



Discussion and Bible Study | Timothy 6:1-10

This session is taken directly from Revival Living by Stephen Gaukroger. Published by Scripture Union. This book is now out of print. Should anyone want to complete the whole study please contact Pauline Burdett for a copy. Pauline.burdett@truro.anglican.org.

You will need:

- Bibles
- Copies of the text for each participant.
- Copy of the worksheet for each participant.
- Pens/Pencils
- Flip Chart and Pens

How to:

- Read 1 Timothy 6:1-10 together.
- Ask for comments on the reading, things that stood out for people, ideas that were new to them or that they feel reinforce beliefs already held. Write all comments onto flip chart.
- Read the verses through again with different voices, note any new comments.
- Give each person a copy of the text to read.
- Break into small groups and discuss noting anything that proves challenging, difficult, encouraging.
- Come back together and feedback group comments, using flip chart as an aid.
- Hand out the worksheet and either work through the questions as a discussion group, or ask individuals to fill in their answers then discuss as a whole group.

Leaders Notes. Work, words and wealth. 1 Timothy 6:1-10

Godliness is a word the world doesn't use. The world speaks about greatness; it will even speak about goodness; but it won't speak about godliness. Yet godliness is just what should characterise the church. We are supposed to be people who by the grace of God, by the completed work of the Lord Jesus and by the incredible ministry of the Holy Spirit within us and among us, are supposed to demonstrate our holy God in the midst of godlessness. Paul, significantly, used the word godly (6:3), three times repeated as godliness (6:5,6,11). The church's responsibility is first to declare God's Word and second to display God's life. And that is precisely



what

godliness really means. It is a demonstration or display of the life of God.

Two generations ago, a former vicar of St Martin's in the Field Church in London, Canon Dick Shepherd, said, 'The

greatest handicap the church has is the unsatisfactory lives of professing Christians'. He was not talking essentially

About Christians who swear, lie, cheat or sleep around - but he was talking about the everyday routines of life, about the way that Christians speak to others, the way they handle their wealth and so on. He was talking about the impact of Christians on society.

Godliness has a bad press. When you speak of somebody who *is* godly, you think of somebody who is odd or eccentric, someone who takes a position and responds to a situation as if they were a bit 'off the planet'. I am reminded of a poem which deals with this subject. It begins with the sentiment, 'I'd rather see a sermon /Than

hear one any day'. And has the conclusion: 'The best of creatures are the ones/Who demonstrate their creeds/ For to see good put to action! Is what everybody needs'. We are living sermons.

Paul's first comments are directed at slaves (6:1,2), but this was no tiny minority. It is estimated that in the Roman

Empire there were a staggering 60 million slaves. Two out of every three people who walked the streets of Rome were classified as slaves. Often slaves were humiliated. They could be branded, mistreated, whipped; some were crucified. Yet many were well treated and carried responsibilities within the working world as teachers, doctors, craftsmen and labourers.

Inevitably, the early church had a majority of slaves. The Bible doesn't condone or accept slavery as a system.

Scripture recognises that the only thing that will break into human exploitation is to send people into that cultural and work situation with the mind of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is godliness, alive and well in society.



Masters might be good or bad, harsh and overbearing or considerate and sensitive, rational or totally unreasonable.

But Paul says (6:1) that regardless of their character they are to be considered worthy of respect. Sometimes church members find it difficult to respect church leaders; they don't understand how their leaders are following the agenda that Jesus has for the congregation. So the natural tendency is to feel ill used and misunderstood, and become critical. If you have a boss in the workplace who is a bit of a bully it's hard to respect him or her. Why should we show respect? Paul tells us that we don't show the unreasonable boss respect so that we can impress him. We don't do it for our own sake, hoping that knuckling under will make life a bit easier for us. But we do it for God's sake, so that God's name and Christian teaching are not slandered.

And when we have a Christian boss (6:2), the great temptation is to be careless. You may even go to the same church as your boss. Familiarity may cause you to become slack, undisciplined, less efficient. Paul counsels against this.

Then Paul, not for the first time in this letter, tackles the area of false doctrine (6:3). He was concerned, of course, about the possibility of error being spoken about the central truths of our faith - the character of God or the person of Jesus or the work of the Spirit, for example. But he was also concerned about other kinds of error, perhaps more subtle and yet easily promoted, even within churches. Some of the wrong teachings I have heard over the years include things like 'Everyone must speak in tongues' or 'Communal living is the highest form of spirituality' or 'Prophecy is more important than Scripture'. I have heard people say 'God will heal everyone'. I have heard 'The ultimate authority for Christians is the church meeting'. I have been told 'God wants to make you rich, financially'.

Some of these things sound attractive, but they are not what the Bible teaches. Godliness is about accepting and acting on the Word of God as it comes to us in the power of the Spirit through the Scriptures. That is normative for Christian living.



Leading theologian and writer Jim Packer says, 'Loyalty to Christ our risen Saviour and Lord calls for total submission to Scripture and anyone or any church declining to believe and do what is written or failing *in* practice to be faithful to it is to that extent a rebel against Christ'. That's pretty strong stuff But this is biblical and the Bible is revelation of the heart of God! Those who promote false teaching are identifiable by the characteristics Paul lists (6:4). They are conceited and contentious, always at the heart of something that is disruptive and destructive and damaging to the body of Jesus Christ. And Paul says they are covetous. They are out for what they can get - whether that's money or position or control or recognition.

So godliness is about our **work** and about our **words**. And, finally, it is about our **wealth** (6:6-10). I have had the privilege of meeting many godly people. If there is one characteristic every one of them holds in common it is their contentment. Whether they have little or much of this world's goods and power, they are happy with their lot. Hands full or hands empty, stomach full or hungry, they are content. They have understood that life is not fastened to the things we have to leave behind. There are no pockets in a shroud.

Two men were at a bus stop, discussing a third who had died recently and had been extremely rich. One said 'How much did he leave?' The second fellow replied, 'Everything!' We can take nothing with us.

But there's not just the **death of the body** to consider, but the **desire of the mind**. Paul says that rich people are prone to temptation (6:9). Epicurus, a philosopher who lived many centuries ago, said, 'The secret of contentment is not to add to a man's possessions but to take away from his desires'. A content person is not always wanting. From the **death of the body** and the **desire of the mind**, Paul moves on to the **destruction of the soul**. Actually, money can bring all kinds of good. Money feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, provides medicine for the sick, gives shelter to the homeless . Money can be a blessing. But Paul says (6:10) that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. For money Delilah betrayed Samson to the Philistines. For money



Ananias and Sapphira became the first hypocrites in the Christian church and lost their lives. For money Judas sold Christ and was ruined eternally. Surely these human tragedies speak loudly and eloquently.



6. 'The secret of contentment is not to add to a man's possessions but to take away from his desires' (Epicurus). What do you think of this view?

- Are our desires to be eliminated or moderated? How?