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# Women and Wealth in 1 Timothy<sup>1</sup>

KEN CUKROWSKI

Separate and yet interconnected, the themes of women and wealth play significant roles in 1 Timothy. The investigation of 1 Tim 2:8-15 shows women and immodest displays of wealth—abuses of wealth that may be connected to those in 1 Timothy 5. Later, two passages in 1 Timothy 6 reveal further discussion about wealth. The examination of these themes illustrates just how contemporary antiquity can be.

## WOMEN IN 1 TIM 2:8-15

Without a doubt, 1 Tim 2:8-15 is one of the most challenging passages in the whole letter. However, a couple of things are clear. First, the problems are specifically related to gender; the men have some specific problems, and the women have some specific problems. Second, the men's difficulties regard anger and quarreling, and the women's difficulties regard modesty.

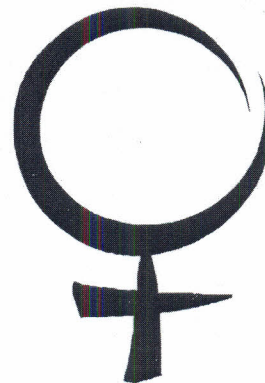
From Super Bowl halftime shows to music videos, we likely think about the problem of female modesty in terms of wearing too little. In the context of 1 Tim 2:9, however, some of the women were wearing too much! Plus, there appears to be a problem not only with what the women were wearing, but also with what they were saying—and perhaps *how* they were saying it.

In 1 Tim 2:8-15, Paul turns to internal problems that the church is facing. Although Paul addresses both males and females, by far the greater attention is on the females. Attending to both structural and thematic features helps readers to understand this passage.

### *Structural Features*

Perhaps here more than the other passages in 1 Timothy, it is important to recognize the structural features of this passage. First, Paul begins by connecting 1 Tim 2:8-15 to 2:1-7 by means of the hook word “pray.” Paul, however, moves in a different direction from the focus on praying for outsiders (2:1-7). Here in 2:8, Paul stresses *how* Christians should pray, namely “without anger and quarreling.”

The next two structural features provide both a larger and smaller frame for reading 2:9-15. The larger bracket includes the prepositional phrase “with modesty and moderation” in 2:8 and a shortened version of the phrase in 2:15 (namely, “with moderation”). In fact, the final two words of the whole passage are the phrase “with moderation.” Within 2:9-15, Paul includes another pair of prepositional phrases. This time, the same phrase (namely, “with quietness”) begins and ends 2:11-12.



Finally, it is worthwhile to recognize the two connections between 2:8 and 9. The word *likewise* links the two verses. In addition, the phrase “I desire that” in 2:8 governs 2:9; that is, 1 Tim 2:9 is translated (“I desire that) the women adorn themselves ....

### *Key Themes and Terms*

One of the difficulties of this passage is the translation of key words and ideas. For example, how should one translate the phrase *in quietness* in 2:11 and 12? The adjective (*hēsuchia*) is translated as quiet or well-ordered in 2:2. Translators recognize that in calling Christians to pray and “lead a calm and quiet (*hēsuchia*) life,” Paul is not telling Christians they cannot speak! Yet, when the corresponding noun (*hēsuchia*) is used in 2:11 and 12, some translations have “in silence,” which is a possible translation if women’s speaking at all is the issue. However, if *how* the women are speaking is part of the issue, than a better translation is “with quiet behavior” or “with respect.”

Another difficulty is the piling up of words connected to modesty in 2:9. I offer the following annotated translation as an illustration:

I desire that the women adorn (*kosmein*) themselves in modest (*kosmios*) attire with modesty (*aidōs*) and moderation (*sōphrosunē*).

Paul also shows attention to the idea of modesty in his use of *prepein* (“be fitting, be seemly/suitable”) in 2:10.<sup>2</sup> All throughout the passage, Paul uses terms synonymous or parallel to modesty.

### *The Context and Interpretation of the Passage*

In 1 Tim 2:8-15, Paul treats two problems, the first briefly and the second more extensively. In both cases, there is some indication that Paul is dealing with specific problems at Ephesus. Thus, this investigation of both problems will involve some description of the context of 1 Timothy.

### **ANGRY MEN**

The context of 1 Timothy points to some evident false teaching in Ephesus (1:3-7; 4:1-4, 7; 6:3-5, 20-21). Notice the following passages from 1 Timothy where we see some probable causes and evidence for the men’s quarreling in 2:8:

They pay attention to myths and endless genealogies that promote useless speculations (1:4).  
Some, while going astray, turn away to fruitless discussion (1:6).  
Avoid godless and silly myths (4:7).  
He is sick with a morbid craving for debates and disputes about words, from which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions, wranglings of people who have corrupt minds and lack the truth, thinking that godliness is a means of gain (6:4-5).  
Avoid the godless, empty chatter and the contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (6:20).

The problem in 1 Tim 2:8 is that these arguments are now occurring in the context of prayer! Men seem to be attacking others with their prayers of all things! In contrast, Paul tells the men that the hands they lift in prayer should be *holy hands*. Unfortunately, even the best things, such as prayer, can be co-opted by sinful individuals. Even though angry, quarreling prayers such as these may be rare today, prayer is still sometimes used to preach personal, theological, and political positions. There are prayers to which one cannot, in good conscience, say “Amen.”



*Immodest Women*

The four cardinal virtues in the ancient world were justice, courage, wisdom, and moderation (*sôphrosunê*). Of these four virtues, by far the one most associated with women was moderation. Sarah Pomeroy describes *sôphrosunê* as follows:

The term means “temperance” but also connotes chastity and self-restraint. It was the pre-eminent virtue of Greek women; it is mentioned more frequently than any other quality on women’s tombstones.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, some women in Ephesus are behaving immodestly. A major question is whether we can learn what these immodest women were doing.

*Links Between Women, Widows*

If Paul is not speaking about women in general, but rather to a particular problem with immodest women in Ephesus, then what evidence is there to connect the women in 2:9-15 with a specific problem in 1 Timothy? An examination of the two passages reveals a surprising number of substantial links between the women of 1 Tim 2:9-15 and the young widows described in 1 Tim 5:3-16.

*Immodest expenditures*

In 1 Tim 2:9, Paul cautions women not “to adorn themselves with braids or gold or pearls or very expensive clothing.” Correspondingly, Paul describes the young widows in 1 Tim 5:6 with the word *spatalan*, which means “to indulge oneself beyond the bounds of propriety, live luxuriously/voluptuously” (BDAG).

*Good Deeds*

In 1 Tim 2:10, Paul remarks that a proper woman adorns herself “with good deeds.” In his contrast between the younger widows and the real widows in 1 Timothy 5, Paul affirms that a “real widow” (5:3) should be “attested for her good deeds and devoted to every good deed” (5:10).

*Quiet Behavior*

If Paul is concerned with *how* the women are behaving and speaking in 2:11-12, is there any evidence of unacceptable behavior among the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5? In the language of 1 Timothy 2, do the younger widows exhibit a lack of “quiet behavior” (*hêsuchia*)?

In fact, Paul has at least four descriptions of behavior that is not “quiet behavior.” The younger widows are described as *busybodies* and *idlers* (5:13). Apparently their behavior has been so scandalous that it has provided others an opportunity to revile the church (5:14). Paul issues a command to avoid luxurious living in order that younger widows may be *without reproach* (5:7). Each of these four descriptions is connected to the absence of quiet behavior in other New Testament texts. As evidence, note these passages where *hêsuchia* is connected to the following items: busybodies (2 Thess 3:11-12; 1 Thess 4:11), idlers (2 Thess 3:11-12), and revile and reproach (1 Thess 4:11-12).

*Problems with Teaching*

When Paul writes “I do not permit a woman to teach” (2:12), is there any evidence that false teaching is a problem among women in Ephesus? Or, is Paul talking about women teaching in general? From our earlier investigation of the “angry men,” we know that there is ample evidence that the church is under attack from false teaching. Thirteen times Paul uses words associated with teaching (1 Tim 1:10; 2:7, 12; 3:2; 4:1, 6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 2, 3).



But what about the younger widows? Is there any false teaching connected with them? In 5:13, Paul describes the younger widows as “saying what they should not,” a phrase that is associated with false teaching in Titus 1:11 (namely, “teaching what they should not”). Thus, there is likely a link between the women’s teaching in 2:12 and false teaching among the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5.

#### *Deception*

Twice Paul uses the language of deception in his illustration treating Adam and Eve—“Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (2:14). What evidence is there that the younger widows have been deceived? Paul uses neither the word *deceive* nor the word *deception* in 1 Timothy 5. However, it seems highly likely that the younger widows, who “have followed after Satan” (5:15), can be described as *deceived*.

#### *Bearing Children*

Finally, what is one to do with the cryptic phrase “she will be saved through the bearing of children” (*teknogonia*) in 2:15? Interestingly, the verb (*teknogonein*) appears in 1 Timothy 5 when the younger widows are admonished “to marry, bear children (*teknogonein*) and manage their households” (5:14). In other words, it is highly unlikely that Paul, in 2:15, is saying that a woman *must* bear a child to be saved.<sup>4</sup> Rather, the word “bearing of children” (*teknogonia*) is a compressed way of saying, “Pay attention to your domestic responsibilities.” This interpretation of 2:15 not only fits well with the admonition to the younger widows, but also with other passages in 1 Timothy (e.g., those who “forbid marriage” in 4:3).

Elsewhere in 1 Timothy, Paul also shows care for the state of the home, likely indicating that there are problems in that area. For example, in his instructions regarding elders and deacons, Paul highlights the importance of a strong home. In effect, he also tells potential elders and deacons, “Pay attention to your domestic responsibilities” (3:2, 4-5, 7, 12). Thus, in a context where the home is under attack, and possibly being used as an outpost for false teaching (cf. 2 Tim 3:6-7), such instructions from Paul are not surprising.

In summary, it is difficult to provide an airtight connection between the women of 1 Tim 2:9-15 and the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5. Nevertheless, the evidence is substantial and worthy of consideration. In addition, such a connection explains some of the puzzling features of 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

### **THE APPLICATION OF THE PASSAGE**

When Christians attempt to apply 1 Tim 2:8-15, the focus is almost always on its words to the women. That consistent focus, however, has not guaranteed a unanimous conclusion. In fact, there are diverse opinions; the following reflection will briefly outline three main options.

#### *Option 1: A Rule for All Time*

With this first interpretation, people contend that Paul’s instructions do not allow women “to teach or have authority over men” (RSV; 2:12). They point to the appeal to creation in 2:13-14. Seeing that appeal as a proof from scripture, they argue for a hierarchical relationship between men and women, primarily based on the phrase “Adam was created first” (2:13). They also argue that 1 Cor 14:34-35 fits with this interpretation.

Those who disagree with this position point out the difficulty of reading the other admonitions in this passage as rules for all time (see 2:8, 9, and 15). The prohibition against having “authority” is also difficult to apply in a generic sense; in our society, women vote as well as exercise leadership in many ways (e.g., justices, senators, mayors, professors, managers, principals).

Furthermore, in the same way that the men’s problems with anger and quarreling do not reflect problems with men in general, but are connected to the context at Ephesus, so also the women’s problems seen in 1 Tim 2:9-15 do not reflect problems with women in general, but are connected to the context at Ephesus.

Last, opponents point to several other passages where women teach or appear to teach (see Luke 2:38; John 4:29-30, 39, 42; Acts 18:26; 1 Cor 14:19, 31).

*Option 2: Specific Instructions for a Specific Problem*

Others apply Paul's admonition in 2:12 on the level of principle; that is, just like Paul gives specific instructions to men in 2:8 because there is a particular problem with some men in Ephesus, so also Paul gives specific instructions to women because there are particular problems with some women in Ephesus, likely connected to the behavior of the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5. In other words, the argument sounds something like the following:

If we had problems with immodest, bossy women teaching false doctrine, then we would tell those women not "to teach or be bossy"<sup>5</sup> (2:12); but we don't have that problem. The principle is "Stop immodest and bossy behavior, as well as false teaching." Such behavior today should evoke a similar response.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Jesus condemns any disciple—male or female—who behaves in an overbearing way (Luke 22:24-26).

Proponents also point to the context and application of 2:8, 9, and 15 on the level of principles. They argue as well that this reading fits well within the context of the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5. Finally, they read the appeal to creation as an illustration—much like the appeal to Eve in 2 Cor 11:3-4—warning the church in Ephesus to avoid deception similar to that experienced by Adam and Eve.

Opponents point out the appeal to creation in 2:13-14 and the apparent contradiction with 1 Cor 14:34-35. Furthermore, they doubt—even if there is a specific connection between 1 Timothy 2 and the younger widows—that the instructions to women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15 would change if the specific problems were solved.

*Option 3: Diversity in the New Testament on This Issue*

Still others are not concerned whether this passage is understood in the first or second way. They contend that the New Testament has passages that both affirm and restrict the roles of women. In other words, they see attempts to squeeze all the passages about women into one end of the spectrum or the other as forced.

In support, they argue that the New Testament shows diversity on other issues (e.g., metaphors for salvation and the attitude of Christians toward the government). Furthermore, proponents contend that the early church may still have been in the process of working out an answer to the issue of women's roles, much in the same way that it was still working out the Christian response to slavery.

Opponents question whether there is diversity on the issue of women's roles. Furthermore, many opponents of Option 3 do not see a problem fitting all the evidence into their interpretation.

**WEALTH IN 1 TIM 6:6-10, 17-19**

As we move to the topic of wealth, it is worth considering that the United States is likely the wealthiest nation in all of human history. From one perspective, one might argue that the U.S. is also the most generous, since it gives more developmental assistance than any other country in the world. Unfortunately, the U.S. ranks *last* (22nd of 22) among the industrialized nations when the aid is calculated as a percentage of the ability to give.<sup>7</sup> As a percentage, U.S. giving is at .13%. As a point of comparison, Ireland's rate is over three times the U.S. rate (.40%), while Norway gives at over six times that rate (.89%).

The U.S. gave at a rate of 2.79% during the Marshall Plan, the highest in our nation's history.<sup>8</sup> Why has the U.S. become less generous as it has become wealthier? In this context of our vast wealth in America, the church needs to be prophetic, as well as informed about the *spiritual danger* of wealth. 1 Timothy 6 offers both warnings and constructive advice to the church.



Paul devotes two sections to the topic of wealth (6:6-10, 17-19). The first section addresses two issues: contentment and the dangers of wealth. The latter section provides an opportunity to reflect on positive models for using wealth.

### *The Structural Features*

Godliness functions as a hook word, along with *means of gain* (*porismos*), linking 6:5 to 6:6. At the end of this section, the passage ends a bit abruptly in 6:10, the new section beginning with a direct address to Timothy in 6:11. In addition, there is a final link to godliness in 6:11, connecting 6:3-10 with 6:11.

### *Key Themes and Terms*

Readers of 1 Timothy may remember the language of entrapment previously mentioned in the context of the devil's activity (3:6, 7). Here in 6:9, Paul again uses the terms "fall into" (*empiptein*) and snare/trap (*pagis*). The main theme, however, is that of *wealth* (6:9), which will recur four times in 6:17-18.

### **THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PASSAGE**

Jesus had some serious words about wealth: "It is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:23). Paul too speaks seriously about wealth. As he reflects on wealth, Paul notes that good Christian men and women end up "leaving the faith" (6:10). Other wealthy Christians endure "many pains" (6:10). In contrast, Paul argues that the "gains" for which Christians should strive stem from "godliness" and lead to "contentment" (6:6).

### *Contentment*

It is important to note that Paul embeds his discussion of wealth in the context of *godliness*, a key theme in 1 Timothy. In other words, how Christians deal with wealth is not merely "my own business" or "a personal matter," but integral to a healthy relationship with God. Next, it's important to notice how Paul modifies his statement in 6:6. Paul says, "Godliness with contentment is a great gain." How Christians view wealth is no small matter in our spiritual life; it will affect our lives in substantial ways.

Most important, however, is how Paul modifies godliness; it is godliness *with contentment*. Contentment (*autarkeia*) was a key word in the ancient world. The Stoics and Cynics in particular stressed how the wise man strives for contentment. What these ancient philosophies meant by *autarkeia* is close to self-sufficiency—whatever happens, the wise man can handle it by himself.<sup>9</sup> The stress of *autarkeia* in this passage, however, falls on the inner disposition of contentment. Note that the same root—stressing contentment—recurring in 6:8 ("we shall be content"; *arkein*).

Paul explains why godliness with contentment is such a foundational idea in his comments that follow in 6:6. Godliness with contentment is a great gain because wealth has only limited use and value—"We brought nothing into the world, and we are not able to take anything out" (6:7). Paul then describes the "bare necessities"—"If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these things" (6:8). The word for clothing (*skepasma*) can also mean shelter, although clothing is the more likely meaning in this passage (BDAG). So, money is obviously necessary to live, but its use is limited to this life, and its primary value is to provide "the essentials."

### *Dangers of Wealth*

Paul turns from his discussion of contentment to a description of the dangers of wealth in 6:9-10. A number of points are worthy of note. First, Paul's comments are not directed toward the wealthy in general (cf. Jesus' comments in Matthew 19:23). Rather, Paul here addresses those who *want* (6:9), *love* (6:10), and *eagerly desire* (6:10) to be rich. In other words, this passage is not a blanket condemnation of the wealthy.



This point is important because it is easy to demonize wealth; for Paul, wealth is not demonic, but it *is* dangerous.

It is important to remember that the congregation at Ephesus has some wealthy members (6:17-19). In this passage, Paul specifically addresses those wanting to be wealthy, not only because that desire in itself is a problem, but also because of wealthy members who have already fallen away (6:10). Although this stress on wanting to be wealthy may seem like a loophole (“I don’t *love* money”), Paul does not intend it to be one. Rather, his words challenge his readers and should challenge us to run a self-check on money and on what we want in terms of our houses, cars, retirement, and opportunities for our children (college, sports teams, music lessons, etc.).

Second, Paul describes some of the dangers for those people who want to be wealthy. They fall into temptation, a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires (6:9). With a desire for wealth comes further temptations, traps, and desires that are foolish and harmful. The desires are “foolish” because they do not lead toward godliness. The desires are “harmful” because, as Paul explains, they plunge men into ruin and destruction (6:9). The end of such desires is literally a spiritual dead end.

Paul further explains (*gar*) why that road leads to ruin: “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evils” (6:10). Using a common proverb, Paul is saying (and I paraphrase!):

Look, there are a million ways that a desire for more can trap you. I can’t list them all. You might get caught in the trap of clothing, computer speed, cars, boats, sports teams, books, the appearance of your house or yard, TV screen width, bandwidth, and so forth. Watch out, because the desire for more leads to destruction.

Third, Paul points to some actual object lessons within the congregation—people whom Christians at Ephesus will know by name. Paul reminds them of “some, who, eagerly desiring to be rich, have wandered from the faith and pierced (or impaled) themselves through with many pains.” Notice that the pains they experience are “self-inflicted.”<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Christians today do not have to look far to be reminded of those who are no longer Christians or who have gone through awful experiences—from failed marriages to wayward children—in large part because of wealth.

Other Christians have destroyed relationships or ruined their health in pursuit of wealth. It is easy to think about ways where “more” does not equal “happier” (e.g., multiple cable channels with nothing on, closets and garages cluttered with stuff that costs time and energy to keep organized).

I’ll add a reflection on the Abilene Christian University youth conference of 1992, where the researchers (Dodd and Lewis) presented positive and negative predictors of teen faithfulness. The top three negative predictors (i.e., its presence correlated with a loss of faithfulness) were as follows:

1. Unethical behavior (e.g., promiscuity, drug use)
2. Accumulation of crises
3. Family income (i.e., the higher the family income, the more likely a loss of faithfulness).

This last factor may be surprising to some; it should be sobering to us all.<sup>11</sup>

### STRUCTURAL FEATURES AND KEYS THEMES IN 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

In verses 6:17-19, Paul concludes 1 Timothy on an optimistic note. Paul connects “truly living” with trusting in God and being generous like God. Those who are “taking hold of the life that is truly life” are those who have learned how to use God’s blessings in generous ways. Ultimately, Paul wants Christians to trust in God and imitate God’s giving nature.

### Structural Features

Paul connects 1 Tim 6:17-19 and the preceding passage with the use of the adjective “eternal” (*aiónios*; 6:16) and the noun “age” (*aión*; 6:17). Another link between the two passages is the repetition (with a slight variation) of the phrase “take hold of eternal life” in 6:12 (which becomes “take hold of the life that is truly life” in 6:19).

Although most translations break 1 Tim 6:17-19 into several sentences in English, the passage is actually one long sentence beginning with a command (“instruct”), followed by seven infinitives (two modified with negatives),<sup>12</sup> continuing with a participial phrase (“storing up”), and concluding with a result (or purpose) clause (namely, “that they may take hold of the life that is truly life”).

### Key Themes and Terms

Two themes thread their way through this passage, one major and one minor. The major one is obvious, but the minor one is more subtly expressed. The major theme is that of riches. Apparently, there is quite a bit of wealth in the congregation at Ephesus. For examples, see 1 Tim 2:9; 3:3, 8; 5:6; 6:5. In his focus on wealth, Paul uses four variations of a root meaning wealth (*plout-*): an adjective used as a noun (*plousios*), a noun (*ploutos*), an adverb (*plousiōs*), and a verb (*ploutein*). This repetition results in a couple of word plays. To the rich, Paul says:

God richly supplies all things to us (6:17).  
Be rich in good deeds (6:18).

In addition, there is a minor word play with *kalos* (good) in 6:18 and 19—*good deeds* in 6:18 lead to a *good foundation* in 6:19.

### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PASSAGE

The church desperately needs to hear teaching about wealth. Shrouded in silence, *the* topic of money may be the taboo subject in our churches. We do not talk to other Christians about how much we earn or how we spend our salaries. Because of this lack of accountability, to a large extent, we can be as greedy as we want to be, and no one knows.

Another consequence of this silence is that the church rarely hears about *positive* models for using wealth. Many Christians want to use their wealth well, but they really haven’t heard very many positive examples illustrating ways Christians can and should give. When a number of stories about generosity are told, the church can be equipped and inspired to be “rich in good deeds” (6:18) as Paul advocates.

### Paul’s Seven Commands to the Rich

With a series of seven infinitives, usually disguised in English translations, Paul charges the wealthy Christians to use their riches well. Paul’s first two commands are expressed as don’ts, but the last five commands are expressed positively. Taken together, these instructions direct Christians in the use of and proper attitude towards wealth.

*Don’t be proud.* Paul begins with a none-too-subtle description of the rich—they are those who are rich “in the present age”. In other words, whatever status, power, or ease they currently possess is temporary, and they have some “financial planning” to do if they are going to be prepared “for the future” (6:19). This first warning addresses their attitude, specifically the possibility of becoming arrogant—an all-too-common temptation for the rich and for those with position or power.

*Don’t hope on the uncertainty of riches.* Paul’s second command is also negative, telling the wealthy what to avoid. They should not place their trust in riches, which belong to the “present age” (6:17). By describing such a trust as “hope on uncertainty,” Paul shows the futility of such trust. In contrast, Paul



describes Christians as those who “hope in God” (4:10; 5:5), a description he will continue with his next command.

*(Hope) in God, who richly supplies all things to us for our enjoyment.* Although Paul avoids repeating the verb *hope* again, *hope* still governs this third command. Instead of trusting in riches, the wealthy should place their trust in God, whom Paul describes as the one who “richly (*plousiōs*) supplies all things to us.” Paul’s comment on “enjoyment” is both a positive statement about creation and a likely critique of some in Ephesus. God’s blessings are for enjoyment, in contrast to some who advocate denial and ascetic practices (4:3-5). God’s blessings are for enjoyment but not for indulgence, as some younger widows seem to think (5:6). In short, Paul commends the goodness of creation; it is “for our enjoyment.”

*Do good works.* As Paul continues, he uses a rare verb to describe a common idea with his fourth command. The only other use of *agathoergein* is Acts 14:17, where it describes God’s activity. Nevertheless, the same idea (with *agathos*) is seen elsewhere in 1 Timothy (2:10 and 5:10).

*Be rich in good deeds.* The fifth command is virtually synonymous with the previous one. However, Paul again puns, telling the rich to “be rich (*ploutein*) in good (*kalos*) deeds.” The same idea (with *kalos*) is seen in 1 Tim 5:10 and 25.

*Be generous and (be) sharing.* As Paul closes, he adds two commands that are virtually synonymous. Paul’s repetition of this idea of generosity stresses this virtue.

With a pair of shifting metaphors (from “storing up” to a “foundation”), Paul points out the results of following these commands—“they store up for themselves a good foundation for the future” (cf. Matt 6:20). Then with the final phrase of 6:19, Paul describes the result of this “storing up—that they take hold of the life that is truly life.” This final phrase echoes that of 6:12 (“take hold of eternal life”), so that we see that “the life that is truly life” (6:19) is synonymous with “eternal life” (6:12).

From 1 Tim 6:12, we note that “eternal life” is something that can be taken hold of now—it has both a present and a future aspect, and so does “the life that is truly life” in 6:19. In other words, as the rich exercise their generosity in this life, they get a foretaste of eternal life. Although the rich may have more money to give, anyone who acts as Paul has described in 6:17-19 will be able to take hold of the “life that is truly life.” Paul’s point here parallels that of 1 Tim 4:8, where godliness has benefits both in this life and the life to come.

In this passage, Paul makes a theological move. He claims that when we act in giving ways, we imitate our maker, who, according to 6:17, “richly supplies all things.” So, even though Paul gives a series of commands, the commands are more than merely “do this; don’t do that.” Rather, Paul indicates that we should act in giving ways *because God acts in giving ways*. When we give, we act in a godly manner. To be certain, Paul also mentions both present and future benefits for Christians in 6:19.

But ultimately, as churches discuss giving, we create more *desire* to do good by founding our encouragement to give on who God is and who we are as his children. When we give, we experience *the life that is truly life* because we imitate the living God who truly is.

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#### NOTES

- 1 My thanks goes to Covenant Press for permission to reproduce much of the substance of my material found in *The Mystery of Godliness: Great Themes from 1 Timothy*. To contact Covenant Press, call 877-673-1015. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
- 2 See F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Henceforth, this lexicon is cited as BDAG.
- 3 S. B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 70; cited in Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 64.



- 4 For a similar use of the language of salvation, see 1 Tim 4:16.
- 5 On the translation of *authentēs* as “bossy,” note the definition in BDAG, “to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to ... (practically = ‘tell a man what to do’ [Jerusalem Bible].”
- 6 Elsewhere in 1 Timothy, men are called to modest behavior with the same word as the women (*kosmios* [“respectable, appropriate”] in 2:9 and 3:2) and with a word built on the same root (*sôphrosunê* [“prudence”] in 2:9, 15 and *sôphrôn* [“prudent”] in 3:2).
- 7 See [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/3/2/22460411.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/3/2/22460411.pdf).
- 8 Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 32.
- 9 The Christian, however, is Christ-sufficient; notice Phil 4:11 and 13; in 1 Timothy, see 1:12.
- 10 Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 296.
- 11 For further reflection on Christians and possessions, see Richard B. Hays, *Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); James Hudnet-Beumler, *Generous Saints: Congregations Rethinking Ethics and Money* (Bethesda, MD.: Alban Institute, 1999); William H. Short, *The Cathedral Within: Transforming Your Life by Helping Others* (New York: Random House, 1999); Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Dallas: Word, 1997); Robert Wuthnow, *Rethinking Materialism: Perspectives on the Spiritual Dimension of Economic Behavior* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995).
- 12 Only five of the verbs are stated explicitly; two verbs are ellipsed.

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Below is a briefly annotated list of books on 1 Timothy. Although I cannot recommend everything they say, I do hope that they can deepen your understanding and enjoyment of 1 Timothy.

- Bassler, J. M. *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.) Brief, but readable and insightful. A careful reading of the text. Strong knowledge of the NT background. Arranged according to literary units rather than a verse-by-verse commentary.
- Collins, Raymond F. *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. New Testament Library.* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.) A technical commentary, strong on ancient literary parallels.
- Davies, Margaret. *The Pastoral Epistles. New Testament Guides.* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.) A short but substantial treatment of various issues such as authorship, women, theology, Christology, and ethics. Arranged topically.
- Dibelius, Martin and Hans Conzelmann. *The Pastoral Epistles. Hermeneia.* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972.) Technical but highly informative.
- Fee, Gordon D. *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus. New International Biblical Commentary.* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988.) Evangelical commentary. Strong exposition with ideas for preaching and teaching.
- Harding, Mark. *What Are They Saying About the Pastoral Epistles?* (New York: Paulist, 2001.) An easy way to catch up on recent scholarship. An extremely helpful series.
- Hawthorne, G. F. and R. P. Martin, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters.* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993.) A great reference volume with brief articles.
- Johnson, Luke T. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy.* Anchor Bible 35A. (New York: Doubleday, 2000.) Strong, sometimes idiosyncratic commentary. Contains an extensive introduction. Argues for Pauline authorship. Strong on NT background.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Knox Preaching Guides. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987.) A brief, profitable overview.
- Kelly, J. N. D. *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. (New York: Harper, 1963.) Older, brief, yet informative.
- Knight, George W., III. *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992.) Technical and detailed.
- Liefeld, Walter L. *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. The NIV Application Commentary. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1999.) Brief but substantial exposition with helpful reflection on application.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *The Pastoral Epistles*. International Critical Commentary. (New York: T & T Clark, 1999). One of the most detailed commentaries but still readable.
- Moss, C. Michael. *1, 2 Timothy & Titus*. College Press NIV Commentary. (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1994.) Clear, concise, and informative.
- Mounce, William D. *Pastoral Epistles*. Word Biblical Commentary 46. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.) Evangelical commentary. Detailed and informative.
- Oden, Thomas C. *First and Second Timothy and Titus*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. (Louisville: John Knox, 1989.) Intended for preaching and teaching.
- Quinn, Jerome D. and William Wacker. *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000.) A detailed, sometimes wordy commentary. Wacker completed the commentary after Quinn's death.
- Thompson, James. *Equipped for Change*. (Abilene: ACU Press, 1996.) Brief but insightful. A great text for Bible studies in churches.
- Towner, Philip H. *1-2 Timothy and Titus*. IVP New Testament Commentary. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994.) A commentary intended for preachers and teachers.

