

12. Learning Why We Need to Learn to Be Content

In our last topic, we saw that we want to have as our goal helping our physical and spiritual children become qualified to serve the Lord as elders and to learn how to develop others to become elders. We saw that our greatest priority is to develop them and equip them so that they can be a part of the next generation of spiritual leadership. Today, we are going to see that we want to help our children learn to become content with whatever the Lord provides them so that they are able to serve the Lord effectively because they trust the Lord to supply their needs.

In the time of the early church, it is estimated that about one half of all of the people in the Roman Empire were bondservants and in slavery to their masters. As a result, 1 Timothy 6:1-2 says, “Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise *them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.” Many of the people who had become Christians as Paul and Timothy ministered in various cities were also slaves.

Some of their masters were Christians but many were not. Regardless of whether they were Christians or not, Paul told those who were slaves to count their own masters worthy of all honor. The word that is translated “count” means *to be the leader, to consider, to esteem or to think*. Philippians 2:3 says, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*” Here, we see that slaves were to place a high value on their masters and count them worthy of all honor. We see that slaves could model the love of Christ to their masters. As a result, Paul said that their masters would not blaspheme either God or His doctrine.

In some cases, these slaves had masters who were Christians. Paul pointed out that this gave them two different relationships with their masters. First, as slaves and as Christians, they were not to despise their masters. Second, they were also brethren in Christ. Since their master also served Christ, the work that they did as slaves also benefited other Christians. Those who were slaves were to serve with love because those who received the benefit of their good works were both believers and the beloved of God. In many cases, their masters probably also used part of the money that they made to serve the Lord by sharing with others. Timothy was to help both slaves and masters understand their new relationship in Christ and encourage them to show their love to one another.

False teachers had a very different attitude as they taught masters and slaves because they were trying to gain riches for themselves. As a result, 1 Timothy 6:3-5 says, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.” Here, we see four characteristics of false teachers.

First, false teachers do not teach the teachings that are in the Word of God. They may use the Word of God but they will twist what they use in their efforts to deceive. As a result, they are not teaching the Word of God but are using a verse out of its context to back up their own ideas. Second, false teachers do not consent to wholesome doctrine. The word that is translated “wholesome” means “*the words that are free from man’s opinions or any mixture of error.*” In 2 Timothy 4:3-4 the word is translated “sound” and that verse says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” Here, we see why many people want to hear the opinions and ideas of false teachers instead of hearing the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Word of God. Third, the opinions of false teachers allow people to live according to their own sinful desires and are not teachings that are in agreement with godliness.

Fourth, false teachers are proud. They actually have no understanding of the teachings of Christ because 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Since false teachers lack spiritual understanding, we see several things that they do in their teaching instead. False teachers are obsessed with disputes. The word that is translated “obsessed” means *to be sick or have an ailment of the mind*. The word that is translated “disputes” means *debates or controversy*. 2 Timothy 2:23 says, “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.” False teachers want to get people arguing over the meaning of words.

The goal of false teachers is to develop envy, strife, evil suspicions (slander), and useless wranglings (arguments) among people. False teachers do this because they are people of corrupt minds (destructive minds) and destitute (to deprive or rob) of the truth. Here, we see that false teachers may have heard the truth and turned away from the truth. As a result, their goal is the destruction of others and they do everything they can to keep people from hearing the truth. The phrase “supposing that godliness is a means of gain” means that they think that they can use religion to deceive people and gain riches for themselves. The word translated “withdraw yourself” means *to remove yourself and stay away from such false teachers*.

We see the attitude that goes with true godliness in 1 Timothy 6:6-8 where we read, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” The word that is translated “contentment” means *an attitude of mind that causes us to be satisfied with what we have*. Another form of the word translated “content” is used in Philippians 4:11 where Paul said of himself, “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” Paul had learned to be content with whatever the Lord supplied for him. This is the genuine contentment that riches can never provide.

We need to remember that we had nothing when we were born. When we die, we will take nothing with us. Christ said in Matthew 6:19-21, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Since we can take nothing with us, the only things we have that are eternal are the treasures we have laid up in heaven as spiritual rewards. Those rewards will last for all eternity. That is why we can be thankful for the fact that God supplies us with the basic necessities of food and clothing for this life.

In 1 Timothy 6:9-10, we read, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” The word that is translated “desire” means “*to have as a purpose or a strong desire*”. This reminds us of the fact that many people have a strong desire to be rich. James 4:4 says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” Here, the word is translated “wants” and shows that some people who profess to be Christians actually have a strong desire to be a friend of the world. Those who make that choice also choose to be an enemy of God.

That strong desire to be rich causes many people to fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” The word that is translated “fall” means *to fall into a person’s power or to fall among robbers*. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ asked the question in Luke 10:36, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” Some fall into temptation. Others are caught in the trap of their own desires. Still other people turn to foolish (unwise choices) and harmful (choices that cause injury) lusts because of their strong desire to be rich. These choices have permanent effects. The word translated “destruction” talks about both physical and eternal destruction. In 1 Corinthians 5:5 it talks about physical destruction while 2 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” “Perdition” speaks of the eternal judgment.

We see that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. There are four roots in the New Testament, two positive and two negative. The other negative root is in Hebrews 12:15 where we read, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Just as Esau chose a bowl of stew, many people choose money and in doing so reject the faith because of their greed. Others pierce or torture their souls and cause much suffering in their lives in their greed for money. That is why we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be content with whatever the Lord chooses to supply for them in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show by your own life and example that you are content with the things that the Lord has given you.