainly not all of us have the same resources, but since God is the owner of all things, we have the same responsibility to steward His gifts to us wisely. Two more studies in this series will examine the topic of giving. Take time in the next week to ask God to help you review your own attitudes and habits regarding money. And practice being thankful for what you have already received from Him instead of complaining about what you lack.

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