

How To Overcome The Curse Of Covetousness 1 Timothy 6:5-6

Introduction:

1. Last week, I told you about a well-known author and pastor that talks about the curse of poverty. It is the idea that if you are poor, you are a substandard Christian. You aren't experiencing all of God's blessings. If you are walking in His favor, you will experience tangible, material blessings galore!
 - I wonder what our Christian brethren that love Jesus with all their hearts, living in 3rd world countries in mud huts, would think about this.
2. I said last week that the guys who teach this are really teaching sanctified covetousness. What exactly is covetousness?
 - It's an excessive desire for something that you don't have (in this text it's money).
 - They are desires that have gone out of bounds.
 - It's first and foremost an attitude of the heart (you could be covetous right now and I would never know).
3. Is covetousness a serious sin? Look at verse 10. I would say it is. Poverty is not a curse. Jesus was poor. Paul was poor. The real curse of mankind is the curse of covetousness. It is poison of the soul and it will swallow you up—you can drown in it.
 - The 10th of the Ten Commandments says covetousness is sin.
 - Paul placed covetousness in the same context as killing, stealing, and lying (Romans 13:9), as well as fornication, idolatry and drunkenness.
1 Corinthians 5:11
4. Why is this? Because covetousness tends to be the mother of a lot of other sins—killing, adultery, stealing, cheating, and lying. It's the driving force behind the corruption in this world—corruption in government, in the home, in the business world, and in the church.
5. Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Covetousness manifests itself as greed, selfishness, self-centeredness, and pride.
6. How do we overcome the curse of covetousness? Paul will explain how here in our text. Let me show you three key principles to overcoming covetousness.

We must recognize that:

Our identity is in Christ, not in our possessions. vs. 5-6

1. As we have learned, there were people in Paul's day that were trying to find identity in wealth. vs. 5
 - The more you have, the more like God you are.
 - Paul rebukes this false theology with some strong words—“*perverse,*” “*corrupt,*” and “*destitute of the truth.*”
2. Here's the truth—if you are a believer, a child of God, your identity is now **in Christ**. 1 Corinthians 12:27; 6:17; Ephesians 5:30

- You were made one with Christ when you were saved—Christ's Spirit now dwells in your spirit. You are alive now at the spirit level (that is the deepest level of life because it is divine life).
3. Before salvation, the Bible teaches that we are dead in sins—our spirit is devoid of the life of God, therefore in our lost condition we operate strictly on a physical level.
 4. This explains why people try to find their identity in physical things (their house, car, games, clothes, money, job, physical appearance, etc.). They are dead at the spirit level (no spiritual life), so they are left to grasp at physical things (they are operating on a strictly physical plain), which brings covetousness. Why is this?
 - Because enough is never enough (we think a little more will make us happy); this is the trap.
 - Because someone else is always a little better or prettier or popular or has more, etc.
 - Because physical things constantly change (they decay, degenerate, wear out, fade away, lose popularity—electronics).
 5. If your identity is found in your appearance, what happens when it changes? If it is in your job, what happens if you lose it or can't work? If it is in your car, what happens when it gets old and scratched up? If it is in your athletic ability, what happens when an injury comes?
 6. Paul is trying to get us to see that our identity is not in these physical things any more—it is in Christ! This is why he says in verse 6, "*But godliness with contentment...*" People, even believers, try to find their identity in all this stuff.
 - Remember, godliness is a love for Jesus that manifests itself as a desire to do His will.
 - A contented heart is a heart at peace. Contentment is an inner stillness caused by knowing our lives are firmly on the course God has set for us. It's the opposite of restlessness. **Illustration:** You're on trip and you're lost. You are miserable and feeling tense.
 7. Contentment never comes to those who are slaves to lust for success.
 - **Illustration:** John Rockefeller was asked, "How much money is enough?" He answered, "A little more."
 - Many people believe that if they can just have enough (possessions), do enough (pleasures) and be enough (prestige), they will be content. But these things only bring cynicism and emptiness.
 8. People who have recognized their identity in Christ now evaluate everything in their life by the standard of Jesus Christ.
 - Contentment comes when our relationship with Christ becomes the lens through which we understand all of life. **Illustration:** Looking through glasses.
 - People who are seeking to find their identity in material things always evaluates things by bigger, better, newer, the brand name, what others have, what will make them popular, the amount of money in their bank account, etc.

9. Godliness with contentment is the fruit of believers who have recognized that Christ is their identity—not their money or job or possessions or talents or abilities—but Christ.
10. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, you are at peace with Christ, with yourself, and with those around you. You don't want or desire anything outside of His will or anything that will hinder your walk with Him, therefore covetousness is not an issue.
11. You are not operating on a physical plain, but on a deeper spiritual level.
12. Does this mean the Christian doesn't have a drive to be the best at what they do? Does this mean the Christian doesn't have a desire to get that promotion at work or to improve their income?
 - Of course not, but they realize that their identity doesn't come through these things. However, when blessings do come, the first reaction is to thank and praise Christ, and the second reaction is to seek to glorify Him in these blessings.
 - How can I take these divine blessings and **be** a blessing? We never lose the correct perspective that our true identity is in Christ.

In Conclusion:

1. Godliness and contentment set a person free from the curse and slavery of covetousness. That is why the Bible says that it is great gain.
2. Money can't buy a heart that is at peace with itself and with God (there are people all over town with more money than they can spend, and still+ they are miserable).
3. Material things leave you wanting more, but a heart that is in tune with Christ is fully satisfied.
4. Praise the Lord! If you know Christ as your personal Savior, your identity is not in the changing things of this world, but your identity is in Christ!