

sermon study guide

May 22/23, 2021

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“How Then Shall We Live?” Part 5: Pursue Generosity 2

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. If you unexpectedly received \$1000 today, what would you do with it?
2. What things in your life bring you the most contentment? Why?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read I Timothy 6:17-19

3. What are God's standards of "do's and don'ts" regarding wealth? Why are these principles challenging to follow?

Read Matthew 6:19-20 and John 3:16-17

4. Our generosity has eternal value and reflects the character of God. How does this change your perspective on generosity?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. What practices help you to keep a Godly perspective on wealth and generosity?
6. What are creative ways to be generous that may not require money (or a lot of it)? What role does personal sacrifice play in generosity?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Reflect on 1 Timothy 6:6. How content are you? How might contentment with what you have lead to generosity in your life?

THE WORD (NIV)

1 Timothy 6:17-19

17 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. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Matthew 6:19-20

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

John 3:16-17

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

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The central passage from 1 Tim 6:17-19 was written to the rich among the church at Ephesus, and therefore the rich among us. There can be a tendency to think that it is sinful to be rich but that is not true. The problem is not with riches but how we use it. Lest we think that this message does not apply to us consider the fact that if you earn \$25,000/year you are in the top 10% of the world in wealth. God wants us to be generous no matter what our economic standard may be.

In our passage today, Paul's challenge to the church at Ephesus is not to get rid of their riches but to channel them in the right direction. He is not advocating for asceticism but calling the readers to steward the wealth God has given them by presenting some 'Don'ts and Dos'.

DON'T become arrogant because of your wealth.

Paul gives this command as a warning to the wealthy as they can be vulnerable to the temptation to become proud because of their wealth. C.S. Lewis says it well, "We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest.". Our Christian testimony ought to testify to the grace of God and not to point a spotlight on our own accomplishments. We should be reminded that we didn't make it this far on our own.

DON'T put your hope in wealth.

It is easy to feel more secure if you have wealth. However, the uncertainty of wealth offers us a false sense of security. Jesus demonstrated this when He said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

DO good deeds with your wealth.

James 4:17 says, "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them." Being idle and ignoring the needs around us is sin. When God gets your attention and places a specific burden on your heart seek out God's direction in responding to a need. As in Matthew 6:19-20, we can store up treasures in heaven by obeying God and performing good deeds. We should be sensitive to the Spirit's prompting to make a difference. The cumulative effect of doing many small acts of kindness faithfully can be truly amazing over a lifetime.

DO share generously of your wealth and possessions

God wants us to be open handed, to hold everything we have loosely. If you want to grow in your spiritual life, excel in giving. You will grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus and have your priorities all straightened up. How you use your money will demonstrate the convictions of your heart.

As we seek to fulfill God's commands from this passage we will inevitably become more like Him. One of the most famous passages in scripture, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..." (John 3:16) is a demonstration of the most generous gift ever given. Our giving is a response to what God has given us. As you consider the demonstration of God's love on the cross let your heart be filled with gratitude. As you do so, ask yourself this question, "God, who do you want me to bless generously this week? Who around me needs a visible demonstration of God's love?"



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