

# **A Study of First Timothy**

Week Five

1 Timothy 6:3-21

## **Day One**

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

v. 3 – The instruction that emanates from the one true God is sound, as Paul wrote. **What about all the variety of teaching and belief that exists in the body of Christ? Which of it is sound and which of it is frivolous or even erroneous? How can we know?** Even some of the worst teaching I've heard uses the Bible to justify their position.

I think that is why we have had the various creeds that were developed, usually in times of crisis, by the early church councils and leaders. I think the creeds contain the basic essentials of our faith. Everything else is open to interpretation and creative application. Often Christians have gone to war, so to speak, over the non-essentials of the faith. Here is what's known as The Nicene Creed. There can be no deviation from what is contained therein:

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Do you adhere to the teaching in this creed? If you call yourself a Christian, then you are obligated to do so. There are some who question the legitimacy of the creeds. This author isn't one of them.**

v. 4 – Most of the significant heresies that have surfaced over time have either diminished Jesus or elevated men. That's a bit of an oversimplification, but not by much. I am not sure that all the false doctrines have produced the results that Paul described here, such as malicious talk and evil suspicions. Some have produced people who seem to have many of the traits known as fruit of the Spirit: love, patience, and kindness. So what's one to do? At that point, I still think one must revert to the historical creeds of the faith that spelled out what one must believe as a follower of Jesus Christ.

v. 5 – Now we get down to the crux of much of the false teaching. It is usually perpetrated by one man [or woman] and it makes them a lot of money! I'm not quite sure why money seems to follow weird doctrines, but it does. Paul gave a warning about some leaders: "Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). Why? Usually, although not always, to obtain money!

## Day Two

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction.

v. 6 – Godliness must be coupled with contentment where money is concerned. Money is a beguiling factor in the human heart. It can cause one to lose track of the essentials of the faith. Jesus taught about this tendency in the parable of the sower:

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful (Matthew 13:22-23).

One way to remain content is to give thanks and not to compare what you have with what someone else has. **Are you thankful for what you have, or secretly envious of what someone else has?** Be careful if you are the latter. That attitude can actually affect what you believe and lead you astray to some doctrine that will draw you away from Jesus. I know that may sound farfetched, but it can happen to anyone. That is why I regularly pray that God will keep me from getting into any weird doctrines as I teach.

v. 7 – There is the story of the wealthy man who died. Two of his friends were looking at his body in the coffin. One said, "He was rich. I wonder how much he left behind." The other friend answered, "He left all of it!" You brought nothing into the world, so you cannot take anything out as well. **So why be uptight and concerned? Has God failed**

**to provide your basic necessities to date? If not, then why worry? Why work so hard to gather more?**

I had a friend who would always ask the question, “Do you own your stuff, or does your stuff own you?” I was in Cuba a few years ago and we had decided to leave behind our clothes for the believers to distribute among the needy. I had a blue batik shirt, however, that I had obtained in Malaysia, and it was my favorite shirt. I wrestled for two days whether or not I should or could give away that shirt. Finally I gave it away before the trip even ended, because I realized that a shirt had a hold on me—it owned me and I didn’t own it. **Do you have anything that owns you? What are you prepared to do about it?**

v. 8 – Food and clothing are the basic necessities as Jesus taught:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 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 that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own (Matthew 6:25-34).

I think if Jesus would preach this message today, He would add reliable transport to the list of necessities of which God would provide. **Can you live in peace of mind that Jesus meant what He said in those verses? If you can, then stop worrying about your life and future. God is in control.**

v. 9 – This admonition is easy to forget because the modern mindset is to make as much money as possible. Millionaires abound and stock prices soar. Men and women amass as much wealth as possible and they are admired for their efforts and results. One thing about having money, however, is that it takes a lot of money to maintain it. You need lawyers, bankers, accountants and advisors. I knew a man who bought the house of his dreams but, in order to afford it, had a two-hour commute each way to work. He bought a house he wanted and was seldom home to enjoy it! I believe that is what Paul was warning against in this verse.

Seek first the kingdom and God can add the wealth. Seek the wealth first and you may miss the Kingdom.

### Day Three

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

v. 10 – This is perhaps the most misquoted verse in the Bible. (The saying, “God helps those who help themselves” isn’t in the Bible or it would qualify.) Paul didn’t say *money* is the root of all kinds of evil. He wrote that the *love* of money is the problem. In Paul’s day, there were some who obviously had wandered from faith in Jesus to pursue wealth and riches. Jesus also warned about this tendency:

"No one can serve two masters. Either 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" (Matthew 6:24).

Jesus did not say you could not have money; He warned that you could not serve money and God at the same time. When you choose to serve and seek money, you are asking for trouble or “many griefs” as Paul warned. This flies in the face of current reality in modern culture, which pressures people to make as much as they can by whatever means possible. You can succumb to that pressure and not even realize what is happening. Before you know it, your life, time, energy, and creativity aren’t your own. They all are devoted to making and keeping your money.

v. 11 – If you aren’t pursuing wealth, then what should I be pursuing, you may ask? You should be pursuing holiness and righteous living. How will you know if you are doing that? You will know by what is produced in your heart, which is best described as the fruit the Spirit. Those should be your goal while you trust God to add any wealth and favor to your life. Let’s review what the fruit are:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26).

**How are you doing where these characteristics are concerned? Are they present in your life? What more can you do, or how can you cooperate with the Spirit to see them in greater proportion?**

v. 12 – This verse is a reference to the ancient public games of athletes. The competitors fought and ran to win, and we must do the same. Faith is not a passive expression of our life in Christ. We must exert ourselves to make sure that our faith is active and that we secure the things upon which we set our faith focus.

Paul urged Timothy to take hold of eternal life. I would have thought that eternal life takes hold of me! **What can I do to take hold of eternal life? What does that mean?** I think in part it means that I must do all that I can to preserve the quality of life that comes with faith in Christ. I had a seminary professor describe eternal life as a life of such quality that nothing can affect it. I would think, however, that sin could affect the quality of life we have in God, so we must do all we can do to avoid sin and maintain the blessings that God wants us to have.

It seems that Timothy made a confession of faith in the presence of many witnesses. Since Timothy probably made this confession in his home town of Lystra, he undoubtedly knew those who witnessed his profession. He could not walk away from what he had done and there were those around him who would also hold him accountable. There was no turning back for Timothy, so Paul urged him to go forward to preserve the benefits that had come to his life as a result of his confession of faith.

**Are you fighting the good fight? Are you laying hold of the quality of life that God intended you to have in Jesus? If not, what more can you do? If so, is it all you can do? What areas have you allowed to languish or be undeveloped? What are you prepared to do about those areas?**

#### Day Four

13 In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you 14 to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

v. 13 – The charge that Paul gave Timothy sounds so solemn! Paul wasn't writing those things because he had nothing else to do. He was writing and exhorting Timothy in the sight of God. This almost sounds like a marriage ceremony or ordination service. Paul was invoking the name of Jesus as he urged Timothy to remain sober and make the most of his opportunities and calling.

What was Jesus' testimony before Pilate? Let's look at John's gospel to find out. When Pilate asked Jesus if He was a king, He responded:

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me" (John 18:36-37).

When you deal with the things of God, you are dealing with serious issues. God isn't frivolous and His will is paramount. God gives life to everything and Jesus is a King, but

a King who transcends this world. In light of those facts, Paul charged Timothy to be serious about his purpose and work.

As I travel the world to teach, consult and proclaim, I know that my work is serious. It has emanated from the mind of God, and I must be serious and single-minded. What I do isn't a hobby, nor is it just a personal interest. My work was preordained by God from the foundation of the world! I must be serious and make the most of my opportunities, remembering that I am dealing with the most important issues of life and death, for all eternity no less! Consequently, I can enjoy my work, but I must never treat it as just another occupation. It is important to God!

v. 14 – Timothy was to maintain this seriousness of purpose until the Lord returned or until he died, whichever came first. And he was to do in such a manner that he kept the Lord's and his names clear of scandal and accusation. That isn't always within your control, but, if someone makes an accusation, you can make sure that it's either false or that you make restitution and repent quickly if true.

v. 15 – Paul was always so quick to worship God and give Jesus glory. Paul knew his source of strength, and it was the Lord. **Do you have that same awareness?** I hope you do. Jesus is the King of kings. That means there are other kings but he is the King of them all. Governing authorities are wise to submit to His oversight. Unfortunately, too many governing kings try to circumvent His Kingship instead of submitting to it, as is described in Psalm 2:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill" (Psalm 2:1-6).

When kings do what is described in Psalm 2, the King of kings just laughs, for He knows their efforts are futile.

### **Day Five**

16 who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 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.

v. 16 – God is both imminent and transcendent. He is distant and unknowable by human flesh. He is in need of nothing and knows all. The Muslim faith emphasizes this aspect of God, for they feel He is so distant that He relates to no one. I am glad that isn't all there is to our God. He is also imminent and, by His grace, enables us to know Him

without perishing in the process! Jesus proved the Father's love and desire to be accessible to His creation, for Jesus came in human flesh and lived among us. He still does remain intimate and imminent through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Yet I am glad that the Lord is above my human experience and can rule and reign as sovereign over all beings and creation.

v. 17 – Paul returned to the wealth and money theme by giving Timothy guidelines for wealthy people. Paul's counsel to the rich was that they avoid putting their trust in wealth. Rather they were to put their hope in God. When one trusts in something other than God, then that "thing" becomes an idol and the Bible describes what happens to someone when they worship or rely on an idol:

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouths. *Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them* (Psalm 135:15-18 emphasis added).

Those who have an idol become like that idol. That is why you must worship God, for you resemble what you worship. If you worship God, you will become more like Him! God gives us all things to enjoy but not to trust in. When that happens, the creature worships another created thing and that isn't worship, that's confusion.

So I return to the questions I've asked before: **Do you own your things or do your things own you? Are you relating to God and your things in proper order? Is God number one in your life or has your job, house, money, investments, relationships or reputation supplanted God in the top position?**

### Day Six

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.

vs. 18&19 – The rich have a wonderful opportunity to use their money to lay up a treasure in heaven. This is in line with what Jesus taught:

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12:32-34).

The rich can also "buy" the prayers of those they help. I use the word "buy" thinking about what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. *And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you*, because of the surpassing grace God has given you (2 Corinthians 9:12-15 emphasis).

The rich have a special opportunity to use wealth, which will not last, to store up wealth in heaven, which will last forever. But if you allow wealth to get a hold of you, then the lesson that Jesus taught in one of his parables will apply to you. Don't let that happen!

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:16-21).

I think the lesson of the parable is clear. **Are you building barns on earth to store your stuff or barns in heaven to store your blessings?**

### Day Seven

20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, 21 which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you.

v. 20 – Paul wrapped up his letter with a brief closing. He ordered Timothy to guard what had been entrusted to his care and those were his spiritual gifts, his work and his relationship with Paul and the other believers. **Why do you have to guard what has been given to you by God?** Obviously there is someone trying to steal it! You must work to maintain and increase what God has given you, or else you are in danger of losing it!

He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty (Proverbs 28:19).

Paul further urged Timothy to stay away from things that seemed to be godly but only contributed to useless discussions that added nothing to the ability of people to live godly lives. Paul was such a great theologian, yet he was so practical! He was always connecting what He believed and learned about God to daily living. That's the kind of theologian I want to be—practical, helping people to live their lives in a manner that pleases God. **Will you join me in that effort?** We have enough useless teaching about

when and where Jesus will return for example; that sounds so spiritual but it is useless in helping someone raise their children or do their jobs.

I want my faith to help people live their faith, not in church, but outside the church walls. I want to be an example of how to bring God into daily life, whether in the home, workplace or school. That is why I write these studies and try to make them as practical and easy-to-apply as possible. That is why I try to have a question every day that you can apply to your walk with the Lord.

v. 21 – There must have been more than a few of Paul’s converts and contemporaries who had strayed from the truth to pursue useless topics and philosophies. Paul did not want Timothy to follow in their footsteps, so he adamantly required that Timothy stay focused on what was most important. The same advice applies to you today. I urge you, and I join you, to live godly lives that lead to holy living. Don’t live out your Christianity in your head, but live it out where you live and in your heart. Don’t settle for being a smart Christian who knows lots of doctrine and Bible verses. Be a wise Christian who knows how to take that knowledge and apply it to the challenges of daily life.

As you do, God can and will use you to impact others and you will find yourself more fulfilled and joyful.

With this admonition, Paul closed his letter rather abruptly it seems to me. So we will end this study in the same way.