

Sound Doctrine Produces Godliness [Slide 1] 1 Timothy 6:1-10

Sound doctrine produces godliness. If a teaching is truly from God then those who follow that teaching will grow in godliness. A strong cause and effect relationship exists between doctrine and behavior. If it's sound doctrine it will produce godly behavior. If it's rotten doctrine it will produce rotten behavior. Or, as Jesus put it, if it's a good tree it will produce good fruit but if it's a bad tree, it will produce bad fruit. Those who live out sound doctrine will become respectable, godly, content people. That's Paul's message to Timothy in our passage today.

[Slide 2] I invite you to turn in your Bible to 1 Timothy 6:1-10. 1 Timothy is about three fourths of the way through the New Testament before you come to the big book of Hebrews. 1 Timothy 6:1-10. We'll start in verses 1-2 where Paul teaches us to respect our employers, especially those who are believers. Let's read those verses. Read.

[Slide 3] Before we discuss the teaching of this passage we need to talk some about slavery. When you read this passage you may ask yourself why the Bible and God seem to ignore the evil of slavery and talk about it here as if slavery were an acceptable business practice? The reason is because the slavery practiced in the OT and even much of that practiced in the NT was very different from that practiced here in the United States. What we had here was unmitigated evil.

American slavery was an evil system. First it was racist because only Blacks were held as slaves. Second it was built on the back of kidnapping, something the OT explicitly forbids in Exodus 21:16. African tribes would kidnap members of other African tribes and sell them to slave traders who then brought those people against their will to the United States where they were sold to Americans. In order to desensitize their guilty consciences, white slave owners dehumanized African Americans laying the foundation for the racism and prejudice that still infects our national soul today. We are doing better as a nation, but we still see a lot of the residual negative consequences of American slavery.

What made slavery in the Bible so very different is that first it was an economic system that many voluntarily entered. If you could not pay your debts, you could sell yourself into slavery and work for a master who would pay off your debt in exchange for your labor so that when you finished paying off your debt you regained your freedom. Slavery was an honorable welfare system where you worked to pay off your debt.

It was not a racist institution because it was not limited to one race. Often white men worked for white men. Since it was an economic arrangement voluntarily entered into, there was no need to dehumanize the slaves in order to desensitize the guilty consciences of the masters. I'm not saying it was a perfect system. Every human endeavor becomes tainted by sin, but the reason you don't see calls for the abolition of slavery in the Bible is because slavery then was very different from what we experienced here in the United States. You can probably see why those Americans who did not understand the nature of Biblical slavery could read their Bibles and conclude that God was not opposed to American slavery.

This is a very graphic example of why you need to interpret the Bible by paying attention to the social, cultural, and historical context in which it was written. If you don't do that you may think that certain things described in the Bible are exactly equivalent to modern day realities when they are not.

Since Biblical slavery was an economic arrangement that the slave voluntarily entered in order to receive compensation from the master for his labor, it is quite legitimate to apply instructions to slaves and masters to employees and employers, which is what I will do.

[Slide 4] Consider your bosses or supervisors to be worthy of all honor so that the name of God and his doctrine or truth will not be spoken against. Treat your bosses with respect. Don't speak negatively of them behind their back. Speak courteously to them to their face. Give them an honest day's worth of work. Don't spend time at work playing computer games or on long phone calls when you could be working. Be on time. Finish your work on time. Don't take home company supplies or materials. Do quality work. Get along with your fellow employees. Do all those things which make you a valued employee so that people will be willing to consider what you say about God and about his truth. Read Executive Secretary card.

Evidently some of the Ephesian believers felt that if their masters were Christians that they could relax more and take more liberties with them even to the point of being disrespectful. Paul says the opposite should be the case. You should show even more respect for Christian bosses because they are brothers in Christ.

Moving on, verses 3-10 tell us we should follow sound doctrine that produces godliness and contentment.

[Slide 5] The correct application of sound doctrine will not only lead to respectful behavior at work but will also promote godliness rather than strife. Let's read verses 3-5. Read.

The key word in verse 3 to describe true doctrine is the word, "sound." Paul refers to the sound words of Jesus Christ. The Greek word translated as "sound" usually means healthy. In contrast to the sound words of Jesus Christ is a different doctrine that does not agree with that taught by Jesus and his apostles and which does not produce godliness.

In verse 4 Paul gives us an inside look at what would motivate someone to teach unsound doctrine. They are conceited, ignorant, and have a morbid or sick interest in controversies and disputes. If true doctrine is spiritually healthy, then false doctrine causes spiritual sickness.

What would motivate someone like a religious liberal to deny historic doctrines of the Christian faith and to replace them with something else? Why would they deny the Bible is the word of God? Why would they reject Biblical teachings on marriage or sex? Why would they deny the resurrection? Paul says it's because of conceit or pride. They think they are smarter and more learned than Christians of past ages. With their new knowledge and mastery of things, they can discard old beliefs like they are worn out clothes and put on something more modern and fashionable with the educated in the Universities and Colleges.

They may be hailed as intellectually brilliant by their liberal colleagues, but Paul says they know nothing. I have personally observed this phenomenon in reading some of the stuff theologians say about Genesis because they have bought into Evolution. Having a degree in Biology and a working understanding of the absolute impossibility of the Evolution of all life by random mutation, I'm amazed at the stupid things theologians and even scientists sometimes say about the Bible and creation. I'm amazed at some of the arguments that liberal theologians make.

Paul says these teachers of false doctrine have a sick interest in controversial questions and disputes about words that produce envy, strife, abusive language, suspicions and constant frictions. The result of their teaching produces discord rather than unity and harmony. Paul describes them in verse 5 as having a depraved or corrupted mind and deprived of the truth. The last phrase, deprived of the truth, suggests that they may have formerly known the truth but they allowed pride or other factors to lead them away from that truth.

These people believe that godliness is a means of material gain. This phrase describes people who use religion as a way simply of making money. Sadly to say religious hucksters exist who use religion as a means of making money, who may not even believe what they proclaim. Whereas people who truly cherish sound doctrine are not likely to use religion as a means of personal gain.

[Slide 6] Godliness in turn benefits a person when it is combined with contentment. Let's read verses 6-10. Read.

Godliness is a means of gain when it is accompanied with contentment. We are not primarily talking about monetary gain here. Godliness is of great profit to you spiritually and emotionally. Godly people become the recipients of God's blessing. Godly people walk by faith and therefore tend to worry less which reduces their stress levels and improves their health. Godly people are less likely to be addicted to health killers such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Godly people avoid the kind of sexual sins that often lead to STD's. Godly people tend to avoid the kind of places, people and situations associated with crime. Godly people are more likely to have healthy relationships and marriages because they are more likely to forgive, to love others unconditionally, and to communicate honestly. Godly people come to work on time, provide quality work, and act responsibly, increasing their chances of job promotion.

When godliness is combined with contentedness so that a person is willing to wait on God for reward, promotion, and material advancement, then godliness can be a means of great personal gain. We pursue godliness as part of a loving response to all that God has done for us and Paul tells us here that you won't lose out by seeking to be godly. You will personally gain from that pursuit especially if you can be content and trust God for the outcome.

We can be content by remembering that we brought nothing into this world and we're not going to take anything out of it when we die. Some people try to take it with them. A very rich man who was known as a miser made his wife promise that when he died she would bury all his money with him. She grudgingly agreed to do so. At his funeral, right before they closed the casket for the last time, his wife dropped something into it. When the funeral director later asked her what she had put in the casket she replied that she had written out a check for the full amount of his fortune and dropped it in the casket.

Tell tombstone joke p. 55 Shell book. Be content with what you have.

Paul says in verse 8 that if we have food and covering we shall be content. I believe Paul is saying that food and covering are the true necessities of life. I take covering to include both clothing and shelter of some kind. If I have food, clothing, and shelter, my basic needs are covered. We have wants and we have needs. Over time many of the wants have been converted to needs. We think we need a lot more than we actually need. We need phones and cars and microwaves and refrigerators and all sorts of things that did not even exist hundreds of years ago. How did people survive without all those things? They managed.

We become content when we pare down our true needs to just a few things and then we are grateful for everything else we have. GK Chesterton said, "There are two ways to get enough: One is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less." Abraham Lincoln said, "A man is about as happy as he makes up his mind to be." One of my professors at Dallas Theological Seminary put it this way, "If you want to be content, make God all you want." "If you want to be content, make God all you want."

One of the great contentment busters is the desire to get rich. Paul says, "Read verse 9." Most Ponzi schemes and business frauds play on people's temptation to get rich quickly. Just invest in this opportunity and you'll make 15 to 20% every year. Look, if someone could make

that kind of return they wouldn't be scouring the bushes looking for someone to invest. They would invest in that themselves. It's always amazed me that anyone would ever pay a fortune teller. If someone could really read the future, they wouldn't be making money telling fortunes. They would be playing the stock market or the horse races.

Unfortunately Christians are often very gullible and susceptible to these kind of financial scams because we tend to be a little too trusting of people, especially when they speak our lingo. Whenever someone describes a fantastic opportunity and your heart starts beating rapidly and they tell you that you need to act right away before the opportunity is gone, that is when you need to walk away.

There are many good guidelines to investing. Let me give you some that are especially appropriate to protecting you from the ruin and destruction described in verse 9. One, don't invest in something that you don't thoroughly understand. If it's too confusing and you don't understand how it works, best not to get involved. Second, don't ever invest what you can't afford to lose. You should have a three to six month reserve of savings equal to your salary before you ever consider investing. That way if you lose your job, you don't have to immediately pull out your money from investments, which often can be costly. Third, wealth that is generated slowly is always safer than wealth that is generated quickly. The higher the rate of return, the more risky the investment. Those are general principles. Seek a certified financial planner or someone well-qualified to counsel you.

The root problem in not being content and in seeking to get rich is the love of money which Paul says is a root of all sorts of evil. It's not a root of all evil but it is certainly one of the major roots of evil. Think about what other sorts of evil flows out of a love of money: burglary, theft, forgery, sex-trafficking, extortion, blackmail, bribery and corruption in government, shoddy construction. I remember many years back we went through a period in which the mosquito infestation was terrible. Come to find out, part of the problem was that the guy spraying was watering down the bug spray to save money, making the spray far less effective. We all suffered for his love of money.

But it is not just the other people who suffer. Paul says that the person who loves money wanders from the faith and pierces themselves with many a pang. People who love money choose work over church involvement and serving in God's mission. They never give God what he deserves because they are too busy making money. They strangle their own spiritual growth in their pursuit of wealth. They often sacrifice their marriage and their family by spending too much time working.

Consider this parable that Jesus taught recorded in Luke 12:16-21 that I printed on your outline. Read. This farmer's harvest was so overwhelmingly productive that he literally ran out of room to store all his grain. So, he decides that he will build himself a bigger barn. What could he have done instead? He could have said to himself, "God has given me such a great excess, far more than I can even store. He must want me to give this excess away to those in need in his name for his glory. He could have chosen to love God rather than his riches by giving to others and he would still have had plenty for himself. Love of money blinds you to the needs of others and opportunities you have to bless others with how God has blessed you.

Jesus said you can't serve God and mammon. I think it's equally true that you can't both love God and love money, for love of money will lure you away from loving God.

Paul uses the expression "wander from the faith" rather than "run from the faith." The love of money causes you to make slow compromises where at first you don't even realize that you left God's path until one day you are completely away from God and you're not even sure how you

got so far away. You wandered and lost your bearings because your attention was totally wrapped up in loving money. Perhaps you know someone like that. Perhaps you are that someone. You have to decide whether you're going to love God or money. If you're going to love God you will probably have to make some major changes in order to stop loving money.

If you are believing and following sound doctrine, then you should be growing in godliness and contentment. At the bottom of your sermon outline is a line from 0 to 10 for both godliness and contentment with 10 representing perfection and 0 representing no progress what so ever. Take a minute and before God rate how well you think you are doing and remember that God is always ready to help you.

Let's pray.