

## Introduction

We are in the midst of a study of the book of 1 Timothy. The Apostle Paul wrote an urgent letter to Timothy to get the church back in order. In chapter three Paul writes his purpose for the letter, so that people would know how to conduct themselves in the household of God, the church. There were six main areas that Paul addressed, which I entitled, Six Characteristics of a Healthy Church.

(1 Tim 3:14-15) "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; {15} but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."

## Six Characteristics of a Healthy Church

September 9, 2012    Healthy Church # 1: Sound Doctrine  
September 16, 2012    Healthy Church # 2: Prayer (1 Tim 2)  
September 23, 2012    Healthy Church # 3: Order Part 1 (Elders, 1 Tim 3:1-7)  
September 30, 2012    Healthy Church # 3: Order Part 2 Service (Deacons, 1 Tim 3:8-12)  
October 14, 2012    Healthy Church # 4: Godliness  
October 21, 2012    Healthy Church # 5: Honor (1 Tim 5-6)  
**October 28, 2012    Health Church # 6: Focus on God**

We have looked at the importance of Sound Doctrine. Sound Doctrine leads to godly living. Next, we looked at Prayer. Prayer is part of our communication with God. We are called to have relationship with God, and without communication, there is no relationship. Prayer is vital to our individual lives and also our corporate lives.

Third, we looked at order in the church. God is a God of order and He wants His house to be in order. Part of order is having the proper leadership in the church. We looked at both elders and deacons in chapter three.

Fourth, Tony Vaughn shared on "Good Religion" or godliness. Godliness is another theme that runs throughout the book of 1 Timothy. Our doctrine, our prayers, our relationships, our leadership, our confessions and songs should all direct us to or reflect godliness.

Last week, we looked at the fifth characteristic of healthy churches, honor. We saw that the primary place that we learn to relate to one another is in the home. We are to always honor one another. Children are to honor their parents. Brothers and sisters are to honor one another. We are to honor the aged. We are to honor widows. We are to honor pastors. Husbands are to honor wives. Wives are to honor husbands. Servants are to honor masters. All of us are to honor kings and those in authority. Honor is a form of love and this should characterize every relationship that we have.

This morning we are going to look at the sixth and final characteristic of healthy churches, a focus on God. Verse three begins a review of some of the main points of the book. It is also a transition into Paul's next thoughts. He reviews Sound Doctrine and Godliness. He says that if anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing. Earlier, Paul spoke about the wrong use of the law, myths, genealogies, marriage, and the abstinence of certain foods. Now, he brings up the false teachings regarding wealth.

## Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 6: Focus on God

In chapter six, Paul's overall theme is that we must fix our eyes on God, and not on the uncertainty of wealth. In the first section, he addresses the pursuit of money. In the middle section of the chapter, he gives Timothy some strong exhortations to protect him from the snares of focusing on wealth. In the last section, he address those who have already obtained wealth. He tells Timothy to instruct them not to fix their eyes on wealth. This morning, we are going to focus on the main thought of the whole chapter, that we must have the proper focus in our lives. We will look at the following three points: the problems with a wrong focus, the cures for the wrong focus, and the right focus.

1. The problems with a wrong focus.
2. The cures for a wrong focus.
3. The right focus.

### **1. The problems with a wrong focus.**

As we take a look at having the right focus, I want to tell you a story about preparing for golf tournaments. The great players focus their schedule around preparing for major championships. The tournaments that they play in help them prepare for the majors. They want to get tournament sharp so that they peak out during the majors. They play the right amount of weeks and the types of courses that they feel will help them prepare properly. They are not focused on the week at hand, but at preparing for a future event.

I had some success in qualifying for the PGA Tour. The majority of aspiring professionals never make it to the PGA Tour. I employed the same philosophy as the great players. I geared my preparation around the finals of the PGA Qualifying School. For example, in the fall of 1979, the finals of the PGA Tour Qualifying Tournament were to be held at Waterwood National Golf Course in Huntsville, Texas. I had played the course in college and did not like it at all. I knew the greens were firm and that higher trajectory shots would be more effective at that course. Therefore, rather than schedule my regional qualifier in Corpus Cristi, Texas, which would have been the best logistical plan, I chose to go to San Diego, California. The type of golf shots needed to do well at Torrey Pines Golf Course in San Diego would be better preparation for the finals at Waterwood National. If I had gone to Corpus Cristi, where it is very windy, low trajectory shots would work better. My goal was to prepare for successfully qualifying at the finals. Even though I did not like Waterwood National, I successfully qualified and regained my PGA Tour Card.

In many ways, life is similar to preparing for the majors or preparing for the PGA Tour Qualifying School. The life we now live should be preparing us for the future. Sometimes, we find ourselves focusing on temporal wealth rather than preparing for eternity. This was a problem in the early church, just as it is today. Therefore, Paul devotes a whole chapter to dealing with having the right perspective or focus on the use of wealth. He wants us to focus on preparing for the finals.

Paul uses the introduction as a way of tying together the purpose of sound doctrine – godly behavior, and introducing his new topic, the handling of wealth. He says that “if anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing.” Our doctrine must agree with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. We find Jesus’ teachings primarily contained in the four gospels. Many editions have his words in red, to help us quickly identify his words. But, the rest of the New Testament contains teachings that were based on Jesus’ teachings.

## Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 6: Focus on God

(1 Timothy 6:3-4a) "If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, {4} he is conceited and understands nothing;"

Paul also tells us that these false teachings do not line up with helping us conform to godliness. **One of the main purposes of sound doctrine is to conform us to godliness.** In Romans, Paul tells us not to be conformed to the world, but to be renewed our minds so that we can prove what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable, and pure. You and I are to be conformed to godliness, not worldliness. These false teachers are wrapped up in worldly teachings. God is more concerned about our character than our comfort. These false teachers are more concerned with our abundant living today than our character being conformed to godliness.

(Rom 12:2) "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

In 1 Corinthians 11, we have a good example of this. In giving instructions about taking the Lord's Supper, Paul tells us to examine ourselves before eating the bread and drinking the cup. He said that when we eat and drink, we eat and drink judgment. Then, he adds, "for this reason, many among you are weak and sick, a number sleep." He said if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. If we do not judge ourselves rightly, then we are judged and disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world. God disciplines us so that we will be conformed to godliness. God disciplines His children to help conform us to godliness. **God is more concerned about our character than our temporary discomfort.**

(1 Cor 11:27-32) "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. {28} But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. {29} For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. {30} For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. {31} But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. {32} But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Notice what Hebrews 12 tells us about discipline. God "disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful." We may experience some temporary discomfort when disciplined. However, notice the result. "It yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." Some of those teaching strange doctrines are more concerned about the temporal things than being conformed to godliness.

(Heb 12:10-11) "For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. {11} All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

**Paul says that these teachers are conceited or proud.** The Greek word is tuphoo, which means to envelop with smoke, to inflate with self-conceit, to be high minded, or to be lifted up with pride. Just as smoke rises, so these teachers have been lifted up with pride. Paul also says that these

teachers understand nothing. This is a repeat of what he said in chapter one, that they do not understand what they are making confident assertions about.

G5187. tuphoo, toof-o'-o; from a der. of G5188; to envelop with smoke, i.e. (fig.) to inflate with self-conceit:--high-minded, be lifted up with pride, be proud.

Next, Paul says that they false teachers have a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words. Someone who continually wants to focus on controversial issues and disputes about words is going to live in strife. God wants us to live peaceful and tranquil lives, not lives full of strife. We are to focus on things that help conform us to godliness, not things that really do not help us grow in our faith. In addition to strife, there is abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction. The fruit of these false teachers is not good.

(1 Tim 6:4b-6) "but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, {5} and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. {6} But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment."

**These false teachers thought that godliness was a means of gain.** There are many prosperity preachers that promise great gain from their Christianity. He states that these men are depraved of mind and deprived of truth. Paul concludes that godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. He says that "we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

In Randy Alcorn's book, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (page 57), he says "you will never see a hearse pulling a U-Haul." This is just another way of saying the same thing that Paul said. "We cannot take anything out of it." When John D. Rockefeller died, someone asked his accountant how much he had left. His accountant's reply was classic, "He left all of it." We cannot take it with us.

(1 Tim 6:7-8) "For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. {8} And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

**The first problem with a wrong focus on wealth is that it does not conform us to godliness.** The second problem is that it leads to strife and controversy. The third problem is that it sows discontent. Finally, he says that those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

(1 Tim 6:9) "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction."

Paul tells us not to fix our eyes on the uncertainty of riches. He may have been inspired by Solomon, who told us not to weary ourselves to gain wealth, for when we set our eyes on it, it is gone. He says that wealth certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens. We cannot focus on wealth because it is here and then it is gone. If our focus is on the wealth, we are going to be greatly disappointed. Therefore, Solomon tells us to cease from our consideration of it.

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(Pro 23:4-5) "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration of it. {5} When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings, Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens."

Solomon also writes in Proverbs 28:20-22 that a faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished. He says that a man with an evil eye hastens after wealth. A greedy man has his eyes on the wealth and goes after it. Because his focus is on the wealth, he is willing to make compromises to obtain that wealth. Notice that he writes that for a piece of bread a man will transgress. If your focus is wrong, we open ourselves up to much evil.

(Pro 28:20-22) "A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished. {21} To show partiality is not good, Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress. {22} A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth, And does not know that want will come upon him."

Let's go back to 1 Timothy and see what else Paul has said about our focus. He says that those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. **A wrong focus can lead to temptations and snares.** He says that the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. By having their focus on money, by longing for it, some have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with a pang. The fruit and consequences of focusing on wealth can be devastating.

(1 Tim 6:9-10) "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. {10} For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang."

A few months ago we did a series on finances. In the Introduction to investments I taught on having a proper perspective on wealth. I used the example of Balaam. He set his eyes on the hope of getting a diviner's fee and it plunged him into temptation. Had it not been for his donkey, whose spiritual vision was 20-20, the angel of the Lord would have killed Balaam. Peter devotes a whole chapter to false teachers and false prophets. His teachings line up with Paul's teachings. The false teachers have a wrong focus on wealth. Peter says that they are greedy and exploit people with false words. He says they have a heart trained in greed. Then, he uses the example of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. The wrong focus on obtaining wealth led him astray.

(2 Pet 2:1-16) "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. {2} And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; {3} and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.... {14} having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; {15} forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, {16} but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."

Paul goes on to say that **the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil**. This is often misquoted. God did not say that money is a root of all sorts of evil. He said that the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. We all use money everyday. We exchange money for lights and electricity. We exchange money for groceries to eat. We exchange money for transportation and fuel. Money is a necessary tool in society. Money can be used for evil purposes and it can be used for good purposes. Money, by itself, is neither good or bad. But, the love of money is an evil thing. The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil.

(1 Tim 6:10) "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang."

Paul goes on to say that some, by longing for it, have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. A wrong focus on pursuing wealth has caused many to wander from the faith. A wrong desire for wealth has caused many to be pierced with a pang or sorrows.

## **2. The cures for a wrong focus.**

Paul gives a number of cures for having the wrong focus. We will look at five specific cures to help us avoid the snares, temptations, and problems associated with having a wrong focus.

### **A. Contentment.**

**The first cure for a wrong focus is learning to be content.** Paul tells us to be content with food and covering. I do not believe that food and covering is an end-all list. He is telling us to be content with the necessities in life. In some cities, cars are not necessary. You can take public transportation and get around just fine. Many people in New York City do not have cars. There are many cities in the world where people do not have cars. In many other places, having a car is a necessity. It is okay to pray for a car. Saving up money for a car is not a bad thing; it can be a necessity in your life.

(1 Tim 6:8) "And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

We need to develop an attitude of contentment. I believe that an attitude of gratitude helps us be content. Learn to give thanks to God in everything. Learn to thank other people for the things that they do for you and for others. Learning to be appreciative and grateful helps us to be content.

The Scriptures tell us to be sober minded. Earlier, Paul said that these false teachers are conceited. The Greek word was typhoo, which means to go up in smoke. God wants our minds to be sober, not puffed up, or raised up like smoke. We are planning a missions trip in the fall of 2013 to the Philippines. One of the greatest benefits from missions trips is that those that go on them become sober minded. They have a new appreciation for material provision. They recognize how much we have, and what is really needed in life. There is a greater contentment when they come back.

Another way to grow in contentment is to fast. When we voluntarily deny ourselves or humble ourselves by abstaining from food, we become more sober-minded. It is a natural way of putting aside the focus on our temporal desires in order to focus more on the eternal things. It is a great way to carry out what Paul tells us to do in Colossians 3:2, to set our minds on things above, and not on things that are on the earth.

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(Col 3:2) "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

### **B. Flee (vs 11):**

**The second cure that Paul gives is to flee.** He tells Timothy to flee from these things. These things includes the storing up of treasures on earth, the desire for money, and the pursuit of money. Whereas the false teachers were pursuing or running towards wealth, Paul tells Timothy to run away from the pursuit of wealth. Many times we live like we drive. If the speed limit is 65, we drive like the minimum speed is 65. We drive 65 to 75. We try and get as close to the limit as possible. We do not do everything possible to avoid going over the speed limit; we hug the line, making sure we do not go one mph under the legal limit.

(1 Tim 6:11) "But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness."

There are several instances in Scripture that we are told to flee from something. When it comes to relationships with the opposite sex, we know that it is wrong to have sex outside of marriage. The Bible calls sex between two unmarried people as fornication. Sex between someone who is married and someone else is called adultery. Both fornication and adultery are examples of immorality. In our culture, many treat immorality like the speed limit. We try to be as affectionate as possible without crossing the line. We want to have all the fun that we can legally have. Unfortunately, when our passions are stirred, we give in to the temptations. That is why Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:18 to flee immorality. We are not supposed to get as close to the line as possible; we are to flee immorality.

(1 Cor 6:18) "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."

That is what Joseph did with Potiphar's wife. She grabbed Joseph and told him to lie with her. Instead, he fled, and went outside. He fled immorality. Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife held on to his jacket and then accused him of trying to take advantage of her. God was in control and had other plans for Joseph. His jail time ended up as the way God would introduce him to people in the Pharaoh's administration. God works all things together for good in our lives.

(Gen 39:12) "And she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside."

In the same way that sexual passions can overwhelm us, the desire and pursuit of wealth can overwhelm us. That is why Paul tells Timothy to flee from it. Before you get emotionally attached and caught up in the pursuit of it, flee from it. Run or flee the opposite direction.

### **C. Follow (vs 11).**

**The third cure is to follow or pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.** Instead of pursuing wealth, we are to flee from the pursuit. What do we pursue then? We are to pursue or follow after six things: righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. There are six things that Paul tells Timothy to follow after.

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(1 Tim 6:11) "But flee from these things, you man of God; and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness."

The Greek word used for pursue is dioko, which means to pursue, follow or press forward. The root word is dio, which means to flee. Paul told Timothy to flee or run away from a pursuit of wealth, and to run or pursue after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. Normally, we pursue what we have our heart set on. If we have our heart set on wealth, we will pursue wealth. In verse seventeen, Paul tells Timothy to instruct the rich not to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God. Our focus, our sights, our hearts must be fixed on God. Therefore, I named it Proper Focus, so that we would focus on the right things. That is what Paul is telling Timothy. He wants him to focus on righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

G1377. dioko, dee-o'-ko; a prol. (and caus.) form of a prim. verb dio (to flee; comp. the base of G1169 and G1249); to pursue (lit. or fig.); by impl. to persecute:--ensue, follow (after), given to, (suffer) persecute (-ion), press toward.

**Following after righteousness is doing what is right to do.** That does not mean what is right in our own eyes, but doing what is right in God's eyes. Solomon tells us several times that our ways are right in our own eyes. We must run things through the filter of God's word.

(Pro 21:2) "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts."

We can also run things through the filter of our brothers and sisters. Solomon also told us that a wise man is he who listens to counsel. We may think something is okay in our eyes, but we need to listen and heed the counsel of wise men and women. We all have blind spots and our brothers and sisters can help us see more clearly.

(Pro 12:15) "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel."

James tells us that if we know the right thing to do and we do not do it, it is sin. Following after righteousness means that we are seeking to find out what the right thing to do, and then doing it.

(James 4:17) "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."

The second area Timothy was to pursue was godliness. I think that many people think that godliness just happens. Positionally, when we receive Christ, it does happen. Practically, **following after godliness is a process.** It is a transformation of our hearts and minds. We have a part to play. We must submit our lives to the Potter. We are the clay and He is the Potter. We must place our lives on the Potter's wheel and let him mold or shape us on the inside and the outside. (See Jeremiah 18 for the Potter making a vessel on His wheel.)

(Isaiah 64:8) "But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father, We are the clay, and Thou our potter; And all of us are the work of Thy hand."



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We must renew our minds. We must fill our minds with the word of God. We must read the word. We must meditate on the word. Memorizing the word helps us to meditate on the word. We must study the word. And, we must apply the word of God in our lives. James tells us to put aside all filthiness, or to repent, and to humbly receive the word. He tells us not to be hearers who delude themselves. We must look intently at the word and become doers of the word. We have a part to play in the pursuit of godliness. We have a part to play in following after righteousness and godliness.

(James 1:21-25) "Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. {22} But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. {23} For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; {24} for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. {25} But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does."

Next, Paul tells Timothy to pursue faith. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. The word for faith is *pistis*, which means to be persuaded or have a conviction about a matter. The root word is *peitho*, which means to be convinced.

(Heb 11:1) "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

G4102. *pistis*; from G3982 (*peitho* - to convince); persuasion, i.e. credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation.

How do we get this conviction? How do we become convinced about kingdom principles? Paul wrote that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. As we read, memorize, meditate, study, and apply the word of God in our lives, we build our faith. Faith is like a spiritual muscle. As we use these spiritual muscles, they become stronger or grow. **Following after God requires us to exercise our spiritual muscles**. Paul tells us that Abraham did not waiver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith. He took hold of the promises of God, and held on to them. As we cling to God's promises, we grow in our faith.

(Rom 10:17) "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

(Rom 4:20-21) "yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, {21} and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform."

Next, Paul tells Timothy to pursue love. How do we pursue love? How do we get this love? This agape love is impossible without receiving it from God. **Following after love requires us to receive God's love first**. John tells us that everyone who loves (agape) is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. We have to know God. The pursuit of love begins by receiving Jesus Christ into our lives. It begins by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.

(1 John 4:7-8) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

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This morning, if you have never asked Christ to come into your life, do not leave here this morning without taking that first step. Receiving Christ is so simple a child can do it. Simply pray, which is talking to God, and ask Him to come in. "Jesus, I want to receive You into my life. Please come in. I believe that You are the Son of God, and that You came to forgive us of our sins. Forgive me of my sins. I confess You to be my Lord." It is that easy. It does not have to be those exact words. You do not have to do it with someone. However, if you ask Christ into your life, tell someone. Tell me. Tell your family. "I prayed to receive Christ this morning." You will never regret that decision. Our pursuit of love begins by receiving His love for us.

Next, Paul tells us to pursue perseverance. The men are studying the book of James. In the first chapter, James says that we are to consider it all joy when we encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance. **Trials in our lives produce perseverance and maturity in our lives.** The word for endurance is hupomone, which is the same Greek word that Paul uses in 1 Timothy 6:11, and is translated as perseverance or patience. It simply means to remain under. God uses trials in our lives to produce the perseverance and patience. He does this to mature us. Therefore, we should consider it all joy when we go through trials.

(James 1:2-4) "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. {4} And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

G5281. hupomone, hoop-om-on-ay'; from G5278; cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy:--enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting). [G5278. hupomeno; from G5259 and G3306; to stay under (behind), i.e. remain; fig. to undergo, i.e. bear (trials), have fortitude, persevere:--abide, endure, (take) patient (-ly), suffer, tarry behind.]

The last thing that Paul told Timothy was to pursue or follow after gentleness. The King James uses meekness. The Greek word is praiotes, which means gentleness, humility, or meekness.

G4236. praiotes, prah-ot'-ace; from G4235; gentleness; by impl. humility:--meekness.

**Following after gentleness requires us to become like children.** We need to become like children. Children are gentle and humble. They want to learn and receive. They are like soft, pliable clay in the hand of the potter. They are easily shaped into a usable vessel on the Potter's wheel. Jesus said the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. How can we pursue meekness and gentleness?

We can humble ourselves with praying and fasting. We can humble ourselves by submitting to authorities. We can humble ourselves by repenting of sins. When we blow it, and we all do, we should quickly acknowledge the error of our ways. We should confess our sins to one another and, most importantly, we should confess our sins to the Lord. We should learn to pray before we speak. Solomon said the poor man utters supplications, but the rich man answers roughly. A gentle and meek answer comes through praying first. Ask the Lord about how you should respond. Ask the Lord to give you specific ways to be gentle. Ask the counsel of others about how to grow in meekness and gentleness.

(Pro 18:23) "The poor man utters supplications, But the rich man answers roughly."

## Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 6: Focus on God

Gary Kivelwitz, a minister from New Jersey, used to come preach at our church. He was a large man, probably 6'5" and 260 pounds. His size intimidated many people. He learned to sit down when he spoke with people so that he would not be towering over them. He learned to lower the volume of his voice. He learned to talk at a slower pace. In order to shepherd people with gentleness, he learned some of these practical things to do.

**D. Fight the good fight of faith. (Vs 12) The fourth cure is to fight the good fight of faith and take hold of eternal life.**

(1 Timothy 6:12) "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

The Christian life is sometimes painted differently than how Scripture portrays it. Jesus told people to count the costs before making a decision. He told people that the Son of Man had no where to lay His head. He told people to deny themselves, pick up their crosses and follow Him. That describes a fight of faith. It describes a daily, moment by moment fight of faith.

(Luke 9:23) "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

The Greek word that is used here is agonizomai, which is where we get our English word, agony. It means to struggle or fight. The root word is agon, which meant a place to gather to see a contest. There would be fights unto death at these contests. This struggle was intense. It was painful. And, the contestant's life depended on being victorious. We are to struggle with the same kind of intensity. Instead of fighting for our earthly life, like the contestants in an agon, we are fighting for eternal life. Our prize is much greater; it has eternal consequences.

G75. agonizomai, ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee; from G73; to struggle, lit. (to compete for a prize), fig. (to contend with an adversary), or gen. (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently, strive. [G73. agon, ag-one'; from G71; prop. a place of assembly (as if led), i.e. (by impl.) a contest (held there); fig. an effort or anxiety:--conflict, contention, fight, race.]

**E. Finish the race properly. (Vs 13-14) The fifth cure is to finish the race properly.**

Paul tells Timothy to finish the race well. How do we finish the race properly? Paul tells Timothy to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are to live lives that are above reproach.

(1 Timothy 6:13-14) "I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, {14} that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Last year, I did a series on Leadership. In that series, I did a message on the qualifications of an elder. It had a very different focus than the one I did a few weeks ago. I talked about how elders are examples to the flock. The qualifications of elders are not just for them. All of us are to have those same character qualities. One of those qualities is to be above reproach. All of us need to live lives that are above reproach.

Our lives should be a light to those around us. The world is looking for answers. When they see sin and hypocrisy in our lives, they don't want what we have. They are looking for pure hearts and sincere faiths. In our upcoming series on love, we shall be looking at having a pure heart, clean conscience, and a sincere faith.

### 3. The right focus.

We have looked at the wrong focus and the problems associated with having a wrong pursuit of wealth. We have looked at some cures that Paul gave Timothy, so that he could avoid the temptations and snares of longing for wealth. In this final section, Paul gives instructions about having the right focus or perspective.

The final section differs from the first section in one respect. In the first section, Paul is telling people not to pursue wealth. In this section, he is addressing those who already have wealth. They do not have to pursue wealth, they already have it. Paul tells Timothy to instruct the rich to store up a treasure of a good foundation for the future by doing four things.

(1 Timothy 6:17-19) "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. {18} Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, {19} storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

Let's take a look at these four things that Paul tells Timothy to instruct to the rich. By the way, in Randy Alcorn's book, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*, he gives this definition of rich.

"Statistically, if you have sufficient food, decent clothes, live in a house that keeps the weather out, and own a reasonably reliable means of transportation, you are among the top 15 percent of the world's wealthy. If you have any money saved, a hobby that requires some equipment or supplies (fishing, hunting, skiing, astronomy, coin collecting, painting), a variety of clothes in your closet, two cars (in any condition), and live in your own home, you are in the top 5 percent of the world's wealthy."<sup>1</sup>

By Randy's definition, all of us are wealthy. These instructions are for all of us. There are different degrees of wealth, but this is for all of us. Here are the four instructions that Paul gives.

#### A. Do not be conceited.

The first instruction to us is that **we must not to be conceited**, high minded, or arrogant. Arrogance or conceit comes from thinking we are responsible for this wealth. In this political campaign, Obama caught a lot of criticism about his remark that we did not make this wealth by ourselves. He was implying that the government helped people make their wealth. Both sides are right. The government does not make people wealthy. People running small businesses work extremely hard. The majority of small businesses simply do not make it. It is hard work owning and running your own business.

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<sup>1</sup>Money, Possessions and Eternity, Randy Alcorn, Page 301

## Characteristics of Healthy Churches # 6: Focus on God

And, we pay the highest corporate taxes in the world. Our government does not make it easy on businesses. Lots of our bigger corporations continue to move to other countries to avoid the excessive corporate taxes. The Republicans are right in being upset over Obama's remarks.

On the other hand, God's word tells us that it is arrogant to think that we made this wealth on our own. It is God that gives power to make wealth. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses tells the nation of Israel how God fed them with manna and humbled them. He goes on to tell them why God humbled them, "Otherwise you may say in your heart, 'my power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.'" But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth..." It is arrogant to think that it is our power and our wisdom that has made us prosper. At the same time, our government is not God. It is not our government that is our source. God is our Source.

(Deut 8:16-18) ""In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. {17} "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' {18} "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."

In the book of Isaiah, God said that He was going to punish the King of Assyria for being arrogant and haughty. Why? Because the King of Assyria said, "by the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this." This is what Moses and Paul were talking about. When God blesses us and we are able to have a great return on our investment, we get prideful and take the credit. To God be the glory forever, not us.

(Isai 10:12-13) "So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." {13} For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, For I have understanding; And I removed the boundaries of the peoples, And plundered their treasures, And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants,"

Therefore, if we are going to heed this instruction about not being conceited or arrogant, we must realize that God is the source of every blessing in our lives. We need to have a grateful heart. We need to learn to give thanks to Christ every day for all things.

### **B. Fix our hope in God, not on the uncertainty of riches.**

The second instruction is directly related to the first one. If we recognize that God is the source of our wealth, we can fix our hope on God. It is the Lord who supplies us with everything that we need. We are not the source. Our bank accounts are not the source or the supply. It is God who richly supplies us with all things. **We must fix our hope in God, not on the uncertainty of riches.**

(1 Timothy 6:17) "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."

### C. Do good works.

Next, Paul tells Timothy to instruct the wealthy to do good. They are not just to do good, but they are to be rich in good works. **We must learn to do good works.** What are good works? The term in Greek is kalos ergon. This combination of words is used fourteen times in the New Testament. Kalos means beautiful, valuable, or virtuous. Ergon simply means work. In fact, we get our measurement of work, an erg, from this Greek word. We are to be rich in these valuable and virtuous works.

G2570. kalos, kal-os'; properly beautiful, but chiefly (fig.) good (lit. or mor.), i.e. valuable or virtuous (for appearance or use, and thus distinguished from G18, which is prop. intrinsic):--X better, fair, good (-ly), honest, meet, well, worthy.

G2041. ergon, er'-gon; from a prim. (but obsol.) ergo (to work); toil (as an effort or occupation); by impl. an act:--deed, doing, labour, work.

Erg (Dictionary.com): the centimeter-gram-second unit of work or energy, equal to the work done by a force of one dyne when its point of application moves through a distance of one centimeter in the direction of the force.

Paul tells those who are rich in this present world to be rich in good works. We should be more concerned about the wealthy in our good works account than the wealth in our bank account. Paul gives three specific examples of how to do good and invest in our heavenly account. He says to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share.

(1 Timothy 6:18-19) "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, {19} storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed."

### Conclusion

Paul's overall theme is for us to not be focused on wealth. We are not to love money or pursue money. Instead, we are to flee from the pursuit and love of money. We are to pursue the kingdom of God with all our heart. We are not to fix our hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God. A healthy church has sound doctrine. She is committed to prayer. She has good leaders. She is focused on godliness. A healthy church honors one another. And, a healthy church is not focused on wealth, and temporal things, but on God.

#### Quick Study on Good Works

1. **Good works are a witness to people.** (Matt 5:16, 1 Pet 2:12, John 10:32, 21:25, Mark 14:3-9, 1 Tim 5:9-10)
2. **God wants us to be rich in good works.** (1 Tim 6:17-18, Tit 2:14)
3. **Good deeds require intentional effort.** (Tit 3:8, 3:14, Heb 10:24-25)
4. **Good deeds include all our service to the Lord.** (1 Tim 3:1)

**Introduction** (1 Tim 3:14-15)**1. The problems with a wrong focus.** (1 Tim:6:3-4a)

- One of the main purposes of sound doctrine is to conform us to \_\_\_\_\_ . (Rom 12:2)
- God is more concerned about our \_\_\_\_\_ than our temporary discomfort. (1 Cor 11:27-32, Heb 12:10-11)
- False teachers were \_\_\_\_\_ or proud.
- False teachers thought that godliness was a means of \_\_\_\_\_ . (1 Tim 6:4-8)
- A wrong focus on wealth is that it does not \_\_\_\_\_ us to godliness, and can lead to strife and controversy.
- A wrong focus can lead to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ . (1 Tim 6:9-10, Pro 23:4-5, 28:20-22, 2 Pet 2:1-16)
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of money is a root of all sorts of evil. (1 Tim 6:10)

**2. The cures for a wrong focus.**

- A. The first cure for wrong focus is learning to be \_\_\_\_\_ . (1 Tim 6:8, Col 3:2)
- B. The second cure is to \_\_\_\_\_ . (1 Tim 6:11, 1 Cor 6:18, Gen 39:12)
- C. The third cure is to \_\_\_\_\_ or pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. (1 Tim 6:11)
  - Following after righteousness is doing what is \_\_\_\_\_ to do. (Pr 21:2, 12:15, Jas 4:17)
  - Following after godliness is a \_\_\_\_\_. It is a transformation of our hearts. (Rom 12:2, Isa 64:8, Jas 1:21-25)
  - Following after faith requires us to \_\_\_\_\_ our spiritual muscles. (Heb 11:1, Rom 10:17, 4:20-21)
  - Following after love requires us to \_\_\_\_\_ God's love first. (1 John 4:7-8)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ in our lives produce perseverance and maturity. (Jas 1:2-4)
  - Following after gentleness requires us to become like \_\_\_\_\_. (Pro 18:23)

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**3. The right focus.** (1 Tim 6:17-19)

- A. We must not be \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim 6:17-19, Deut 8:16-18, Isai 10:12-13)
- B. We must fix our hope in \_\_\_\_\_, not on the uncertainty of riches. (1 Tim 6:17)
- C. We must learn to do \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim 6:18-19)

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