

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 28-JUNE 3

Message Title: REQUIREMENTS FOR FINISHING WELL

Message Text: I TIMOTHY 6:11-21

Before Your Small Group Meeting:

- Watch Pastor John's Message
- Read 1 Timothy 6:11-21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is one thing that challenged you from the message this week?
2. What are the temptations in your life from which you should flee? Are there some areas where the temptation of overconfidence blinds you to the need to flee?
3. How do righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness function as weapons in spiritual warfare?
4. What are the dangers of simply trying to avoid sin without intentionally pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love...?
5. Does Paul condemn wealth? If not, how does he instruct the rich to view their wealth?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on 1 Timothy 6:11-21

6:11. Paul made an impassioned plea to Timothy—**you, man of God, flee from all this** (ungodliness). He was to live differently. So are all Christian believers.

Those who have chosen to follow Christ have an obligation to him. They are to run away from all the false teacher represents, the pride, the misguided thinking, the greed. But God never calls us to give up something without instructing us to embrace its alternative. We are told to put off the old nature and put on the new (Eph. 4:22–24); we are to stop lying and speak honestly, to put away crude speech and say only beneficial things (Eph. 4:25–29). The Christian is to escape from the traps and temptations of money, selfish ambition, and intellectual sophistry. We are to **pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.**

These six qualities mark the life of a Christian. But they must be pursued with purpose. We are to “run with perseverance ... [fixing] our eyes on Jesus” (Heb. 12:1–2). Paul’s list of characteristics closely matches the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22.

6:12. Timothy was to chase after personal behaviors, attitudes, and habits which would reflect his companionship with Christ. He was also **to fight the good fight of the faith.** As a leader he was to defend truth.

There will always be attacks upon God’s truth: professing Christians who propagate false teachings and those who encourage compromise. But the inspired beliefs must be fought for and upheld. This is not a skirmish but a sustained contest which the believer must see through to the end. This requires endurance and patience.

Paul told Timothy to **take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

The eternal life which believers enter is not simply a future hope; it is also a present reality. We take hold of this eternal life when we live in the power and values of God’s eternal kingdom. We will not experience the fullness of Christ’s dominion until the future when he reigns over all the earth. But the eternal kind of life is still accessible at the present time. We touch upon it when we order our daily lives in harmony with God and his Spirit.

This new kind of life is what every believer is called to. It is not reserved for the elite. It is available to all who make the good confession—that Jesus Christ is God’s Son, delivered to death for our sins and raised from the dead to secure eternal life for all who trust him.

True faith cannot be hidden. Timothy gave public witness that he believed and trusted in Jesus Christ. He had followed in the right way. Now Paul encouraged him to continue on with strength and clarity of purpose.

6:13. If all this were not enough, Paul wrote a serious mandate to Timothy. His prelude was filled with dignity, love, and a sobering reality. He gave his exhortation **in the sight of God, who gives life to everything.** This is not simply a nice-sounding phrase; it is a critical truth. God is sovereign over all life—everyone, the false teacher and the true, the powerful and the slave. All these exist by God’s mercy and life-giving power. We are cared for by his strength and goodness. This should bring comfort as well as gratitude. This is the God whom Paul called as witness to the charge he gave Timothy.

All of us have a calling—it is to eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). This life begins with faith and confession, and it grows in intimate fellowship with Christ, fulfilling his life through us in the world. Christ also had a calling—to reveal God in this world and to provide a way by which people could know God. This came through holy living, death for mankind’s sins, and resurrection.

Paul delivered his command in the sight of **Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.** In the course of Pilate’s questioning, Jesus stated: “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37). Jesus never wavered from the call of the Father upon his life. He persevered unto death.

6:14. Having called his witnesses, Paul then extended the charge to Timothy: **keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Timothy was to flee from unrighteousness and pursue the fullness of the Christian life. He was to devote himself to growing intimacy with Christ, to compassionate relationships with others, and unwavering guardianship of truth as found in Scripture. The full spectrum of life is to be lived under the reign of Christ, and it is to be done with consistency so that no sin interferes with such a life.

This is not a Sunday event but a lifelong pursuit and commitment **until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The coming of Christ has sustained the church for centuries. It is to our shame that we do not have the

same anticipation, the same high expectancy of the Lord's return. Such a glorious prospect keeps the difficulties as well as the temptations of this life in proper perspective.

6:15–16. This coming of Christ **God will bring about in his own time.** Even Jesus said, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7).

Paul again broke into adoration of the God whom he loved and served. It was meant to remind Timothy of the greatness of the one who had called him and to whom he ministered. Realizing the eminence of our God can diminish the opposing forces with which we must deal.

God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords—all these descriptions speak of his sovereignty, the vastness of his dominion.

This greatness was not evident at his first appearing, however. He came as a baby, naked and vulnerable. He served God and man, learning obedience through suffering (Heb. 5:7–8).

But at his second appearance he will come with might, with the word of his strength, invincible, clothed with majesty and glory. No king or president has any power except as given by God. Even this delegated authority is weak in comparison to the commanding strength of God.

The purpose of Jesus' first coming was to rescue sinners; the purpose of his Second Coming will be to save believers.

Paul stretched to describe this God who is beyond the created order. He began with God's transcendence: he **alone is immortal.** No one else and no other thing can claim this eternal existence. God has no beginning, no ending, no progression of growth or decline. Out of his life comes all other life. Out of his immortality he grants eternal life to others.

He **lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.** Light signifies purity, penetrating and blazing holiness. God is beyond the comprehension of humankind. He is also beyond our full knowing. He is so "other" than we are that no one can experience or approach the purity of his being. And it is to this God that **honor and might forever** are due.

6:17. Christianity does not require a vow of poverty or the forsaking of wealth, for Paul wrote, **command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant.** Some followers of Christ will be wealthy by society's standards. Just as Paul told slaves to stay and serve their masters (1 Tim. 6:1–2), so also he left the rich person in his surroundings. Circumstance makes little difference in the value system of God. It is how a person behaves in their circumstances that makes the difference—either glorifying or discrediting the name of Christ. However, there are inherent dangers in having wealth.

Those who are rich can easily fall into arrogance. This is an ancient problem, and Israel provides a classic example. They possessed and settled the Promised Land after years of wanderings. God, foreseeing what would ultimately occur, warned the people that wealth could be their undoing. "When you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Deut. 8:12–14).

Abundance breeds pride—toward God and others. The person who has much begins to credit himself with his wealth. Creeping into his heart is the notion that he has done well on his own, that he can get by without God. Wealth also creates an economy of false values. Beneath the class wars and the tensions between rich and poor simmers the deception that worth is determined by possessions.

Another danger which confronts the wealthy is that they easily place confidence in what they see—their stuff. Paul told them not to **put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain.** Jesus cautioned us about the uncertainty of money (Matt. 6:19). Each day we see the evidences of his warning—bankruptcy cases increase, the stock market fluctuates, governments fall and their monetary systems fail, prices escalate, and money drains away. There is no predictability when it comes to money; trusting it is risky.

Instead, wealthy believers are to hold their money with an open hand; they are to **put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.** Putting hope in money is no different from the primitive man or woman who bows to an idol of wood or stone, expecting it to protect or provide. This is

worshiping the creation instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). The Christian must never invest trust in things but in relationship—particularly with God, maker of all that exists (John 1:3).

A stronger, clearer statement about worthy trust could not be made than that given by Jeremiah: “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: ‘that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the LORD” (Jer. 9:23–24). Riches are unworthy to be the center of our hearts.

6:18. Paul almost always countered the negative with the positive. If we are to refrain from something, then he tells us to engage in something else. If the rich are not to devote themselves to things, then they are to invest themselves in doing good, to be rich in **good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.**

How we invest ourselves and our time is more valuable than money. God desires that we spend ourselves in doing good, helping others, benefiting those around us. It is a tendency of the wealthy to think that others exist or their benefit, to do their bidding. In God’s eyes it is just the opposite. Those who have been richly blessed must give abundantly. Once again, God desires that we imitate him. Just as he richly provides us everything for our enjoyment, just as his mercy and love are without limit, so his people are to live with the same extravagance.

6:19. By imitating the generous nature of our Lord, **they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age.** The treasure which accumulates in the life to come is not money, stock portfolios, or real estate. The treasure of which Paul spoke is spiritual, and it lasts for eternity.

This eternal wealth—the generous and giving life expressed in the world—is evidence of true faith in God. In this way it is a firm foundation for entry into eternity. How we use our time and our resources indicates where our heart truly belongs. If it is directed by the values and compassion of God, we **take hold of the life that is truly life.**

6:20–21. Paul issued a personal plea to Timothy: **guard what has been entrusted to your care.** This is no light matter. The gospel and doctrine, as given by the apostles, must be defended and preserved. Timothy had been equipped by God to do this; now he must set his heart and mind to the task. The work was entrusted to him, just as valuables are deposited in a bank for safety. Timothy was handed the responsibility of guarding the riches of the gospel against false teachers and keeping the church unified in the face of divisive teachings.

In order to carry out this work, Timothy must **turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge.** These are the arrogant views of the false teachers, those who think academic pursuits and tangling with words are, in themselves, pathways to spirituality. They do not recognize the need for a comprehensive belief that changes the inner person and his behavior. Such people and their teachings appear wise, but they are actually empty.

These false teachers were not just little irritants which disrupted the church; they were dangerous. The spurious doctrines **which some have professed** have caused people to wander **from the faith.** This was soul-damaging. Such people appeared as religious teachers, but they were traitorous to the God who created them.

Paul ended as he began: **Grace be with you.** This was extended not only to Timothy, but to the congregation who listened to this letter and heard all of Paul’s instructions. For the believers gathered in Ephesus, Paul desired God’s grace, his abundant goodness and spiritual fullness.

We continue as we started in the Christian faith—by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–10).¹

¹ Larson, K. (2000). *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Vol. 9, p. 251). Broadman & Holman Publishers.