

Carefully Content (1 Timothy 6:1-10)

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[0 : 00] Hey Church, I'm reading 1 Timothy 6, verses 1-10 from NIV. These are the things you are to teach and insist on.

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing.

They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malice, talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between people of corrupt mind who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a mean to financial gain.

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.

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are trapped and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

[1 : 38] Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. It's the word of God, and I'll pass you to pass a billion. Thanks Daniel.

G'day church. Do keep your Bibles open. And that passage. And have it there for reference, so that everything I'm going to share with you, you can check.

And say, yep, that's exactly, or that lines up with what the word of the Lord says. So I'm the mouthpiece. I'm the one that is just delivering a message. But this is the word of the Lord.

And just apologies in advance. I've been actually at Auckland Hospital most of this past week. I really appreciate those of you who have prayed for me and Cheryl and our family.

We've been walking alongside some family members with some pretty major health issues. A brain bleed is no fun in games. And apologies in advance that all the illustrations in the sermon are medical related.

[2 : 45] So, yeah. Any doctors in the house? Yeah. All right. You'll be tracking with me, right, Janie? Okay. All right. We'll see. But look, spend enough time at a hospital. Who's actually been to a hospital?

Yep. Okay. Who hasn't and has never stepped foot in a hospital? Yeah. I walk in the hospital. I felt like singing on Beauty and the Beast, like, little town.

It's a quiet village. It's not a quiet village. So many people there, right? Doctors, nurse, all kinds of staff members. Yeah. And you spend enough time there and you just meet some amazing, gifted, very brainy, servant-hearted men and women, right?

These are frontline workers, right? If there was a nuclear explosion, the hospital would still keep going, right? It has to keep going. Frontline workers who make life and death decisions.

And in one sense, actually, many of them embodying the love of Jesus Christ. Did you know the first hospitals were founded by Christians? Yeah. In the medieval times. And now we compared our lives to these really brilliant doctors and nurses and so on.

[3 : 51] And most of us, we don't feel like frontline workers, do we? Right? We're just studying for exams or just finished. We're just answering emails at work. I'm just checking out for my kids from time to time, making sure they're fed and looked after.

And yet you are actually a frontline worker. Because every Christian is on the frontline, in a sense. When it comes to whether the name of Jesus is mocked or praised by the watching world.

You and I, we are frontline workers. We are front row examples to our friends, our families, for the gospel, the good news of Jesus. As we've been hearing from this letter, how we work, how we act, matters a great deal.

It doesn't save us, doesn't make us, get us into heaven, but it sure does show people whether heaven is worth getting into. Right? Just like a terrible doctor, and there are rogue doctors around, just like a terrible doctor would just tarnish the reputation of the entire medical profession, in a sense.

A lazy Christian, a violent believer, an ungodly member of God's household, dishonors the name of Christ and the church he died for.

[5 : 09] Cool. The Apostle Paul knew this, didn't he? We've been hearing this over and over again. He's been mentoring in this letter. He's been advising Timothy, young Timothy, how one ought to behave in the household of God.

Do you remember that verse, chapter 3, verse 15? It's kind of like the purpose phrase of this whole letter. How should one behave in the household of God, the church of the living God?

And Paul lays out lots of advice, right? Practical advice. We've heard lots of it, especially in chapter 5. How do we honor the older women, the worthy widows amongst the church family?

How do we honor elders who lead and serve beautifully? And how do we respond when they don't?

How can Timothy himself, as a very busy ministry worker, how can he discern, how can he make godly decisions when there's limited resources, when there's opposition around him, when there's difficult choices to make, when there's even personal health issues for himself?

Advice from, you know, gospel workers, one to another. There's no area, it seems, that's off limits when it comes to how God can transform our lives by his Holy Spirit.

[6 : 28] And as we enter into chapter 6, last chapter of this letter, it begins with a little bit more of Paul's encouragement to frontline Christians. And so I've just divided up the passage into four main themes.

And so we're just going to look at them as usual, we look at them in turn, and see what God has to say to us. So the first two verses, Paul just addresses directly to the slaves of Christ, right?

He says they're all who are under the yoke of slavery. He's referring to a specific group of people.

But notice what he says, they should consider their masters worthy of full respect.

Literally, you could also translate that, worthy of all honor. There's that word again. We heard about this word, honor, last week.

I hope you kept your honor-shame glasses from last week that we talked about. Because again, Paul is writing with this kind of worldview in mind. Whether your boss is a Christian, or perhaps not, verse 1, they're worthy of honor, worthy of respect.

[7 : 35] There's a double meaning to the word honor here, of course, right? The original word, it could also have a financial meaning behind it. And we've kind of seen this, right? When Paul says honor widows who busy themselves with good works, it means actually supporting them financially as well, right?

Making sure they're looked after. And when we honor elders who labor in preaching and teaching, it's not just a pat on the back, it's making sure they can be freed up, resource-wise, financially, to do exactly that.

And now Paul says the boss at work, your boss at work, is to benefit if they've employed a Christian who works for them. I think that's the logic, the principle that we can draw out of this, right?

Because, of course, none of us are slaves, you know, in the same way as in the first century there were slaves. Slavery was a commonplace practice, right?

In that age. It's slightly different, what Paul's talking about here, to the forced slavery in the 19th century, where people were treated literally as property.

[8 : 39] That was a horrible evil, still is, wherever in the world it's practiced today. It's a horrible evil that Paul doesn't quite have in mind when he wrote this.

In his day and age, sometimes you could choose to be a slave. Often you weren't, right? You were captured by an army, and then, you know, taken away, cut away, and then you became a slave.

But you could actually win your freedom, you could actually buy your way out of slavery. So, slightly different picture there. But the underlying principle, here in 1 to 2, verse 1 to 2, remains, right?

If the Lord has set you free, in a spiritual sense, you now serve a new master, whether or not you're a slave in real life.

And that means, right, if you've been freed by Jesus in this way, how you treat your earthly masters, or your managers, or your bosses, or your teachers, any human authority, how you treat them should now be shaped by how Jesus has treated you, how he's freed you.

[9 : 45] Do you get the logic? The gospel transforms how we view our relationships, human relationships, all of them. How we view authority in our midst.

Because perhaps some of the Christians in Ephesus, maybe they were forced to serve masters who were mean to them, who mistreated them. Certainly, many of them would have been forced to work or slave for masters who did not share their faith.

They worshipped idols, right? Idols like Artemis. Maybe they were beaten, mistreated, persecuted. And so these slaves, right, literally and in Christ, they could choose to fight back.

Maybe they could run away. They could rebel. And yet Paul says in their context, honor your masters. Why? What does it say? So that the name of God and the teaching may not be slandered. Again, Paul is pointing out this principle, right? Being Christian isn't just about coming to church. How you live, your godliness in your workplace, in the society around you is so important.

[10 : 56] It's not just the proper response to the truth about Jesus. It's also a way to promote the truth about Jesus, right? But let's think about another way, right?

Let's say your boss, your teacher, your ministry leader, is a fellow believer, a Christian. What can happen there is that, oh, we're both in the Lord, right? And so maybe there's an opposite temptation there.

Maybe in this kind of situation, you might go, oh, yeah, we're just family in Christ. So maybe you can just slack off a bit, right? They're just family. They're brothers and sisters in Christ.

So we're all one in Jesus. So maybe it's okay if I show up late to a service or I'll just text an excuse 10 minutes before I'm meant to meet someone at church.

Surely they'll understand. Paul says, actually, verse 2, No, that's kind of disrespectful too, right? If you serve in a Christian team, he says you ought to serve all the more faithfully and diligently because the people who are blessed by what you do or don't do, right, they're family in Christ.

[12 : 12] This is frontline ministry advice here, right? How you and I honor teachers, lecturers, managers, whoever is above you in the organization chart.

For Jesus' sake, let's not cut corners at work or slack off in class. Rather, let's see what we do all through the week as an act of worship, as faithful service for God's glory.

That impacts on how people will see the good news of Jesus, right? When they see you truly live out the love of Christ, right, working hard for his glory, that makes a difference.

That makes people curious, wanting to know what's in it for you when you do it this way. On the flip side, a slack attitude to work, whatever it is, or a lack of love in our church relationships, that just poisons the progress of the gospel, doesn't it?

Godly living before our friends, our family, our co-workers honors them, right, with the work that we do for them, and it lifts the truth of Jesus Christ for everyone to see how brilliant, how beautiful, how worthwhile it is.

[13 : 33] And so to slaves in Christ, whether literally or spiritually, Paul says to Timothy, teach and urge these things. All right, next, verse 3 to 5, let's consider one of three different issues that Paul wants to give advice about.

Firstly, there's the sickness of constant arguments and more. As I mentioned, I've been surrounded by a lot of sickness this past week. Don't worry, I wore a mask all the time at Auckland Hospital, so whatever superbugs are there, hopefully stayed there.

I mean, I was there, and by the end of the week, I was starting a photo collection of all the different wards I'd visited. But Paul and Timothy, spare a thought for them.

They were surrounded by all kinds of sickness too. But as we have heard, they were surrounded by spiritual disease. And I wonder if you notice, when Daniel read that passage so well, the language of health and hygiene, actually, here in verse 3 and 4.

Right? Unhealthy interest. Do you see that? Do you see that, actually, puffed up in one of my translations, with conceit?

[14 : 49] Right? This is Paul and Timothy reflecting, right, on how they were pressured by false teachers. You want to imagine them, right? Puffed up with conceit.

Almost like, you know, they were so proud that you could see it and how bloated their belly was. They were fuzzy thinkers, right? It's almost like they had a concussion, and all they can think of is how to do harm to God's people.

Didn't even know how to understand the message of Jesus. And yet, just all the time, craving unhealthily after arguments and fights and quarrels about words.

It's almost like as if they were possessed or they had some kind of disease. They were pretending to be some kind of animal pointlessly chasing themselves. That's the kind of picture that we've got here. Paul is surrounded by blind guides who are causing envy, dissension, abusive speech, it says, and evil suspicions among God's people.

Does that describe your life? I hope not. Does that describe the life of someone you know? Perhaps. Or worse.

[16:03] Is this kind of description, this sickness, something you see often in our church family? We need to be honest with ourselves.

If we are seeing constant friction in a church family, that's a warning sign of a serious spiritual problem.

A disease, as it were, a pandemic even. Right? People who are depraved in mind, deprived of the truth. If all you can be surrounded by, if you're surrounded by fights all the time at church, maybe the deeper issue is not what they're arguing about.

Maybe that there's some people who are just malnourished of the truth about Jesus. That's what Paul says, right? These are God's words, not mine. Paul is taking aim here, of course, in this context, at particular false teachers in Ephesus and their behavior.

And yet, even Christians in church are not immune from forgetting the gospel and starting to get into this kind of quarrelsome behavior and thinking.

[17:18] We could all, apart from God's grace, be acting the same way as this. If you and I want to be a truly healthy people spiritually, the Bible says here we need the teaching right?

Godly teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. You see that? The sound instruction, sound, you could translate that, healthy instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the medicine that we need day in, day out is the gospel.

And you might think, it's not that simple, surely, William. But please remember, every false teaching, whatever it is, it starts with a false belief about who God is and what he's done.

Every heresy out there, every cult out there, every false teacher out there has twisted something about what they believe about God. Every ungodly act, whether it's sexual immorality, financial mismanagement, whatever else, arguing, fights in the church lobby, hopefully not ever, but any of these acts, they stem from untrue thoughts about Jesus.

Don't they? So if an apple a day keeps the doctor away, as they say, then you and I need to daily prescribe the gospel to ourselves every day.

[18:44] Remember how Paul did it, right? Chapter one, what did he say? I'm the worst sinner I know, and Jesus Christ is the best savior I have. Do you believe this?

Then rinse and repeat. Tell that to yourself. Apply it liberally to every area of your life so that the grace of God is what drives you, flows out of you into your living.

Don't wait till you are in a spiritual crisis to take this kind of gospel preventative medicine, okay? You want to be taking and accepting the healing words of Jesus every day for yourself.

What does he say? He says in his word, my grace is sufficient for you. Believe that and then go live it. As men and women who belong to Jesus Christ, let us treat the sickness of constant arguments, fights of all kinds, dissension, envy, all that stuff and more with his gospel truth.

There is no plan B. God has always wanted us to go back to Jesus. But Paul also then says, verses 6 to 8, he also tells us about the secret of contented living and more.

[20:09] Verses 6 to 8, sorry, the slide isn't quite right. Verse 5, right, ends with a reference to a specific fact about the false teachers. Have a look at the end of verse 5.

Constant friction between men of corrupt mind. They've been robbed of the truth and they think that godliness is a means to financial gain. So that's a little bit of a reference to what the particular problem there was in Ephesus.

There seemed to be kinds of people who were preaching for profit in a sense. Kind of like how in Acts chapter 20 something, I think it's 21, there were some people who were silversmiths.

They would make idols and sell lots of them for lots of money. They'd get a lot of profit out of it. And then when Paul was in Ephesus, he told people about Jesus and then they got really angry because they were losing their business.

In a lot of places in the world, religion makes big bucks, big profit. The people who sell tickets to Mecca, airline tickets to Mecca, make a lot of money. And Paul says this kind of mindset can creep into the church as well.

[21 : 17] And as Paul says this here in verse 5, then he immediately, verse 6, wants to talk about the true tremendous gain that can be gotten. Do you see that?

He says here, some people think that godliness is a means to financial gain. And then verse 6, but godliness with contentment is great gain.

In other words, Paul is saying, look, there is so much gain in living for Jesus, honoring Him, obeying Him, but it's not necessarily financial rewards in this life.

As far as Paul's concerned, those kinds of gains are not that relevant. His secret formula, godliness plus contentment, gives great gain. This is an important principle from the Bible, from God's heart Himself.

Writing to the church in Philippi, in the book of Philippians, Paul actually applies this formula, godliness plus contentment, great gain. He applies it to himself. Listen to him speak.

[22 : 21] Philippians 4, 11 to 13, he says, not that I'm speaking of being in need, for I've learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound in any and every circumstance.

I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance, and need. I can do all things, i.e. be content, through Him who strengthens me.

For every super athlete who puts Philippians 4, 13 on their shoe or their, you know, their, I don't know, sunglasses, whatever, they're talking about contentment. Paul's talking about contentment.

As I was walking around, you know, the ground floor of Auckland Hospital, hospitals have changed over the years. It's kind of like a little mall, if you've ever been, right?

Because when you're in hospital, you've got to wait a long time. You might get hungry, you might have to quickly buy a present, some flowers, there's even a post box, right? That's quite a village.

[23 : 25] And so, I think what I noticed was that there are two kinds of needs these retailers cater for. All right? There are the kinds of people who rush around the hospital going, I need, I need to fill my medical prescription.

So there's a pharmacy right there, okay? And then there's other kinds of people who say, I need, I need, I really need a coffee right now. How do you use the word need?

The first way or the second way? Paul tells us the contented follower of Christ uses the word I need the first way. And for everything else, she or he will take an attitude of contentment.

I want that, but I'm okay. It'd be nice to have that, but I don't need it. That's the attitude that Paul is teaching here for us when it comes to being rich or poor in relation to those around us.

And how is this attitude even possible when we are surrounded by messages saying, buy me, buy me, buy me? By taking the long view. By having a perspective that is not just about the here and now, this life, right?

[24 : 38] What does Paul say in verse 7? He gives us the long view. We brought nothing in the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.

Think about what Job in the Bible said. Very similar. Anyone heard about the guy Job in the Bible? A couple of years ago, we went through this whole book in a couple of sermons, so you can look that up on our website if you want.

Job, nice guy, really righteous, godly, lost everything he had. Everything he owned was torn away from him in a single day.

And yet, initially, his faith and trust in God was so secure that he could say, naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I would depart. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, God. That's the attitude, the mindset of contentment. It's not easy to have. Job himself struggled to have the same view his whole time.

[25 : 50] We need to remind ourselves this. We need, actually need, food, clothing, sustenance and shelter. Everything else that shows up in our bank statement is just extra, frankly, isn't it?

And so because of this, if you ever hear a preacher, or teacher, or YouTuber try to convince you that God wants you to have your best life now, or that if you do this, you will be able to manifest something else in your life, if you pay me, I can guarantee this, please run away.

Please don't be scammed. Instead, you and I, we are called to foster, grow a heart that is so satisfied in the Lord Jesus, that you don't need, need to try that \$120 seafood buffet, or else feel like you're missing out.

You don't need to line up for that limited edition collectible. You have to leave it behind anyways, right, when you meet Jesus again. Can you bring it with you? I don't think so.

As a missionary, Jim Elliot, put it, he is no fool who gives, who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. Sorry, I munched up that quote.

[27 : 09] He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. Do you believe that? Or as the Lord Jesus himself put it, do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, where thieves can break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moths and vermin cannot destroy, where thieves don't break in and steal, but where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The Bible is full of warnings of the danger, the deceit, of pursuing godliness just to get something from God, rather than to glorify God whatever our life circumstances.

promises. How many of us have met good Christian actors and actresses, you know, for a couple of years, on fire for the Lord? Later on, it just turns out they were looking for benefits from within the church, who among us have worshipped passionately alongside these people during good times, but unfortunately they disappear during the hard times.

Don't get me wrong, church, please understand, being content isn't just so-and-so's problem, or that church over there's issue. Remember, Paul's personally addressing Timothy here, a leader, a church leader.

So even capable leaders struggle with being godly for the right reasons. As my former classmates share what they're up to these days, their winning stories, I struggle too.

[28 : 58] It's hard for me. Caught up with my classmate from high school the other day. Owns three or four stores, you know, selling lots of things. Said that his classmate, you know, gets to go to an auction, you know, and says, I'll buy that house.

Here I am thinking, have I missed out? Do I need what they've got? What's their secret? The contentment trap gets me to. We're in the same boat.

But Paul says to me and to you, to us, no. Godliness won't always give you riches in this life, but it does give you great gain when you are content in Jesus.

Right? As you trust the Father as a good Father who lavishes to you every spiritual blessing, through Christ, you're already a billionaire.

here. And even yes, even when he hasn't given you what you want, he's lavished you with everything you need. So church, can I encourage you, learn from Paul the secret formula, the gain that is greater than flipping houses or winning the lottery.

[30 : 12] Godliness plus contentment, just as our Lord Jesus taught us, is great gain. But finally, where contentment and godliness will lead to great gain, verses 9 to 10, swing us back, as Paul points out, the snare of craving wealth and more.

Listen to verse 9 and 10 again. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves of many griefs.

Please notice a couple of things here in the verse in front of you in your Bibles. Firstly, Paul makes reference to those wanting to be rich. In other words, they're wannabe billionaires, right?

And that's all of us at some level. These are people who aren't actually financially wealthy. They wish they were. And so any of us can fit this description, right? Any of us can be like that animal trapped in a trap but then tangled up but still wanting to urge themselves out, damaging themselves more and more.

[31 : 30] Any of us can be like this description, constantly craving comfort, security, financial success. And this cannot be all of us because money is a wonderful gift from God.

God. But money, right, and what it buys us can be a terrible God and master. Like bait dangling on a fish hook, the idea of being rich, comfortable, it's so inviting, isn't it?

And yet once you nibble at this line, once you bite at the bait, you're hooked and you can't escape. It just makes you want more and more and more. You start taking foolish risks.

you start gambling God's gifts away and foolish and harmful pursuits. You can be a millionaire one moment and have lost it all. Next, running headlong into utter failure and destruction.

Now once I was trying to counsel someone, he'd shared how he'd worked hard enough. Why? So that he could just pay for anything he wanted and do whatever he wanted.

[32 : 34] And yet he couldn't buy a good relationship with his family that he really wished for. His family barely recognized him.

Yes, he might have had worldly material success, but was he happy? I don't know. Notice 2, verse 10, have a look again. It's actually not money itself that's evil, right?

We don't want to go down the other trap. Some people who were in the early church, they said, well, money's so bad, let's just avoid it, right? Sold everything and went and hid in the desert and lived a very, very austere life.

That might have been good for them, but that's not the real issue here. Verse 10, what does it say? For the love of money. It's the love of money that breeds all kinds of trouble and evil.

It's the heart posture towards it. Where does this kind of senseless lust for more lead to? Paul plainly says, right, some will even wander from the faith because none of us can worship two gods.

[33 : 41] You can't love both God and money, right? You can't bow down at both altars. And then there's others, Paul says, that pierce themselves with sorrows and struggles.

If you talk to someone who has a 10-house portfolio, they're not more relaxed. They're trying to work out how they can keep this portfolio and grow it, right? In the same way.

Think of the pain, for example, you'd experience. Anyone have an ear piercing? Right? Okay. Tattoo? Yeah? Right? It wasn't pain-free, okay?

There's a lot of pinning, right? Imagine permanently affixing grief after grief to yourself, piercing yourself with regret after regret, right?

Riddling yourself with grief after grief. That's what Paul is describing here. When you love money, that's what it does to you. Getting a body blow after body blow. Just being tortured and tortured and tortured by wanting more and more and more.

[34 : 43] That's the danger of this road. And this love of money, let's be honest, right? It's a particular blind spot amongst some cultures. Why is there a movie out there called Crazy Rich Asians?

Right? There is a blind spot amongst some people. So let God's word diagnose your heart tonight. Are you always chasing the next pay rise?

Are you always hanging out for the sweetest deal online? Are you longing for the next purchase that you can make? Please don't be scammed. Look at Jesus again.

The Bible tells us though he was rich, he became poor for us, right? 2 Corinthians 8 verse 9. One of my favorite verses. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, emptied himself, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Far beyond your wildest dreams, right? This is God's grace, his infinite love and mercy poured out into your balance, as it were. All our sin erased, debt cleared.

[35 : 54] all his grace enters our account. What good news for every frontline worker, isn't it? What amazing grace, far more valuable compared to anything you guys can buy on this earth.

Can you see this? The only cure for our craving for more stuff is more Jesus. Let me say it again.

The only cure for your craving, my craving for more stuff, is more Jesus.

So can I encourage you, at the very end of all this, turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face.

And when you do, the Bible tells us the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of his glorious grace.

Let's pray. Give yourselves a moment as we, as the band comes up to reflect.

[37 : 07] To think of ways that you've not been content. to ask yourselves what you truly love in this life.

Is it something that you can buy one day but lose before you die? Are you clinging on to a hope that seems purchase possible, that seems attainable here and now and yet is hurting you, the people around you, as you try to keep getting it?

Listen to the pulse that's beating in you right now. What does it say? More, more, more.

could it say, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Our spirit, confront us again and again through your word.

Do what you do so well as you speak to us. Turn our eyes to Jesus. ask in His precious name.

[38 : 44] Amen.