

HILARIOUS GENEROSITY

STUDY TWO

Contentment, Generosity, and You

1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Put godliness with contentment, and the results are a generous heart and life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JOYFUL generosity is like a mountain stream. Sparkling and splashing, the water rushes past boulders and cascades over ledges as it pools into a pond where animals come to be refreshed. The stream sustains life in the ecosystem of the forest. Without its generous flow, the land would be parched and the forest barren.

In a similar way, our joyful giving nourishes the ecosystem of God's kingdom. When we give, ministries thrive. Thirsty souls are satisfied by the life-giving message of Christ, who is the living water bringing salvation and hope to a world in desperate need.

But generosity isn't generated in a vacuum. To find its source, we must search the recesses of a person's heart where character is formed.

As we'll discover in this *Searching the Scriptures* study, the character quality from which generosity springs is *contentment*—which is an outflow of *godliness*. If you want a life flowing with joyful generosity, focus on developing godliness with contentment. Let's find out more about these tributaries of generosity from Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 6.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prayer opens our hearts to receive the message God has for us in His Word. Invite the Lord to guide you in His truth.



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1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to his protégé in Ephesus—Timothy, a young pastor whom Paul left in charge when he departed to Macedonia. Paul pressed Timothy to deal with some false teachers in the church who were wasting everyone’s time with “endless discussion of myths” (1 Timothy 1:4).

Their ramblings didn’t help anyone “live a life of faith in God” (1:4) but stirred up “arguments ending in jealousy, division, slander, and evil suspicions” (6:4). Although they put on a show of godliness, these firebrands were corrupt to the core. They wanted only “to become wealthy” (6:5).

Paul urged Timothy to stick to “the wholesome teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ” (6:3) and to pursue “a godly life,” which is marked by “faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness” (6:11). But Paul didn’t stop there. He wrote, “true godliness with *contentment* is itself great wealth” (6:6, emphasis added), and he explained to Timothy the life-changing benefits of this golden quality.



Observation: The Benefits of Contentment

Read *1 Timothy 6:6–10* with a keen eye to *observe* every detail of what Paul was saying. The first word in 6:6 signals a contrast: “Yet.” Look back at *6:3–5*. Whom does Paul want Timothy to live differently *than*? What vices characterized these people?

Certainly, godliness offers “great wealth”—but not the kind the false teachers craved (6:6). Based on Christ’s teaching in *Matthew 6:19–20*, what wealth was Paul alluding to in *1 Timothy 6:6*?

Few things are more detestable among people in ministry than greed. It’s all around us. Signs of greed. Wanting to get rich out of false piety.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Greed bankrupts our souls, but contentment enriches us. In *interpretation*, we'll explore the meaning of contentment. For now, let's observe what contentment does.

Contentment Adjusts Our Perspective—1 Timothy 6:7

According to *1 Timothy 6:7*, how does contentment adjust our perspective on the things of this world? Compare with Job's cry from his pit of suffering in *Job 1:21*.

Contentment Centers Us on the Essentials—1 Timothy 6:8

What essentials did Paul list in *1 Timothy 6:8*? What is the value of being content with these essentials?

Contentment Guards against Greed—1 Timothy 6:9–10

What pitfalls of greed did Paul list in *1 Timothy 6:9–10*? Look closely at Paul's choice of verbs. From what dangers does contentment guard us?

No one has convinced me that getting more makes you generous. Having more will not result in your giving more. Giving at the current level where you are reveals the true condition of your heart. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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To conclude this section, in *1 Timothy 6:17–19*, Paul turned his attention from those who long for riches to those who were *already rich*. Put in your own words Paul’s commands to “those who are rich in this world” (6:17).

In summary, contentment helps us “not to be proud” but be humble and thankful (1 Timothy 6:17). It reminds us to trust in God and “not to trust in [our] money” (6:17). It affirms that all our possessions come from God and belong to Him. Contentment does so much for us . . . but what exactly does it mean?



Interpretation: What Does Contentment Mean?

Interpretation digs out the meaning of the passage using Bible-study tools and contextual clues. The Greek word for *contentment* is *autarkeia*, which suggests a mind-set that results from having all we need. Look up *autarkeia* in the Greek dictionary at billmounce.com and write down what you learn about the meaning.

Contentment isn’t complacency; rather, it’s linked to a sense of sufficiency. When we are content—that is, *satisfied that what we have is sufficient*—then we experience the following:

1. We enjoy our lot rather than strive for more.
2. We applaud the achievements of others rather than envy them.
3. We cultivate gratitude for what we have.
4. We avoid resentment about what we don’t have.

Contentment, Generosity, and You

1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

In what ways can contentment benefit you in your walk with God?

We're contented when we're able to say, "That's enough." Contentment lacks the intensity of always needing more to be satisfied. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Free to Give

The writer to the Hebrews echoed Paul's contrast between greed and contentment. What insight does *Hebrews 13:5–6* offer? On what divine promises does contentment depend?

Paul also used *autarkeia* in a different form to encourage generosity in the Corinthian believers. We examined these verses in our previous *Searching the Scriptures* study, but below you'll see how Paul used the word for contentment here:

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. (2 Corinthians 9:7–8, emphasis added)

What is the connection between *cheerfulness* in giving and contentment—that is, a settled assurance that “you will always have everything you need”?

Contentment, Generosity, and You

1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

Free from the love of money, cheerful givers are free to give. They are content—*satisfied* that what they have is sufficient and *confident* that God will provide for their needs.

You are content if you have a God-given sense of sufficiency, regardless of your material circumstances. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: From Contentment to Generosity

What happens when contentment overflows into generosity? According to Paul, you have a storehouse of treasure “for the future,” so that you “may experience true life” (6:19).

Most Christians long for the “true life” that joyful generosity offers, but they struggle with releasing things. Instead of letting generosity flow, they build a dam to protect their finances, possessions, and time.

If this describes your struggle, paddle upstream to the source of generosity and examine your contentment. Do you feel satisfied that what you have is sufficient? Are you confident that God will provide everything you need? Search your heart and reflect on your level of contentment in the space below.

What fears over finances do you need to release to the Lord?

In practical terms, how does contentment overflow into a generous lifestyle? Paul tells us plainly in 1 Timothy 6:18:

1. *Use your money for worthwhile causes . . . “do good.”*
2. *Balance giving money with giving yourself . . . “be rich in good works.”*
3. *Stay ready to share . . . “always [be] ready to share with others.”*

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1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19

How can you put these points into practice today?

Close this study by formulating your own prayer of trust in God that He can and will provide for your needs and pray for opportunities to share what He's given you with others.



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your prayer.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2015, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 2 • Page 7

