

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: July 7, 2019

Lesson Title: "Lasting Investments"

Lesson Passage: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In 1 Tim. 6:6-19, Paul addresses a familiar perversion of religion, the belief that "religion is a way to become rich" (1 Tim. 6:5b). In our lesson passage he urges moderation in the quest for money and contrasts the value of spiritual riches with a hunger for material wealth (6:6-10). He concludes his letter by giving Timothy personal instructions once again (vv. 11-16) and advises "those who are rich" to be humble and to regard spiritual riches as more important than material wealth (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Summarize what Paul had to say about the pursuit of riches.
- (2) Outline Paul's advice concerning the proper use of wealth.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with these comments: We usually understand the word "heresy" to mean doctrinal error, but Paul sometimes associated heretical beliefs with misconduct, especially the bad behavior that disrupts harmonious relations within the church. ( E.g., the church factions he refers to in 1 Cor. 11:18 are called "heresies" in 1 Cor. 11:19. And in Titus 3:10 a man who has been involved in "contentions and strivings about the law" is called a "heretic.") But in 1 Timothy 6:3-5, the heresy Paul is describing seems to have both meanings; for here he refers to anyone who disagrees with the teaching of Jesus as one who loves to argue and quarrel about words and fosters jealousy, disputes, insults, evil suspicions and wrangling. *Read 1 Tim. 6:3-4, then make this point:* In heated disputes over fine points of doctrine, the compulsion to "be right" can obscure the responsibility to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Promoting doctrinal error is heresy, but so is introducing discord within the community of faith.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Read 1 Tim. 6:5-11, then suggest that v. 5 tells us why Paul launched into this discussion of the pursuit of riches: Certain people in Ephesus were using religion for personal gain (a vice that we see a lot today). "Supposing that godliness is gain" they peddled the belief that one can get rich by being religious. (Like today's "health and wealth" gospellers.)

2. Comment on 1 Tim. 6:10: Observe that this verse is commonly misquoted, with the wording, "Money is the root of all evil." Share

this literal rendering of the Greek text: "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." Ask your class to name some of the evils linked with love of money today. EXAMPLES: Child pornography; drug trafficking; prostitution; mail fraud. Note that the truth recorded in v. 10 is so self-evident that even ancient secular philosophers recognized it. EXAMPLES: "Love of money is the metropolis of all evils" (Democritus, 5th cent. B.C.). "The love of money is the mother of all evils" (Phocylides, Greek poet, 6th cent. B.C.).

3. Observe that the second half of v. 10 usually gets less attention than the familiar first part. Lead a discussion of the two results of coveting (i.e., "reaching after") money: Being "led astray from the faith" and "piercing oneself with sorrows." Ask: Why does the love of money lead one astray from the faith? SUGGESTIONS: (1) Obsessive desire for money can encourage selfishness, making one indifferent to the fact that wealth is often gained at the expense of other people. (2) Love for money can easily become a dominant force in one's life, overshadowing everything else. People sometimes sacrifice health, marriage, children, friendships and spiritual values in their quest for money.

4. Next, ask this: Why is love of money sometimes a source of sorrow? Share these ideas: (1) Love of money can produce dissatisfaction. QUOTE: An ancient Roman proverb says, "Wealth is like seawater, always creating greater thirst, rather than quenching it." ILLUSTRATION: A neighbor asked a greedy landowner, "How much land will it take to satisfy you?" He replied, "A little bit more." (2) Love of money is based on the illusion that it can buy security; but money can't guarantee security. The rich can suffer, get sick, have family problems and die like everyone else. (3) And money can create anxiety. The more a person has to keep, the more he has to lose; and the risk of loss can haunt him.

5. Ask the class to read vv. 17-19 silently, then comment: Paul was not totally opposed to wealth. He has cautioned against becoming obsessed with the pursuit of riches; but now he gives advice to those who already possess wealth. (1) First, he warns against haughtiness. Christians should be humble, no matter how large their bank accounts. (2) The wealthy person must guard against the tendency to depend upon material things rather than depending upon God, who is the source of all things. (3) Verse 18 is based on the truth that God is the owner of all things (*Ps. 24:1*), and the possessions He puts into the hands of His servants are to be used to accomplish His will.

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

*Emphasize the formula for happiness given in 1 Tim. 6:6*: "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Comment: Godliness is the spiritual regulator that controls our desires. When the focus of one's life shifts from material to spiritual values, the things that once were important become secondary.

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