

Brian Chesemore

SESSION 1: Pursuing Godliness with Contentment

*"Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment..." 1 Timothy 6.6
"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliot*

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Recommended Book: *The Treasure Principle: Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving* by Randy Alcorn (Multnomah, 2001)

Week One: Pursuing Godliness with Contentment

Week Two: Avoiding Worldly Pitfalls

Week Three: Budgeting, Saving, Investing

Week Four: Giving

I. WE WERE MADE TO LIVE FOR GREAT GAIN

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs... (1 Tim. 6.6-10)

A. The Assumption: Money exists for Me

1. The American Dream has been realized
2. The American Dream has been found wanting

"My soul finds rest in God alone." (Ps. 62.1)

3. Our hearts remain tempted to crave riches

B. The Gospel Reorders Our Definition of Great Gain

1. Hoarding give way to Stewardship
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MONEY: THE MEASURE OF THE HEART

“...for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world.” (I Tim. 6.7)

2. Craving yields to Contentment

“But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.” (I Tim. 6.8)

“Contentment is one of the most distinguishing traits of the godly person, because a godly person has his heart focused on God rather than on possessions of position or power. As William Hendrickson has observed so well, “The truly godly person is not interested in becoming rich. He possesses inner resources which furnish riches far beyond that which earth can offer.”¹

3. Destruction is replaced with Discernment

“...into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction”.

- *The Sin of Achan (Josh. 7.20-21)*

“It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs...”

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RICH

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so they may take hold of that which is truly life. (I Tim. 6.17-19)

A. Our Riches Are Not to Be our identity or Hope

1. Haughty—Arrogance is common to the rich.
2. Uncertain—What seems guaranteed so often disappoint.

“Arrogance, or pride, is the deadly sin of all people, but it seems to be the special curse of the rich. Not only that, but they tend to put altogether too much confidence in what is so uncertain.”²

B. Our Hope is to Be in God Alone (v.17)

¹ Bridges, Jerry. *The Practice of Godliness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1983). Pg. 105.

² Fee, Gordon. *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998). Pg. 157.

MONEY: THE MEASURE OF THE HEART

“Hope in God...” (Ps. 42.5)

“She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.” (I Tim. 5.5)

1. God Richly Provides: The Lord is not stingy.
2. Everything to Enjoy:

“Real life is physical. It has to do with touch and smell and sight and sound and taste. It has to do with trees and stumps and fish and frogs and ants and birds and leaves and water and heat and slaw and iced tea and numb thighs and salty sweat and worms and granddaddy longlegs and ten thousand other creatures and sensations that come to us because God made a physical world.

...Two nights ago I took a kitchen chair and went outside at about 10:30 and sat down to watch the moon. It's been making a lower and lower arc over the southeastern hemisphere these last nights. This night it was just above the power lines that trespass with modern technology on this little Georgia paradise. The moon was almost full. The grey-orange face was pocked with beautiful grey blemishes. The constant caressing of the thin clouds could do nothing to cleanse the old man. His defects are too deep and too old.

I sat there and soaked again in the lavish beauty of the sky and the droning crickets and tree frogs, with the soft breeze on my face and the smell of pine; and I marveled that God, who is spirit and cannot be seen or touched, would make an ocean of physical reality that smells and shines and feels and tastes and sounds. As C.S. Lewis said,

‘There is no use trying to be more spiritual than God, God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not: He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it....

I know some muddle-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure, were bad in themselves. But they were wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body—which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, and that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty, and our energy.’³

“Enjoyment, however, does not mean self-indulgent living (5.6) The reason everything may be enjoyed lies in the recognition that everything, including one’s wealth, is a gift, the expression of God’s gracious generosity.”

³ Piper, John. *The Pleasures of God.* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2012 ed.) pg. 64-65

C. We Are to Be Known for our Wealth of Good Works (v.18)

1. Wealthy in Works—God’s grace produces a love and concern and action for others.
2. Generous—A picture of God’s grace. Like the Lord, we are not stingy, we freely give as we have freely received from God.
3. Ready to Share—We save so that we might be able to give.
“True ‘riches’ is found in the giving, not in the having.”⁴

D. Generosity Produces Eternal Treasures (v.19)

“What is this “treasure in heaven”? It includes power (Luke 19:15-19), possessions (Matthew 19:21), and pleasures (Psalm 16:11). Jesus promises that those who sacrifice on earth will receive “a hundred times as much” in heaven (Matthew 19:29). That’s 10,000 percent—an impressive return!

Of course, Christ Himself is our ultimate treasure. All else pales in comparison to Him and the joy of knowing Him (Philippians 3:7-11). A person, Jesus, is our first treasure. A place, heaven is our second treasure. Possessions, eternal rewards, are our third treasure. (What person are you living for? What place are you living for? What possessions are you living for?)

“Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Why? Because it’s right? Not just that but because it’s *smart*. Because such treasures will *last*. Jesus argues from the bottom line. It’s not an emotional appeal; it’s a logical one: Invest in what has lasting value. You’ll never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul. Why? *Because you can’t take it with you.*

Do not be overawed when a man grows rich,
When the splendor of his house increases;
For his will take nothing with him when he dies,
His splendor will not descend with him (Ps. 49:16-17)

John D. Rockefeller was one of the wealthiest men who ever lived. After he died someone asked his accountant, “How much money did John D. leave?” The reply was classic: “He left...all of it.”

...Jesus takes that profound truth “You can’t take it with you” and adds a stunning qualification. By telling us to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven, He gives us a breathtaking corollary, which I call the Treasure Principle:

You can’t take it with you—
But you *can* send it on ahead”⁵

⁴ Fee, Gordon. New International Biblical Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998). Pg. 157.

⁵ Alcorn, Randy. The Treasure Principle (Sisters, Or: Multnomah, 2001). Pg. 16-17.