

THE  
BIBLICAL  
FUNDRAISER  
IN ANCIENT WORDS

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THE HISTORICAL MINISTRY OF  
MAJOR GIFTS FUNDRAISING

ΤΟΙΣ ΠΛΟΥΣΙΟΙΣ ΕΝ  
ΤΩΝΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΡΩΜΑ  
ΡΑΓΓΕΛΛΕΜΗΥΨΗ  
ΑΦΡΟΝΙΝ ΜΗΔΕ  
ΝΑΠΙΚΕΝΑΙ ΕΠΙΠΡΑ  
ΤΟΥ ΑΛΗΘΟΤΗΤΙ  
ΑΛΛΕΠΙΘΩΤΩΤΙΑ  
ΡΕΧΟΝΤΙ Η ΜΙΝ ΠΑ  
ΤΑ ΠΛΟΥΣΙΩΣ ΕΙΣ  
ΠΟΛΛΥΣΙΝ ΑΓΑΘΟ  
ΕΡΓΕΙΝ ΠΛΟΥΤΙΝ  
ΝΕΡΓΟΙΣ ΚΑΛΟΙΣ

RUSSELL JAMES III

# **The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words:**

## **The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising**

A simplified technical commentary on 1 Timothy 6:17-19  
and companion to *The Biblical Fundraiser in Modern Practice*

**Russell James III**

JD, PhD, CFP®

Professor, Charitable Financial Planning, Texas Tech University  
President (former), Central Christian College of the Bible

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Story Elements

**Characters, Setting,  
and Backstory**

(Identity)





## Chapter 1

### **The people group: To those who are rich**

- *Biblical fundraising is a scriptural ministry to the wealth holders.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is just a way to get quick cash to a charity.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct **those who are rich** in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [ . . .]. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Prepare to be offended***

Let's face it. The Bible is offensive. Many parts are offensive to modern culture. Other parts were offensive in other ages and other times. Jesus's teachings were so offensive that he was killed for them.

This passage in 1 Timothy is also offensive. But it's offensive in a different way. It's offensive to popular church culture. It's offensive to modern-day Christians. It's offensive to their norms and expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

## ***To the rich***

When scripture delivers an offensive teaching, it's usually not subtle. That's especially true when Paul is writing. When he has something offensive to say, he usually leads with it.

We see that here. English translations of 1 Timothy 6:17 typically start with the verb. This might be instruct, teach, tell, or command. The Greek does not. It starts with the offensive part. It starts with, "To the rich" [*Tois plousiois*].

This letter is a "Pastoral Epistle." Paul is telling Timothy how to be a minister. Paul has already given special instructions for ministries to

- Older men (1 Timothy 5:1)
- Older women (1 Timothy 5:2)
- Younger women (1 Timothy 5:2)
- Older widows (1 Timothy 5:3-7, 9-19)
- Younger widows (1 Timothy 6:11-15)

These are all sensible ministries. The modern church would happily embrace any of them.

But then, Paul gets offensive. He tells Timothy to do something that few churches find comfortable. Few are willing to follow. After warning against chasing wealth (1 Timothy 6:9) and the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10), Paul outlines a specific ministry to the rich.

## ***No wiggle room***

When the Bible gives an offensive command, our first instinct is often to resist. We've already formed our ideas about God and his expectations; thank you very much. Change is

hard. We don't like to listen to anything that contradicts our comfortable assumptions. It's easier to explain that the words don't really mean what they say.

Here, scripture anticipates this reaction. If the verse began simply with "To the rich," we might invent some wiggle room. Perhaps Paul meant those who are spiritually rich? Perhaps "rich" means those with a rich prayer life? Alas, no.

To hammer the point home, scripture continues. This ministry is to "those who are rich in this present world." It's talking about worldly wealth.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Isn't this a contradiction?***

A ministry to the rich? Surely, this can't be! Doesn't James expressly prohibit this? Is Paul contradicting James? What's going on here? Let's take a look. James 2:2-4 warns,

"For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and is dressed in bright clothes, and a poor man in dirty clothes also comes in, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the bright clothes, and say, 'You sit here in a good place,' and you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?"

Two people enter the assembly. Immediately, they are separated. The message is clear: You don't belong together.

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<sup>2</sup> "In the three places in which *o nyn aiōn* occurs it has a definite material physical sense; whereas *o aiōn outos* has a more notional ethical force." [White, N. J. D. (1912). Commentary on 1 Timothy 6. In W. R. Nicoll (Ed.), *The expositor's Greek testament* (Vol.4, pp. 1897-1910). Eerdmans.]

The word for “make distinctions” here is *diakrinō*. One study explains that this word,

“Literally means, ‘to separate throughout or wholly’ (*dia*, ‘asunder,’ *krinō*, ‘to judge,’ from a root *kri*, meaning ‘separation’)”<sup>3</sup>

This behavior is wrong. Why? Because it breaks the fellowship community. (It breaks the *koinōnia*.) It separates those within the assembly from each other. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 does the opposite. It pulls the rich into the fellowship community [*koinōnia*] through sharing [*koinōnikous*].

The passages don’t contradict. They match.<sup>4</sup> Both target the same goal. Both strengthen the mutual bond of the fellowship community [*koinōnia*].

Wealth can be a barrier to fellowship. It can cause separation. Wealth holders can feel like they don’t need others. And wealth can make them distrust others’ intentions. It can isolate. Others can feel that the rich are different. They are better. Or they are worse. But they are not “us.”

The ministry to the wealthy attacks this isolation. It replaces isolation with active fellowship in the community.<sup>5</sup> It replaces isolation with mutual sharing [*koinōnikous*].

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<sup>3</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com)

<sup>4</sup> This is a consistent theme throughout 1 Timothy. Professor Craig Blomberg reviews this long series of connections, beginning, “Interestingly, some of the most striking parallels to James occur in 1 Timothy.” [Blomberg, C. L. (2022). *The perfect law of liberty on poverty and wealth: A precursor to Paul? Tyndale Bulletin*, 73, 171-199. p. 182.]

<sup>5</sup> In his commentary on this passage, Professor Ronald Ward explains, “When the church is as it ought to be, the question of wealth does not determine fellowship, which is in Christ and not in wealth or in the absence of wealth.” [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 121.]

Special ministries for special groups are scriptural. They need not divide the community. Instead, they can strengthen it. We can have special ministries to older widows. We can have special ministries to younger widows, older men, younger men, and younger women. And yes, we can even have a special ministry “to the rich.”

### ***Who are these people?***

So, we’re looking for people with big paychecks, right? Maybe a professional athlete or a brain surgeon? Probably someone with social standing? Someone who dresses fancy, right? Actually, no.

The word for “the rich” comes from *ploutos*. It means riches and wealth.<sup>6</sup> It references an accumulated pile of assets. It’s talking about houses, land, livestock, businesses, gold, and cash. It’s talking about net worth. It is a ministry to

“Instruct those rich in this world’s goods” (1 Timothy 6:17a New English Bible)<sup>7</sup>

This ministry is for people with wealth. Wealth is assets, not income. Having a big paycheck doesn’t make a person wealthy. Many with big paychecks spend even more! Having

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<sup>6</sup> “The *plousiois* refers to people who have ‘an abundance of earthly possessions that exceeds normal experience’; thus, they are categorized as ‘rich’ or wealthy.” [Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus* (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement Vol. 11). Penn State Press. p. 195. Quoting from Bauer, W. & Danker, F. W. (2010). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. University of Chicago Press. p. 831.]

“Simply put, the word choice of the Pastor reveals an extraordinarily affluent audience.” [Reinhardt, J. (2021). “God, who giveth us richly”: Wealth, authorship, and audience in 1 Timothy 6. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*, 2(1), 101-114. p. 106.]

<sup>7</sup> The New English Translation Bible uses the same phrase: “those who are rich in this world’s goods”.

fancy clothes or cars doesn't make you wealthy. It usually does the opposite. These purchases quickly lose their value.

This ministry is for people with wealth. It's for the accumulators. Wealth is assets, not social rank.<sup>8</sup> Often, those who try to flaunt it don't actually have it. Most wealthy people don't want to be known as wealthy.<sup>9</sup>

This ministry can include those without any prestige, recognition, title or social class. Why? Because none of these are assets. None of them are wealth. This ministry is for people who hold wealth.

### ***Wealth is not income***

A defining fact about wealth is this: Wealth is not income. It's a basic distinction, but it's often missed. People often confuse wealth and income.

They seem similar. Both are described in terms of money. People with great wealth often have great income. People with great incomes are at least thought to be wealthy. But wealth and income are different.

In math terms, income is a "flow" variable. Wealth is a "stock" variable. Income is like a river. Wealth is like a pond. Income is new. It's something that arrives fresh. Wealth is old. It's something in storage. Income is a basket of fruit from an orchard. Wealth is the orchard itself.

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<sup>8</sup> This was true in the early church as well. In his book, *The rich Christian in the church of the empire*, William Countryman writes, "People of various social ranks may be wealthy." [Countryman, L. W. (1980). *The rich Christian in the church of the early empire: contradictions and accommodations*. E. Mellen Press. p. 33.]

<sup>9</sup> One study asked ultra-high-net-worth people if they wanted people to know they were wealthy. Only 11% said "yes." [Taylor, J., & Harrison, D. (2008). *The new elite: Inside the minds of the truly wealthy*. AMACOM Div American Mgmt Assn. p. 19.]

A property tax is a tax on wealth. If the property generated no income, the tax doesn't change. An income tax is not a tax on wealth. Even a billionaire might have no income. He might lose money during a year. He could have both negative income and massive wealth.

The point is this. Wealth is not income.

### ***The Greek words: Wealth not income***

In English, wealth is not income. Greek makes the same distinction. Greek has several words that reference income.<sup>10</sup> Paul could have used any of them. He doesn't. Instead, he begins by using the words for an accumulated pile of wealth. He starts with *plousiois* [rich], *plousiōs* [richly], *ploutou* [riches], and *ploutein* [rich]. These all come from the same

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<sup>10</sup> For example, *prosodos* references income or rent in contrast to stock or principal. In an oration to a jury, Lysias says, "the sum which he did eventually confess to holding,—seven talents and forty minae: not counting in any income [*prosodon*]," [Lamb, W. R. M. (1930). *Lysias with an English translation*. Harvard University Press. 32.28.]. In another oration, Demosthenes references, "Then he has also in his possession thirty minae besides, which he received as the revenue [*prosodon*], from the factory, and of which he has tried to defraud me in the most shameless manner possible. My father left me a revenue [*prosodon*] of thirty minae accruing from the factory;" [Murray, A. T. (1939). *Demosthenes with an English translation*. Harvard University Press. 27.8.]. This also differs from the Modern Greek word *eisodēma*, referencing income, revenue, or crops. This word is used, for example, in a Modern Greek translation for "income" in Proverbs 15:6, "Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, but trouble is in the income of the wicked."

*Gignomenon*, "of things, to be produced," described the earliest income taxes – as opposed to property taxes on wealth – in Classical Athens. For example, Thucydides describes a tax on income in *History of the Peloponnesian War*, where income or revenues is *gignomenōn* – "of things, to be produced." The passage in Thucydides 6.54 is "*kai Athēnaios eikostēn monon prassomenoi tōn gignomenōn ...*" translated as "and taking of the Athenians but a twentieth part of their revenues ..." Similarly, a 10% income tax is referenced in the Athenian constitution (Aristotle, Athenian Constitution 16.4) using the phrase "*ginomēnōn dekatēn*". [See discussion in Fawcett, P. (2016). "When I squeeze you with eisphorai": Taxes and tax policy in classical Athens. *Hesperia*, 85(1), 153-199.]

*Chrēmatistikos* references money-making, profit, or the person who makes money or has high income potential. See, e.g., "Now it is clear that wealth-getting [*chrēmatistikē*] is not the same art as household management," [Ross, W. D. (1921). *Aristotle, Politics*. Oxford Classical Texts. 1.1256a.]



Greek word, *ploutos*. It references an abundance of possessions. It's a pile of valuable stuff.<sup>11</sup> It's riches or treasures.<sup>12</sup> It's wealth.

Our passage is not about income. It's not rent. It's not production or profit. It's about an accumulated pile of stuff – valuable stuff. It's about wealth.<sup>13</sup>

### ***No, we aren't all rich***

Wealth is not income. This seems simple enough. But messages on this passage often ignore this basic fact. This message is for the wealth holders. It's for a small group.

Preachers prefer messages that apply to the whole congregation. So, often, they'll introduce this passage by saying that we live in a rich country. They'll quote statistics about income. Then they'll say,

“We're all rich! So, this ministry is for all of us.”

No, it's not. High income does not mean high wealth. Living in a high-income country doesn't make a person a wealth holder. The US is a rich country. Yes. And the lower half holds

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<sup>11</sup> Some interesting uses include a translation as “property” [Godley, A. D. (1925). *Herodotus - Histories*. Harvard University Press. 1.29.] In Homer's *Iliad*, 1.171, Achilles complains, “while I am here dishonoured to pile up riches and wealth [*aphenos kai plouton*] for you.” Homer uses two different words, *plouton* and *aphenos*. While these are synonyms in most ways, *aphenos* can also include the idea of revenue, along with riches, wealth and abundance. In contrast, *plouton* does not appear to reference revenue, or a flow of money. *Plouton*, instead, is an accumulation of valuable items.

<sup>12</sup> See *ploutos* in Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., & Jones, H. S. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press [Also in Liddell, H. G., & Scott, R., (1889). *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press.] The meaning is consistent in Homeric Greek as well. [See Autenrieth, G. (1891). *A Homeric dictionary for schools and colleges*. Harper and Brothers.]

<sup>13</sup> Misunderstanding this distinction can lead to erroneous descriptions of the passage such as, “A typical charge to the high-income earner is found in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.” Halteman, J. (2007). *The clashing worlds of economics and faith*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 68.

about 1% of that wealth.<sup>14</sup> Credit card debt is over \$1 trillion.<sup>15</sup> For the bottom quarter of all households, median net worth is less than \$120.<sup>16</sup> (Read that again. That's not a typo.) Even in a high-income country, not everyone is rich.

The rich are different not only in their circumstances. They're also different in their behaviors. These are the accumulators. They're the collectors. They're the holders. Sometimes, they're the hoarders. This is a distinct group. It's a special group. It's not everyone.

Of course, it is still possible to ignore this reality. Look at the starving children in famine. We're all rich compared to that! But being rich isn't about having more than someone in a far-removed place or time. It's having more than those around you.

The richest men in the Old Testament were kings. But would you trade your lifestyle for theirs? Would you give up modern medicine, hospitals, running water, air conditioning, glass windows, automobiles, airplanes, movies, the internet, and your phone?

Solomon had none of these things. So should we say he wasn't actually wealthy? Of course not. That's ridiculous. He

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<sup>14</sup> For example, from 1990 to 2015, the share of total wealth held by the lower half averaged 1.04%. This share varied from 0.40% to 1.59%. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (2023). *Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989*. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/table/>

<sup>15</sup> Federal Reserve Bank of New York. (2023). *Household debt and credit report (Q2 2023)*. <https://www.newyorkfed.org/microeconomics/hhdc>

<sup>16</sup> The median amount of household net worth for the bottom quarter of households varies from year to year. In 2016 it was \$110. In 2013 it was \$0. In 2010 it was also \$0. The highest ever was in 2004 when it briefly rose to \$2,300. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (2023). *Survey of Consumer Finances, 1989-2019*.

[https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scf/dataviz/scf/table/#series:Net\\_Worth;demographic:nwcat;population:all;units:median](https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scf/dataviz/scf/table/#series:Net_Worth;demographic:nwcat;population:all;units:median)

had more than anyone around him. If others in a different time or place have it better or worse, that doesn't change anything.

***Conclusion: What's the point?***

The point is this. This passage describes a ministry to the rich. The rich are a specific, narrow group. But we already knew that. The only reason to resist it is because it feels uncomfortable.

Scripture commands a ministry to the rich. Yes, it's uncomfortable. Yes, it's offensive. But that's still what it says.

## Chapter 2

### **The ministry relationship: The authorized messenger who comes alongside**

- *Biblical fundraising comes alongside [para] the wealthy to deliver an authorized message [angelle] about generosity.*
- *Ordinary fundraising begs (from below), attacks (from above), or avoids the wealthy.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "**Instruct** those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### ***This one's different***

This passage is special. Many passages in the Bible have instructions about giving. This one has instructions about fundraising. It's not written to the one who will give. It's written to the one who will motivate others to give. Other passages tell the donor what to do. This one tells the fundraiser what to do.

Biblical fundraising starts with the relationship, not the message. Later, we'll explore the fundraiser's message. But the

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni **parangelle** mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

starting point is not the message. It's the fundraiser's Biblical role.

### ***The right role is everything***

Scripture doesn't give a list of 100 fundraising tips and tricks. It doesn't need to. Instead, it starts with a specific role. Then, it describes a specific message. If we fill the right role – and deliver the right message – results will follow.

As a fundraiser, filling this scriptural role can change everything. The Biblical fundraiser fulfills

- A continuing ministry to the rich
- That comes alongside to deliver an authorized message
- About enjoying wealth through impactful sharing

Filling this role works. It works for fundraisers. It works for their career satisfaction. It works for their life satisfaction.

It works for donors. It works for their giving experiences. It works for their life experiences.

It works for the church or charity. It leads to long-term relationships. It leads to long-term success.

Filling the right role – and delivering the right message works. It works for everyone. To understand this scriptural role, let's start with scripture.

### ***It starts with the right relationship***

This passage starts by defining the audience. This is a ministry to a specific group. It's a ministry to the rich [*Tois plousiois*]. It's also a ministry with a specific message. The message is about generosity. But how, exactly, should we

communicate this message? That starts with the right relationship.

In 1 Timothy, Paul describes several ministries to specific groups. Each group has messages specific to them. But for each group, Paul first describes the right relationship. He describes the role that Timothy should fill when delivering each message. For example, Paul explains,

“Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father” (1 Timothy 5:1a).

When working with an older man, Timothy is to take on a role. It’s the role of a son appealing to a father. The ministry is not just about the message. It’s about the relationship. It’s about the attitude. It’s about the delivery. In other words, it’s about the role.

But the role changes when the group changes. When working with younger men, Timothy fills a different role. He delivers the message in a different relationship. He appeals to them “as brothers”. (1 Timothy 5:1).

The role differs for each group. For older women, the appeal is as a son to a mother. (1 Timothy 5:2). For younger women, the appeal is as to a sister. But this relationship comes with a special warning. It must be “in all purity”. (1 Timothy 5:2).

The ministry to each group is different. It’s not just the message that differs. It’s also the relationship that differs. For each group, the role is different.

### ***What’s the word?***

So, what about the ministry to the rich? Once again, scripture doesn’t start with the message. It starts with the role.

This is not the relationship of a son to a mother. It's not a son to a father. It's not a brother to a brother or sister. It's something different. And, in translation, it's a little tricky.

The Greek word is *parangelle*. Without question, this is some type of communication. It involves delivering a message. That's no surprise. Each of the other groups also had a specific message.

But what's the right method? What's the right relationship? What's the right role? The verb gives some guidance. English Bibles translate it differently. It can be "instruct,"<sup>2</sup> "teach,"<sup>3</sup> "tell,"<sup>4</sup> or "command."<sup>5</sup> Other translations use "urge,"<sup>6</sup> "recommend,"<sup>7</sup> "enjoin,"<sup>8</sup> "impress,"<sup>9</sup> "direct,"<sup>10</sup> "charge,"<sup>11</sup> or simply, "here's what you say."<sup>12</sup>

This variety can lead to uncertainty. Is the right role that of a teacher? A military commander? An orator? A boss? An encourager? Should we give orders like an imperious general? Or should we be advising like a wise guiding sage? What's the right answer?

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<sup>2</sup> New American Standard Bible, 2020

<sup>3</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>4</sup> Common English Bible; The Message

<sup>5</sup> New International Version

<sup>6</sup> Mounce Reverse Interlinear New Testament

<sup>7</sup> The French word "Recommande" (recommend or advise) in Traduction de Louis Segond Version.

<sup>8</sup> Darby Translation

<sup>9</sup> Weymouth New Testament

<sup>10</sup> Tree of Life Bible

<sup>11</sup> King James Version

<sup>12</sup> The Voice. Similarly, Professor I. Howard Marshal describes this passage as "what to say to rich people regarding the use of their wealth in generous giving." Marshal, I. H. (2011.) The Pastoral Epistles. In S. Westerholm (Ed.), *The Blackwell companion to Paul* (pp. 108-124). John Wiley & Sons. p. 116.

## *Seeing the Greek*

It may help to start with what we aren't seeing in English. *Parangelle* isn't just a word. It's two words. More precisely, it's a compound word. *Parangelle* combines *para* and *angelle*.<sup>13</sup> You might already be familiar with these two Greek words.

By itself, *para* can mean “alongside,” “from close-beside,” “by,” or “near.” You may have heard this prefix in the Greek word for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is *paraklētōs*. A *paraklētōs* can be one who stands beside and speaks for the accused in a court of law. It can also be one who comes alongside to console or comfort.<sup>14</sup>

The second part, *angelle*, is from *angelos*. We know this word as angel. But this isn't just a heavenly being. It's the word for a messenger, news bearer, or herald.<sup>15</sup> Thus, *parangelle* combines the ideas of a messenger, *angelle*, who comes alongside, *para*.

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<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., “Word Origin: from *para* and *aggellō*” [The Lockman Foundation. (1988). *NAS exhaustive concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries*]; “*paraggēllō*, *par-ang-gel'-lo*; from *para* [3844] and the base of *aggelos* [32]” [Strong, J. (1990). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament with their renderings in the Authorized English Version*. In J. Strong. *New Strong's exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson. p. 55]

<sup>14</sup> “3875 /*paráklētōs* ... Usage: (a) an advocate, intercessor, (b) a consoler, comforter, helper, (c) Paraclete.” See also “3870 *parakalēō* (from 3844 /*pará*, ‘from close-beside’ and 2564 /*kalēō*, ‘to call’) – properly, ‘make a call’ from being ‘close-up and personal.’ 3870 /*parakalēō* (‘personally make a call’) refers to believers offering up evidence that stands up in God’s court. 3870 (*parakalēō*), the root of 3875 /*paráklētōs* (‘legal advocate’), likewise has legal overtones.” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).]

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., “*angelos*, -*ou*, *o*: one sent, messenger, angel” [Mounce, W. D. (1993). *The analytical lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Zondervan. p. 49.]; “*áγγελος*, *ang'-el-os*; from *aggēllō* (probably derived from G71; compare G34) (to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an ‘angel’; by implication, a pastor:—angel, messenger.” [Strong, J. (1990). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament with their renderings in the Authorized English Version*. In J. Strong. *New Strong's exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson. p. 7]



## ***I command you to give?***

Some translations use the word “command” for *parangelle*. Indeed, this word can have a military meaning. It can describe a general issuing a command. It can also describes one soldier passing along that command to another.<sup>16</sup>

In the days before PA systems, a general couldn’t simply yell loud enough to command large armies. Instead, his message would have to be passed along through the ranks. The soldier wouldn’t hear the general directly. He would get the command from someone next to him. Thus, the soldier would hear the general’s command from a messenger, *angelle*, who was close beside him, *para*.

The nearby soldier delivered the message. But the authority of the command didn’t come from the soldier. The authority came from the general who issued the command. One lexicon explains that,

“*parangellō* (from *para*, ‘from close-beside’ and *angellō*, ‘inform’)” references a command that is fully authorized because it has gone through all the proper (necessary) channels.”<sup>17</sup>

Paul gives Timothy a message to deliver to the rich. Its authority does not come from Timothy alone. Indeed, Timothy

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<sup>16</sup> One example comes from the Greek writer Xenophon. (Xenophon was a student of Socrates.) In 370 B.C., in his biography of Cyrus the Great, he uses the same core word, *parangellō*, three times, writing, “And when Cyrus heard this, he gave orders [*parangeila*] to the captain who was stationed first ... he told him to transmit [*parangeilai*] the same order to the second captain and to pass it on through all the lines. And they obeyed at once and passed the order on [*parangellon*] ...” [Miller, W. (1914). *Xenophon. Cyropaedia. 2.4.2. Xenophon in seven volumes, 5 and 6*. Harvard University Press. [English Text]. Xenophon. (1910; reprinted 1970). *Xenophontis opera omnia*, vol. 4. Oxford, Clarendon Press. [Greek Text]]

<sup>17</sup> I have inserted the alternate English transliteration, *parangéllō* (rather than the original *paraggellō*) here to maintain consistency for the reader across all quoted sources. [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).]

was likely much younger and less socially prominent than these rich people. It's unlikely that he could simply command them on his own authority. Instead, Timothy comes alongside them to share an authorized message. His message is true. It's inspired. It's authorized by God.

### ***Sharing authorized messages***

Coming alongside another to deliver an authorized message [*parangellō*] is an important task in the military. But this isn't just a military term. It's also used for other authorized messages.

Aristotle uses it to refer to a physician's prescription.<sup>18</sup> It's also used for legal instructions coming from a court. The court's message might be an injunction, a summons, or a notice.<sup>19</sup> Of course, the judge doesn't personally hand deliver these. Instead, a messenger passes them along. The messenger's role is to deliver an authorized message. The task is to *parangellō*.

### ***Sharing ethical instructions for life***

This word is not only for passing along military, medical, or legal commands. It's also used for ethical instruction. William Barclay explains of the verb and noun forms,

“They are *ethical words*. They are used of the instructions that the ethical teacher gives to his disciples.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *paraggellō*. (n.d.) The online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English. In *Thesaurus linguae Graecae: A digital library of Greek literature*. <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lsg/#eid=80255>

<sup>19</sup> Barclay, W. (1974). *New Testament words*. The Westminster Press. p. 210.

<sup>20</sup> Barclay, W. (1974). *New Testament words*. The Westminster Press. p. 210.

Aristotle also uses this word when referring to the ethical rules of life.<sup>21</sup> Clement of Rome uses this of God's instructions not to lie.<sup>22</sup> In the Gospels, the verb is repeatedly used to describe Jesus's instructions to his disciples<sup>23</sup> and others.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Barclay explains,

“We discover that it is the regular word for Christian instruction, and that it is the word which is uniquely characteristic of the commands and the instructions and the training which Paul gives to his friends and converts.”<sup>25</sup>

Thus, it fits that Paul would use this word here. He is giving instructions for those in the church. He is describing a ministry relationship.

### ***Encouraging generosity***

The military and legal uses of *parangellō* connote a sense of raw power. They imply a terse command. But the ethical instruction use softens this. It suggests the importance of explanation and persuasion.

Other uses are particularly interesting in the context of fundraising. The word can be positive and encouraging. It can mean to

- Recommend
- Exhort

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<sup>21</sup> Barclay, W. (1974). *New Testament words*. The Westminster Press. p. 213. (Citing Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. 1104a7.)

<sup>22</sup> Barclay, W. (1974). *New Testament words*. The Westminster Press. p. 212. (Citing 1 Clement 27.2.)

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 10:5; Mark 6:8; Acts 1:4; Luke 9:21.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 15:35; Mark 8:6; Luke 5:14; Luke 8:56.

<sup>25</sup> Barclay, W. (1974). *New Testament words*. The Westminster Press. p. 212.

- Cheer on
- Encourage <sup>26</sup>
- Counsel <sup>27</sup>

Finally, it can mean asking for another's help in a shared group endeavor. In politics, it means to summon one's partisans. It means to form a cabal for a political cause. This sense can apply even in a military context. It can mean a "call to arms" to bring together soldiers for a campaign.<sup>28</sup>

### ***And the answer is: It's a ministry relationship***

So, what's the right answer? Is it "command"? Is it "instruct"? Maybe "encourage"? What is it? Here's what we know with certainty: It's communication within a ministry relationship.

1 Timothy is a "Pastoral Epistle." It's about ministering to those in the church. Paul uses this same word in this way throughout the letter. It's how he instructs Timothy. (1 Timothy 6:13). It's how Timothy is to instruct widows in the church. (1 Timothy 5:7). It's how Timothy is to instruct everyone in the church. (1 Timothy 1:3; 1 Timothy 4:11).

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<sup>26</sup> *Paragg-ellō*. (n.d.) The online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English lexicon. In *Thesaurus linguae Graecae: A digital library of Greek literature*. <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lj/#eid=80255>

<sup>27</sup> Professor Ceslas Spicq, describing this word in the noun form, *parangelias*, explains that it "can take on the mild sense of exhortation or counsel." For example, he cites Plutarch's *Politika Paraggelmata*, a collection of "political advice." [Spicq, C. (1994). *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (Vol. 3) (J. D. Earnest, Trans.). Hendrickson Publishers. p. 10.]

<sup>28</sup> *Paragg-ellō*. (n.d.) The online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English. In *Thesaurus linguae Graecae: A digital library of Greek literature*. <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lj/#eid=80255>. See also *paragg-ellō*. Liddell, H. G., & Scott, R. (1889). *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon* [Middle-Liddell]. Harper & Brothers.

We might prefer one translation or another. But this is certain: The word here describes communication within a ministry relationship.<sup>29</sup>

Can we have a ministry relationship of military command? It's possible. If so, then translating this as "command" might fit. But it could fit only if that's the type of ministry relationship we have. If the listener recognizes our absolute authority to issue commands, then we can do that.<sup>30</sup> That would fit the ministry relationship.

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<sup>29</sup> In other places in the New Testament, this word is used for instructions given in a relationship of fellowship. It is the word used by Jesus speaking to the apostles (Luke 9:21; Acts 1:4; Acts 10:42). It is the word Jesus used in giving counsel to them when sending them out to teach (Matthew 10:5; Mark 6:8). It is also the language of the apostles communicating Jesus's instructions for the great commission to Peter after the resurrection (Mark 16:20). It is the language of Jesus instructing the man affected by leprosy after willingly making him clean (Luke 5:14) or instructing the parents of the little child brought back from the dead (Luke 8:56). It is also the language of Paul instructing those he continually addresses as brothers (1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:4; 2 Thess 3:6).

Indeed, even the roots of the compound word itself can imply this usage. Strong's dictionary defines, "áγγελος, ang'-el-os; from aggéllō (probably derived from G71; compare G34) (to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an 'angel'; by implication, a pastor:—angel, messenger." [underline added] [Strong, J. (1990). A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament with their renderings in the Authorized English Version. In J. Strong. *New Strong's exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson. p. 7]

<sup>30</sup> In an interesting parallel to this potential dual usage, Dr. Verlyn Verbrugge suggests that in Paul's fundraising appeals, he first writes in the form of a commanding letter in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 because his authority was fully accepted at that time. Through various conflicts, this acceptance of his authority then decayed, leading Paul to change the form of his appeal to that of the persuasive requesting letter in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. Professor Verbrugge writes, "When the relationship was good, he as their founding father and leader was able to take an authoritative approach, evidenced by his use of a commanding letter in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. But when his status in the church in Corinth deteriorated through the criticisms of opponents who were active in the congregation, it became far more difficult for him to function as a leader. He had to use more subtle means to motivate them to continue with the collection." [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul's style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 367.] Such an interpretation would fit with the usage of a word here as the word can incorporate both types of instruction, direct command or persuasive request, befitting whatever the underlying ministry relationship happens to be.

## ***Typical ministry relationships***

In real-world fundraising, we're probably not going to be issuing commands to donate. The ministry relationship is likely going to be different. It's more likely to be one of ethical instruction – not military command. As Dr. Dominik Tomczyk explains,

“*parangellō* (imperative) does not mean merely giving authoritative directions, commanding or instructing. In a broader context, it also means recommending, encouraging or even urging to carry out a recommendation.”<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, Dr. Bill Mounce translates *parangelle* here as “urge the rich.”<sup>32</sup> He explains that this reflects the relationship with the audience.

“*Parangellein* in the Pauline Epistles means ‘to urge’ rather than ‘to command’ (cf. I Timothy 1:3), and this confirms that Paul is speaking not to his opponents but generally to those in the church; his language is stronger when addressing the opponents.”<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, Professor Thomas Oden titles his commentary on this passage as

“Pastoral Counseling of the Wealthy (1 Timothy 6:17-

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<sup>31</sup> Tomczyk, D. T. (2021). Bogactwo jako hojność dawania. Analiza lingwistyczno-teologiczna 1Tm 6, 17-19. [Wealth as generosity in giving: Linguistic and theological study of 1 Timothy 6:17-19] *Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny [Wrocław Theological Review]*, 29(1), 71-93. p. 75. (Translation of *paraggellō* “(tryb rozkazujący) nie oznacza jedynie dawania autorytatywnych wskazówek, nakazywania czy instruowania. W szerszym kontekście oznacza on także polecanie, zachęcanie czy nawet przynaglanie do wykonania jakiegoś zalecenia”)

<sup>32</sup> Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary volume 46: Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 364.

<sup>33</sup> Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary volume 46: Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 366.

19)”<sup>34</sup>

Professor Thomas Massaro labels 1 Timothy 6:17-19 as

“Advice to the rich to be generous and ready to share.”<sup>35</sup>

This approach to encouraging donations fits Paul’s own practice. In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul writes a fundraising appeal letter.<sup>36</sup> He instructs the Corinthians to donate. But he begins this instruction by explaining,

“I am not saying this as a command [*epitagēn*]” (2 Corinthians 8:8a).

Paul is blunt. He makes clear that he is not commanding them to donate. Instead of commanding, Paul gives advice.<sup>37</sup> He writes,

“I give my opinion [*gnōmēn*] in this matter, for this is to your advantage.” (2 Corinthians 8:10a).

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<sup>34</sup> Oden, T. C. (1989). *First and Second Timothy and Titus: Interpretation, a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching*. John Knox Press. Table of Contents; p. 105.

<sup>35</sup> Massaro, S. J. T. (2015). *Living justice: Catholic social teaching in action*. Rowman & Littlefield. p. 66.

<sup>36</sup> “The two letters of Paul to the Christians in Corinth (2 Corinthians 8 and 9) seem to be the first fund-raising letters in western history.” [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul’s style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 369.]

<sup>37</sup> “In vv. 7-15, Paul urges the Corinthians to bring the collection, which had already been begun last year, to a successful conclusion. However, he cannot give a strict command, only an advice.... He does not want to order, yet he gives advice: it is better for you to finish what you began last year.” [Lambrecht, J. (1998). Paul’s boasting about the Corinthians: A study of 2 Corinthians 8:24-9:5. *Novum Testamentum*, 40(4), 352-368. p. 364]; “Then, in 2 Corinthians 8:10, as hinted above, Paul asserts that his message to the Corinthians in this chapter must be seen as *gnōmē*.... In Paul’s writings, however, he uses this word for the notion of advice or opinion (1 Corinthians 1:10; 7:25, 40; Phlm 14). What Paul is about to say in the next couple of verses of 2 Corinthians 8, in other words, likely reflects his opinion or advice.” [Verbrugge, V., & Krell, K. R. (2015). *Paul and money: A Biblical and theological analysis of the Apostle’s teachings and practices*. [Kindle]. Zondervan Academic. p. 154.]

Other translations start this verse with

“Here is my advice:”<sup>38</sup>

“So, listen to my advice”<sup>39</sup>

“And I am giving counsel in this matter”<sup>40</sup>

“But to counsel, I advise you this”<sup>41</sup>

Or, in a particularly fascinating translation for fundraising practice,

“But in this matter I give you an opinion; for my doing this helps forward your own intentions”.<sup>42</sup>

One lexicon explains that *gnōmēn*, the word here translated as “opinion,” refers to,

“A personal opinion or judgment formed in (by) an active relationship, the result of direct (‘first-hand’) knowledge.”<sup>43</sup>

Paul is explicit. He is not issuing a command to donate.<sup>44</sup> He is not giving orders [*epitagēn*] from afar. Instead,

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<sup>38</sup> New Living Translation; See also “And herein I give my advice:” King James Version; Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>39</sup> Contemporary English Version

<sup>40</sup> New American Bible; See also Bishop’s Bible of 1568 (“And I geue counsell hereto:”); Tyndale Bible of 1526 (“And I geve counsel hereto.”); “It is counsel that Paul is giving, not any kind of order.” [Thrall, M. E. (2000). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. Vol II. In J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, & G. N. Stanton (Eds.), *The international critical commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*. T & T Clark. p. 535]

<sup>41</sup> Aramaic Bible in Plain English

<sup>42</sup> Weymouth New Testament

<sup>43</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). 1106 *gnōmē*. HELPS Lexicon [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com)

<sup>44</sup> Beyond Paul’s explicit statement in 2 Corinthians 8:8, commentators note of 2 Corinthians 8:3, “Paul’s primary reason for emphasizing that the Macedonians responded voluntarily and generously is to make clear to the Corinthians that he did not force the Macedonians in any way to bend to his will.” [Verbrugge, V., &



he is sharing wise counsel from close beside [*gnōmēn*].<sup>45</sup>

This matches with the “*para*” (from close-beside) of *parangelle*. Paul is giving his personal opinion or judgment formed in an active relationship. He is sharing wise counsel resulting from direct “first-hand” knowledge of the donors.

Paul plainly rejects giving a “command” [*epitagēn*] to donate.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, doing so would contradict his goal that donors do not give “under compulsion”. (1 Corinthians 9:7). A general cannot command a soldier to “volunteer” for a mission. Once it’s commanded, it’s no longer volunteering!

The same contradiction informs our passage. The goal is not just that these wealthy people would give. The goal is that they would give freely, easily, and joyfully.<sup>47</sup>

A command, by its very nature, implies compulsion.<sup>48</sup> That’s what makes it a command. Following commands is not

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Krell, K. R. (2015). *Paul and money: A Biblical and theological analysis of the Apostle’s teachings and practices*. [Kindle]. Zondervan Academic. p. 168.]

<sup>45</sup> Professor David Garland writes, “the apostle does not command but instead invites, encourages, and lays out divine principles gleaned from Scripture.” [Garland, D. (1999). *2 Corinthians*. Broadman & Holman. p. 372.]

<sup>46</sup> The Greek text expresses this same idea in more subtle syntactical ways as well. Dr. Verlyn Verbrugge explains, “We are now in a position to draw this syntactical analysis of Paul’s appeal for funds in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 to a conclusion. The cumulative evidence is unmistakable: Paul displays extreme hesitancy to tell the Corinthians to get on with the project of the collection for Jerusalem. He uses a new, developing form of the imperative that creates ambiguity as to its force (8:7); he uses a participial construction rather than an ordinary imperative (8:24); he omits an imperative, thereby leaving the instruction understood (9:7); and when he does use the imperative, he makes sure that it will be understood as his opinion rather than as a command (8:8, 10, 11).” [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul’s style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 259-260.]

<sup>47</sup> This is referenced more directly later in the sentence as *eis apolousin* [“to enjoy”] and *eumetadotous* [“generous,”] as discussed in detail later.

<sup>48</sup> Professor Étienne Louis Chastel explains, “Thus the apostles preached. They left each one free as to the measure of his gifts, and as to the gifts themselves. They did not order; they advised, exhorted, supplicated; and this preaching of

an act of an easy-breezy, free-flowing impulse. It's the opposite. Thus, "command" is likely not the intended meaning in our passage.

Regardless of your preferred word, one key idea remains. When we come alongside [*para*] the donor to deliver this authorized message [*angelle*], we do it as a ministry to them. The communication must fit that relationship.

### ***It's a ministry for the donors***

Paul describes a ministry for the donors. It's a ministry to benefit the donors. It's a ministry that expresses care for the donors.

Why does Paul make his fundraising appeal to the Corinthian donors? He writes in 2 Corinthians 8:10b,

- "I advise you this to help you"<sup>49</sup>
- "I'm giving you my opinion because it will be helpful to you."<sup>50</sup>
- "I am giving advice because it is profitable for you"<sup>51</sup>

Why did he make his fundraising appeal to the Philippian donors? He writes,

"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek the profit which increases to your account." (Philippians 4:17).

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persuasion, advice, especially of example, was understood by the Christians of every nation to whom they addressed themselves." [Chastel, E. L. (1853/1857). *The charity of the primitive churches: Historical studies upon the influence of Christian charity during the first centuries of our era, with some considerations touching its bearings upon modern society* (G. A. Matile, Trans.). JB Lippincott and Company. p. 52-53.]

<sup>49</sup> Aramaic Bible in Plain English

<sup>50</sup> GOD'S WORD® Translation

<sup>51</sup> Christian Standard Bible

Paul writes a fundraising appeal letter to the Corinthians. He then sends Titus to complete this fundraising campaign in person. Titus is a fundraiser. Paul is explicit about this. He writes,

“So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:6 NLT).

Why does Titus fundraise? Why did he agree to this fundraising task? Paul explains,

“I am grateful that God made Titus care as much about you as we do. When we begged Titus to visit you, he said he would. He wanted to because he cared so much for you.” (2 Corinthians 8:16-17).

Titus’s motivation was his care for the donors.

Notice how Paul describes Titus’s role as a fundraiser. He writes,

“If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you.” (2 Corinthians 8:23a NLT)<sup>52</sup>

In other translations, Paul tells the donors that Titus works “for you” [*eis hymas*]. This *eis* clause reflects purpose. The purpose of Titus’s fundraising is for the donors. The purpose is “to help” the donors.

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<sup>52</sup> Paul writes to the Corinthian donors that Titus is Paul’s fellow-worker [*synergos*]. But Titus is a special kind of worker. He works “for you” [*eis hymas*]. See also King James Version, “Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you”; Good News Translation, “As for Titus, he is my partner and works with me to help you;”; GOD’S WORD® Translation, “If any questions are raised, remember that Titus is my partner and coworker to help you.” Webster’s Bible Translation, “If any inquire concerning Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you”.

The Biblical fundraising relationship with donors is a ministry relationship. It's a ministry to the donors. It's a ministry for the donors. It's a ministry that delivers benefits to the donors. It's a ministry that expresses care for the donors.

### ***It's an ongoing ministry relationship***

Biblical fundraising is a ministry relationship. This also implies something about the length of the relationship. This is not just a one-shot, hard sell to close the deal. It's not a one-time communication. It's ongoing communication. It's an ongoing relationship.

*Parangelle* reflects this. It's a present imperative verb. This describes something that is to be done continually and repeatedly.<sup>53</sup> Professor Ronald Ward explains,

“The present tense here suggests a long term policy: Timothy was not merely to ‘tell them’ and the matter would be ended. He had to keep on telling them.”<sup>54</sup>

Professor William Heidt explains,

“The present imperatives characterize the activity under consideration as one which is to be repeated time and time again, a continual process, iterative by nature.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., “The Greek present tense indicates continued action, something that happens continually or repeatedly, or something that is in the process of happening ... When the verb in question is in the imperative ... Its only significance is to show that the action happens continuously or repeatedly. In Ephesians 5:18, for example, Paul uses a present imperative when he tells believers to ‘be filled with the Spirit.’ The present tense makes it clear that this is a continuing experience, which they should maintain constantly.” [Bechtel, J. (2022). *The tenses explained: Basic meanings of each Greek tense*. The Ezra Project website <https://ezraproject.com/greek-tenses-explained/>]

<sup>54</sup> Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 121.

<sup>55</sup> Heidt, W. (1951). Translating New Testament imperatives. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 13(3), 253-256. p. 255.

One Greek grammar text puts it simply,

“present imperatives give a command to do something constantly.”<sup>56</sup>

This communication matches the intended outcome. As Dr. Martin Sheldon explains,

“The right use of wealth is now described in four infinitival phrases—all in the present tense, as if to stress the constant doing of the actions mentioned.”<sup>57</sup>

The goal is not a gift. The goal is many, many gifts.<sup>58</sup> The donor becomes rich in good works. This is giving so pervasive that it changes the donor’s identity [*einai*]. The donor’s identity becomes that of a good wealth sharer [*eumetadotous einai*]. The donor’s identity becomes that of a sharer with the fellowship community [*einai koinōnikous*].

So, let’s get practical. What happens if a minister actually does this? What happens when this instruction becomes repeated, even continual? The statistical answer is simple. More instruction predicts more giving. George Barna’s study of church giving found:

“Churches in which pastors preach a single message

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<sup>56</sup> Moulton, J. H. (1963). *A grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3, *Syntax*. T & T Clark. p. 74.

<sup>57</sup> Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul’s theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 151.

<sup>58</sup> “The rich (who by definition have much) are to be rich in good deeds. They are to have a large quantity of them, just as they have a large quantity of money or property. In other words, they are to keep on doing good. This has been implied already in the present infinitive but it is here brought out into the open. They are to keep on doing good – many times.” [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 123.]; “They must seek to be rich, not just in material possessions, but in the multiplicity of attractive and worth-while works (plural of *ergois kalois*) which their wealth enables them to perform.” [Kent, H. A. (1958). *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus*. Moody Press. p. 208.]

about giving raise more money, per capita, than do those churches in which no preaching about stewardship takes place.”<sup>59</sup>

A little instruction works better than none. The study also found:

“Churches in which pastors preach two or more consecutive messages about stewardship topics raise more money, per capita, than do churches that hear a single message about giving. They are also twice as likely to witness increased giving during that year.”<sup>60</sup>

More instruction works better than just a little. And what about those “superstar” big-giving churches? The answer was the same. The study found:

“At the great fund-raising churches in America, stewardship is a perpetual theme, not a special campaign.”<sup>61</sup>

A little instruction works better than none. More instruction works better than just a little. Perpetual instruction works best of all.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. [Kindle Edition]. Gospel Light Publications. p. 92-93

<sup>60</sup> Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. [Kindle Edition]. Gospel Light Publications. p. 92-93

<sup>61</sup> Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. [Kindle Edition]. Gospel Light Publications. p. 107

<sup>62</sup> For those ministers uncomfortable with frequently addressing the topic of money, it might be instructive to compare how frequently Jesus did so in his teaching. One author explains, “Between one-third and half of the forty parables that Jesus told have to do with the prevalence of money, the importance of money, and the role that money plays in our lives.” Boyd, B. (2020). *Extravagant: Discovering a life of dangerous generosity*. Howard Books. p. 17.

Scripture directs repeated, continuing communication. This is an ongoing relationship. This is a ministry relationship. Ministry relationships are not one-time encounters. Just showing up to make an ask isn't a ministry relationship.

This isn't just theology. It's practical reality. One study looked at the largest gifts received at different colleges and universities. These mega-gift donors were different. Most of them,

“had long-term relationships with the institution (11 to 40 years).”<sup>63</sup>

Only about one in five of these “had only been engaged 3 years or less.”

These relationships tended to be long. Beyond this, the mega-gift wasn't from a quick ask. Just for that one gift,

“On average, the gifts studied took 19.6 months to secure (from initial discussions with the donor to final agreement).”<sup>64</sup>

Transformational gifts aren't quick. They're from long-term, ongoing processes. They're from long-term, ongoing relationships.

In scripture, instructing about giving is not a one-shot task. It's long-term, ongoing instruction. It's part of a long-term, ongoing relationship. That ongoing relationship is not as a “money-getter” or “fund-raiser.” The role is to minister to the donor. It's to help the donor.

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<sup>63</sup> Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A., & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A., & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 7.

The instruction is beneficial, not burdensome. It's shared out of love for the donor.<sup>65</sup> It shows how to make a powerful, meaningful impact. It shows the most wonderful way to enjoy wealth. It shows how to grab hold of life that is really life.

The instruction is so exciting we want to share it. We want to share it again and again! In other words, we want to *parangelle*.

### ***And the wrong answer is: Begging***

Paul uses *parangelle* rather than any of the common words for “ask.”<sup>66</sup> One issue is that such words also would allow for the possibility of begging.<sup>67</sup> *Parangelle* does not. This doesn't mean that a fundraiser can't ask.<sup>68</sup> (Indeed, *parangelle* was used by the later church fathers to mean, “Ask.”<sup>69</sup>) It means that begging is not allowed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Indeed, “The goal of our instruction [*parangeliās*] is love” 1 Timothy 1:5a

<sup>66</sup> “There are many specific Greek words for ask: *aiteō* denotes the request of the will, *epithumeō* that of the sensibilities, *deomai* the asking of need, while *erōtaō* marks the form of the request, as does *euchesthai* also, which in classic Greek is the proper expression for a request directed to the gods and embodying itself in prayer.” [Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Biblesoft, inc. <https://biblehub.com/greek/154.htm>]

<sup>67</sup> For example, in Matthew 5:42, Jesus says, “Give [*dos*] to him who asks [*aitounti*] of you.” The word for ask used here, *aitounti*, need not refer to begging, but it can. The English Standard Version translates this as, “Give to the one who begs from you.” The typical word for ask can include begging. *Parángelle*, in contrast, does not permit this meaning.

<sup>68</sup> Asking can be included as one of many approaches to instructing, counseling, or advising. Consider the close similarity of the standard fundraising ask: “Would you consider a gift of \$50,000 to fund this good work?” as compared with giving direct instructions such as, “I think you should consider a gift of \$50,000 to fund this good work,” or “I would advise you to consider a gift of \$50,000 to fund this good work,” or “I encourage you to consider a gift of \$50,000 to fund this good work.”

<sup>69</sup> See *Paraggello* in Lampe, G. W. H. (1964). *A patristic Greek lexicon* (Part 4). Clarendon Press. p. 1009. (Citing the *Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* 1.3, *Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp* 5.1, and *Testament of Judah* 21.1.)

<sup>70</sup> Similarly, this does not use *parakaleō*. *Parakaleō* is a broader term for encouraging/exhorting another to act. It is used 109 times in the New Testament. It can mean admonishing, exhorting, encouraging, or comforting. But it can also



In many ways, *parangelle* is the opposite of begging. The prefix *para-* in *parangelle* references coming alongside the rich person to deliver an authorized message. This is communicating across. It's horizontal. Begging is asking upwards – from low to high. It's vertical.

The instruction will be to share [*koinōnikous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. This is giving across. It's horizontal. This is not almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. Almsgiving is giving down. It's vertical.

*Parangelle* (instruct, encourage, counsel) is horizontal communication. It pairs with horizontal sharing [*koinōnikous*]. It instructs from alongside about a horizontal gift.

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mean begging, imploring, or pleading. Again, the choice of *parangelle* excludes these last meanings. *Parakaleō* can involve begging or pleading. *Parangelle* cannot.

Some of the earliest evidence of fundraising is found on Ancient Greek monuments. An inscription on a monument concerning “the restoration of a gymnasium in Larisa between 192 and 186 B.C.E” reads, *inter alia*, “When the rulers had made a report to the people concerning the restoration of the gymnasium, and because the need was urgent, they were urging that the restoration take place by pledges because the government had no money, and they were encouraging those who were able.” “Urging” here is from *protrepō*, and encouraging is from *parakaleō*. One commentator notes, “Two things stand out in this inscription. First is the clear evidence it gives for the governing officials giving public verbal encouragement to the citizens to participate in the project (note the use of *protrepō* and *parakaleō*). We have, of course, no record of what they actually said, but this is one of the clearest indications we have for verbal appeals for donations in antiquity.” [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul's style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 171-172.]

In another example dated in the time of Augustus, the inscription “then goes on to speak of Epinikos, the secretary of the council, who had been showing great concern to repair public buildings and was out encouraging (*parakalountos*) Greek and Roman residents to do the same. They had been responding with their pledges. Thereupon follows a list of contributors, with the amounts they gave.” *Id.* at p. 173.

In both cases, those encouraging the gifts were of high government position. This high position as a practical matter likely precludes any sense of the *parakaleō* as “begging.” Timothy, in contrast, may be dealing with older and more socially prestigious wealthy church members, but Paul instead uses a word, *parangelle*, which inherently precludes “begging.”

Begging is vertical communication. It pairs with vertical giving or almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. It asks from below for a vertical gift. *Parangelle* and begging are opposites.

Begging asks without offering anything in return. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, the *parangelle* message describes a wonderfully attractive list of donor benefits.<sup>71</sup> *Parangelle* and begging are opposites.

Begging asks without standing or confidence. *Parangelle* delivers an authorized message. A general's instruction or court's decree is not shared with hesitation.<sup>72</sup> *Parangelle* and begging are opposites.

Begging asks as an unknown outsider. *Parangelle* here is in the context of an ongoing ministry relationship. *Parangelle* and begging are opposites.

The Biblical fundraiser may instruct, recommend, exhort, encourage, and counsel. He may “spur on” to good works.<sup>73</sup> But he does not beg. That's not just different from the scriptural instruction. It's the opposite!

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<sup>71</sup> Such as 1) doing good, 2) being rich in good works, 3) being generous and ready to share, 4) storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, and 5) taking hold of that which is truly life.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Oden explains it, “The pastor must not be afraid of those who have great wealth but address them with candor and care for their souls, bringing them into the concrete awareness of their opportunities of works of mercy—’thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed’ (v. 19).” [Oden, T. C. (1989). *First and Second Timothy and Titus*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 106.]

<sup>73</sup> Described in Hebrews 10:24. The Greek words for “good works” in Hebrews 10:24 (*kalōn ergōn*) are the same as in 1 Timothy 6:18 (*ergois kalois*).



## Chapter 3

### **Message 1: You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this!**

- *Biblical fundraising starts with the donor's past and continuing identity: They will give because of who they are.*
- *Ordinary fundraising starts with the charity's identity: They're supposed to give because of who we are.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world **not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches**, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Language problems***

In English, 1 Timothy 6:17 can read like an attack. It can read like an accusation. It's as if the idea is to yell,

"Hey, you! Rich guy. Stop being conceited! And stop setting your hope on riches! Repent! Change your life. Start setting your hope on God instead."

That sure set him straight! Mission accomplished, right? Actually, no. There are two problems with this approach. First, it doesn't work. Second, it doesn't match scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle **mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti**, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, plutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

We already know it doesn't work. Don't believe it? OK. Try opening with that approach the next time you're talking with a major gift prospect. See what happens. That conversation probably won't end well. It certainly won't end with a large gift. That's not how it works. No successful donor conversations start this way.

So, if it doesn't work, why does scripture tell us to do it? Simple answer: It doesn't. The actual message of scripture is very different. It communicates a very different idea. It delivers the single most powerful message in major gift fundraising. That message is this:

“You are the kind of person who makes gifts like this.”

To see this, let's start with the words from scripture.

### ***Not an accusation: We're all in this together***

This message begins with “not to be conceited.” The phrase is *mē hypsēlophronein*. Literally, this is “not” [*mē*] “high-minded” [*hypsēlo-phronein*].<sup>2</sup> This can sound like an

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<sup>2</sup> *Hypsēlo* [high] – *phronein* [minded]. For example, Matthew 4:8, “Again, the devil took Him along to a very high [*hypsēlon*] mountain ...”; Matthew 17:1, “Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James, and his brother John, and led them up on a high [*hypsēlon*] mountain by themselves.”

The verb form, *hypsēlophroneō*, appears nowhere else prior to Paul's usage in 1 Timothy 6:17. “Here, Paul uses the rare *hypsēlophronein*, a verb that appears here for the first time in extant Greek literature” [Pao, D. W. (2017). Set our hope on God who richly provides us with all things. In P. N. Jackson (Ed.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament, Volume Two: 52 Reflections to inspire and instruct* (pp. 116-118). Zondervan Academic.]

In one of only two known appearances of the noun form, Plato uses the word in a parallel way in *Republic* 8.550. Plato describes a wealthy family's son. His family backstory is positive. His father gives good advice. But nefarious nearby voices give evil advice. The son appears to occupy the same middle ground as the rich in vs. 17. They are in a different category from those in vs. 10-11 whose love of money is a root of all kinds of evil [*kakōn*]. The son is not an evil person [*mē kakou andros einai*]. Sadly, he falls into “evil communications” [*kakaj kechrēsthai*]. The result is, “under these two solicitations he comes to a compromise and turns over the government in his soul to the intermediate principle of ambition and high spirit and becomes a man haughty [*hypsēlophrōn*] of soul” [Plato. (1969). *Plato in twelve volumes. Vols. 5 & 6* (P. Shorey, Trans.). Harvard University Press.] Similarly, Paul's

accusation. It can sound like it's singling out the rich for condemnation. It's not.

Paul says the same thing to everyone. But it can feel different when it's about "us," not "them." He writes in Romans 12:3,

"I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself [*mē hyperphronein*] than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith."

The message to rich Christians is *mē hypsēlo-phronein*. The message to all Christians is *mē hyper-phronein*. *Hypsēlo-* means "high." *Hyper-* means "high." Both *hypsēlo-phronein* and *hyperphronein* are present active infinitives. Both mean "high-minded."

It's the same message. When Paul directs it towards us, it feels like good advice. When we get to tell it to the rich, it feels more fun to turn it into an attack. It's not an attack.

Romans 12 describes how our identity motivates our sharing. 1 Timothy 6:17-18 describes how their identity motivates their sharing. Both encourage sharing. Both begin with the same identity statement: "not high-minded."

The parallels continue. Next, both discuss the source of what we will share. Timothy is to instruct about

"God, who richly supplies us with all things" (1 Timothy 6:17b).

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ministry to the rich Christians may seek to replace alluring bad communications with a call back to their position in the family of the fellowship community.

Each of us is richly supplied, just in different ways. Romans 12 makes the same point. It says,

“However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us” (Romans 12:3a)<sup>3</sup>

We all get different things. God provides these different things for a reason. The reason is

“to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

Regardless of what God has richly supplied us with, we can use it in these ways. We can enjoy it by using it to do good. Sharing wealth is just one example among many. Romans 12 makes the same point. It says,

“each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one’s faith; if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:6-8).

1 Timothy 6:18 ends with *einai koinōnikous*. *Einai* is the “I am” verb. It’s an identity statement. Being *koinōnikous* is being a sharer with the *koinōnia*, the fellowship community. We share as part of the body. The message in Romans 12 is the same.

“For just as we have many parts in one body and all the body’s parts do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another.” (Romans 12:4).

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<sup>3</sup> An echo of this sentiment is also expressed in one translation of Romans 12:3 as, “I ask you not to think of yourselves more highly than you should. Instead, your thoughts should lead you to use good judgment based on what God has given each of you as believers.” GOD’S WORD® Translation

1 Timothy 6:17-18 parallels Romans 12:3-8. We share because of who we are. We are not “above” or separated from the fellowship community. We are not high-minded. We are not *hypsēlo-phronein*. We are not *hyper-phronein*. We share because we are bound together. We are different parts of the same body.

The message to the rich is not an attempt to attack. It’s an attempt to embrace. It’s not separating [*diekrithēte*] the rich from the poor in the fellowship community as James warns against.<sup>4</sup> It’s connecting the rich more strongly into that fellowship community [*koinōnia*] through sharing [*koinōnikous*].

Paul’s message is not attacking rich Christians as being different. It’s showing that they’re the same. We’ve all been richly blessed, just in diverse ways. And we’re all doing the same thing with it. We’re all sharing together. We’re all sharing because we’re not separated from or “above” the fellowship community. We’re all parts of the same body.

***Stop doing this, don’t do this, or continue not doing this?***

This is not an attack on the rich. It’s encouraging them. These Christians are to continue their already in-progress, ongoing process of being not high-minded. To understand this, let’s look at some grammar.

The phrase is “not [*mē*] to be high-minded [*hypsēlophronein*]”. *Hypsēlophronein* is a present infinitive.

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<sup>4</sup> “have you not discriminated [*diekrithēte*] among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” James 2:4 (New International Version)



The present infinitive references an in-progress, continuing process. One text explains,

“The present infinitive ... pictures the action expressed by the verb as being in progress.”<sup>5</sup>

The present tense represents an in-progress, continuing event. *Mē* (not) negates the verb. This combination can mean

1. Stop continuing to do this. (Negative presumption)
2. Continue to not do this. (Positive presumption)
3. Don't do this. (Permits positive, negative, or neutral presumption)

For example, Professor A. T. Robertson gives two translation options for *mē* with the present imperative as, “‘continue not doing,’ or ‘do not continue doing.’”<sup>6</sup> Professor Andrea Taschl-Erber explains all three options in more technical terms:

“Since the present stem in the Greek verbal system

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<sup>5</sup> [HellenisticGreek.com. (2015). *Lesson 14: Infinitives in English and Hellenistic Greek*. <https://hellenisticgreek.com/14.html> ]; See also, “The Present Infinitive refers to action in progress usually shown by the context to be contemporaneous with the action of the principal verb.” [Burton, E. D. W. (1900). *Syntax of the moods and tenses in New Testament Greek*. University of Chicago Press. p. 50.]; “The present represents action in progress” [Hildebrandt, T. (2003). *Mastering New Testament Greek textbook*. Baker Academic. p. 131]; “The most important kinds of action (Aktionsarten) retained in Greek (including the NT) are the following: (1) The punctiliar (momentary) in the aorist stem ... (2) The durative (linear or progressive) in the present stem: the action is represented as durative (in progress) and either as timeless (*estin ho Theos*) or as taking place in present time ... (3) The present stem may also be téerative: *eballen* ‘threw repeatedly (or each time)’. (4) The perfective in the perfect stem: a condition or state as the result of a past action is designated” [Blass, F., & Debrunner, A. (1961). *A Greek grammar of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. (R. W. Funk, Trans.). The University of Chicago Press. p. 166.]

<sup>6</sup> “Gildersleeve (*Syntax*, p. 164) says: “*mē* with the present imperative has to do with a course of action and means sometimes ‘keep from’ (resist), sometimes ‘cease to’ (desist).” So, ‘continue not doing,’ or ‘do not continue doing.’” [Robertson, A. T. (1934). *A grammar of the Greek New Testament in the light of historical research*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Broadman Press. p. 853.]

expresses continuous, linear (or iterated) action, this durative (or iterative) Aktionsart also has to be taken into account with regard to present imperatives. Accordingly, a prohibition (with the prohibitive particle *mē*) could be paraphrased as follows:

- (1) Do not be acting in this way. Here it is left open whether the action is already underway or not. The prohibition therefore can mean
  - a) continue not being[/]acting in this way, or
  - b) do not keep on acting in this way, stop acting in this way (if the action has already begun).
- (2) Be (or keep) not-acting in this way.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, there are three options for *mē* + the present tense. “Continue not acting in this way” has a positive presumption. “Stop acting this way” has a negative presumption. “Do not be acting in this way” allows a positive, negative, or neutral presumption.

Example translations using “do not” without a negative presumption read,

“Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical” (1 Timothy 6:17).<sup>8</sup>

Or,

“1 Timothy 6:17: “To those endowed with the riches of this world, direct this charge: ‘Don’t become haughty’”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Taschl-Erber, A. (2016). Between recognition and testimony: Johannine relecture of the first easter witness and patristic readings. In R. Bieringer, B. Baert, & K. Demasure (Eds.), (Vol. 283). *Noli me tangere in interdisciplinary perspective: Textual, iconographic and contemporary interpretations* (pp. 77-110). Peeters. p. 79-80

<sup>8</sup> Common English Bible

<sup>9</sup> It continues, “nor trust confidently in ephemeral wealth, but in God, who offers everything to us richly for our enjoyment.” [Bream, H. N. (1974). *Life without resurrection: Two perspectives from Qoheleth*. In H. N. Bream, R. D. Heim, & C. A. Moore (Eds.), *A light unto my path: Old Testament studies in honor of Jacob M.*

The phrase, “Don’t become,” reflects that the negative behavior would be a new state. (Thus, the previous state was either neutral or positive.) It’s a prohibition without a negative presumption.

The “continue to not” approach is even more strongly positive. For example, one commentator explains,

“They must remain humble.”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Professor Daniel Wallace explains of *mē* + the present imperative,

“It is not, then, safe to say that when an author uses the present prohibition the audience is being indicted for not heeding this command.”<sup>11</sup>

Professor Sean du Toit gives another example of the positive presumption in 1 Peter 4:4. The phrase is “not running with them.” (This is *mē* + the present tense *syntrechontōn* “joining with.”) He explains,

“Peter states this in a way that assumes their lack of participation.... We must therefore conclude that the audience is encouraged to continue to not participate in the vices listed ... [it] is something they are exhorted to continue to avoid.”<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added.)

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*Myers* (pp. 49-65). Temple University Press. p. 65. fn 14.] Note that the use of “don’t become” rather than simply “don’t be” implies a positive presumption that this negative outcome would be a new state. The “nor trust” phrase employs the more neutral language of a general precept without a presumption of previous behavior.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, D. P. (2012). *What Paul might say today: Critiques in the practical theology of 21st century western Christendom*. LaRue Publications. p. 96. (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> Wallace, D. B., (2000). *The basics of New Testament syntax*. Zondervan. p. 321.

<sup>12</sup> du Toit, S. (2021). Practising idolatry in 1 Peter. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 43(3), 411-430. p. 424. (emphasis added); Other writers take this approach with other *mē* + present tense passages. See e.g. Bruce Hurt who writes of *mē* + *enkakein* (present infinitive active “to lose heart”) in Ephesians 3:13, “Not

When talking about “them” – the rich – making a negative presumption may feel more comfortable. (The message would be: “Stop it!”) When talking about us – making a neutral or positive presumption may feel comfortable. (The message would be: “Do not,” or “Continue to not.”) But this self-serving tendency is not what determines the meaning.

So, which approach is correct? Is it positive, neutral, or negative? Fortunately, the rest of the text answers this question. The tone, grammar, logic, and context all lead to a positive approach. Let’s look at each.

### ***The positive message: Continue not doing this***

The tone of this passage is not an attack. Many have pointed this out.<sup>13</sup> Professor Donald Guthrie explains,

“There is no suggestion of denunciation.”<sup>14</sup>

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to lose heart is present tense, middle voice meaning ‘you, yourselves, continue to not lose heart.’” [Hurt, B. (n.d.). *Ephesians 3:13 Commentary*. Precept Austin. [https://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians\\_313](https://www.preceptaustin.org/ephesians_313)]; William Wenstrom explains of *mē + thaumazete* (present imperative active “be surprised”) in 1 John 3:13, “they must continue to not be taken by surprise” [Wenstrom, W. E. (2018). *Exegesis and exposition of First John 5:20-21*. Wenstrom Bible Ministries. p. 66]; He writes of *mē + pikrainesthe* (present imperative passive “be embittered”) in Colossians 3:19, “It is expressing the idea that by continuing to exercise the love of God in relation to their wives, their husbands would continue to not be embittered against them” [Wenstrom, W. E. (2016). *Exegesis and exposition of Colossians 3:19-20*. Wenstrom Bible Ministries. p. 3.]

<sup>13</sup> *E.g.*, “This verse is perhaps the least severe to the wealthy in the whole New Testament.” [Gore, C., Goudge, H. L., & Guillaume, A. (Eds.), (1928). *A new commentary on Holy Scripture: Including the Apocrypha*. SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) Publishers. p. 588.]; “(1 Timothy 6:17-19). Timothy was not instructed to rebuke or neglect the rich” [MacArthur, J. (2009). *Right thinking in a world gone wrong: A Biblical response to today’s most controversial issues*. Harvest House Publishers. p. 135.]

<sup>14</sup> “The approach to wealth is strikingly moderate. There is no suggestion of denunciation.” [Guthrie, D. (1990). *The Pastoral Epistles: An introduction and commentary* (Vol. 14). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 117.]

Professor Arthur Peake and colleagues write,

“They [the rich] are not attacked.”<sup>15</sup>

Professor Ernest Findlay Scott writes,

“he [Paul] does not denounce them.”<sup>16</sup>

John MacArthur explains,

“(1 Timothy 6:17-19). Timothy was not instructed to rebuke or neglect the rich.”<sup>17</sup>

John Kelly of Oxford University labels his commentary on this passage as,

“POSITIVE ADVICE FOR THE RICH v. 17-19.”<sup>18</sup>

The context of the full sentence is intensely positive. It’s about God richly providing. It’s about massive personal impact. It’s about an inspiring personal identity. It’s about wonderful, lasting personal benefits.

Using a positive presumption form of *mē hypsēlophronein* matches this message and tone. It says, “Continue to be not high-minded.” It describes a desirable long-term, ongoing identity. It describes character. It explains why this person is going to be generous. He shares [*koinōnikous*] because he is and continues to be not separated

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<sup>15</sup> “They are not attacked, but reminded of the true riches in the world to come which will be their reward for being rich in good deeds in this.” [Rowley, H. H., Black, M., & Peake, A. S. (1962). *Peake’s commentary on the Bible*. Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd. p. 1004.]

<sup>16</sup> “With his usual moderation he does not denounce them or bid them surrender everything. He only tells them that in their worldly prosperity they must not forget God, and that they must use what He has given them to a right purpose.” [Scott, E. F (1936/1957). *The Pastoral Epistles*. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 80.]

<sup>17</sup> MacArthur, J. (2009). *Right thinking in a world gone wrong: A Biblical response to today’s most controversial issues*. Harvest House Publishers. p. 135.

<sup>18</sup> Kelly, J. N. D. (1963). *A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Adam & Charles Black. p. 147. (Note: Kelly was both Oxford faculty member and occasional university fundraising campaign administrator.)

from (not “above”) the fellowship community [*koinōnia*].

In fundraising, this positive presumption works. It’s effective. The next words show why it is also grammatically necessary.

***The perfect tense: An already completed action with continuing results***

Next in the sentence is,

“nor to set their hope [*ēlpikenai*] on the uncertainty of riches, but on God”.

The word *ēlpikenai* is surprising. It’s surprising because it’s in the perfect tense.<sup>19</sup> What is this tense? One source explains,

“The perfect tense in Greek is used to describe a completed action which produced results which are still

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<sup>19</sup> The previous present tense infinitive may also be used to reference the past due to the context of indirect discourse. As Goodwin explains, “The Present Infinitive has three distinct uses: 1. First, in its *ordinary* use (either with or without the article), whenever it is not in indirect discourse, it denotes a continued or repeated action *without regard to time*, unless its time is specially defined by the context... 2. Secondly, the Present Infinitive in indirect discourse is used to represent a Present Indicative of the direct discourse, and therefore denotes a continued or repeated action, which is *contemporary* with that of the leading verb, that is, *relatively present* ... 3. Thirdly, the Present Infinitive belongs also to the *Imperfect*, and is used in indirect discourse to represent an Imperfect Indicative of the direct discourse. It here denotes continued or repeated action which is *past* with reference to the leading verb, thus supplying the want of an Imperfect Infinitive.” [Goodwin, W. W. (1879). *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*. 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Ginn and Heath. P. 12-16.]

Thus, we have options of no time, continued action, or past action. Two things help to clarify the best usage. First, we are helped by the next infinitive being in the perfect tense. The perfect tense of the paired instruction provides insight as to the intended time focus.

Second, the context speaks to this as indirect discourse. This holds despite using a verb of instruction or command, which does not normally introduce indirect discourse. See, e.g., “verbs of *commanding, wishing, and others* ... although they may imply thought, yet never introduce an indirect quotation in the sense here intended, as an Infinitive after them never stands for an Indicative, but is merely the ordinary Infinitive used as a verbal noun, without any definite time.” [Goodwin, p. 14]. Here, the verb does not describe Paul’s instruction or command. Instead it describes for Timothy what Timothy’s instruction should be. Paul is essentially telling Timothy, as in *The Voice* translation, “Here’s what you say.” This usage is

in effect all the way up to the present.... Notice that the perfect tense carries two ideas: (1) completed action and (2) continuing results. The action was completed at some time in the past, and the results continue up to the present.”<sup>20</sup>

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indirect discourse. As such, the tense options shift from “no time” to either continued action or a past action that is continual.

Similarly, treating this as indirect discourse shifts the tense options for the perfect infinitive to either perfect or pluperfect. As Herbert Weir Smyth explains in *A Greek grammar for colleges*, “Each tense of direct discourse is retained (with its proper meaning as regards stage of action) when it becomes infinitive in indirect discourse; but an imperfect is represented by the present infinitive; a pluperfect, by the perfect infinitive.” [Smyth, H. W. (1920). *Infinitive as object in indirect discourse*. In *A Greek grammar for colleges*. §2019. American Book Company. p. 449].

Thus, the reference to “not high-minded” and “not having placed hope” as past and ongoing characteristics of those rich Christians being encouraged to share appears either permitted (if the present infinitive makes no particular time reference) or, more likely, explicitly directed, given the use of the paired perfect infinitive. In a parallel passage, Job says, “If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence;” (Job 31:24 KJV). In the Septuagint, this passage uses the aorist *etaxa* (have made) and the pluperfect *epepoithēsa* (relied upon).

<sup>20</sup> The Ezra Project (2022). *The tenses explained: Basic meanings of each Greek tense*. <https://ezraproject.com/greek-tenses-explained/>

More technically, this is taking the perfect infinitive as expressing anteriority. The anterior perfect “emphasizes the anterior event, whereas the state it refers to should be understood in a ‘loose sense’ ... The anterior perfect is usually described as the perfect referring to an anterior event with current relevance.” [Kavčič, J. (2016). The decline of the aorist infinitive in Ancient Greek declarative infinitive clauses. *Journal of Greek Linguistics*, 16(2), 266-311.]

This use of the anterior perfect is here dictated first by the context because the rich person is the actor, not the one being acted upon. Kavčič explains, “This is one of the basic distinctions between the resultative and anterior perfect: whereas the latter is patient-oriented, the former is agent-oriented.” Also, anteriority is dictated by the context of following a verb of communication. Professor Klaas Bentein explains, “The perfect infinitive denotes anterior propositions after various verb classes, including verbs of communication such as *graphō* ‘I write’ (e.g. BGU.16.2635, ll. 8–9 (ca. 21 B.C. – 5 A.D.)); *legō* ‘I say’ (e.g. P.Ryl.2.pg381, ll. 4–5 (40 A.D.)); *mēnuō* ‘I declare’ (e.g. P.Giss.61, ll. 7–8 (119 A.D.)); *phēmi* ‘I say’ (e.g. P.Brem.13, ll. 3–4 (II AD));” More generally, he explains, “Since the aorist infinitive seems to have been avoided already in Classical times for anterior propositions, one could ask what the reason for this avoidance might have been: rather than attributing it to a tendency for ‘stativity’, or the omission of temporal distinctions (see above), I would like to suggest that the aorist tense was less frequently employed because (i) the aorist infinitive was already used quite frequently for proposals, not only after verbs of ordering, but also after verbs of communication; (ii) the perfect infinitive could be used as a specialized device conveying anteriority, whereas the aorist was ambiguous between a perfective or a current

This word, *ēlpikenai*, is a perfect active infinitive.<sup>21</sup> In a commentary on the Greek text, Charles Ellicott translates the word here as,

“to have hoped and continue to hope.”<sup>22</sup>

Other literal or Greek interlinear New Testaments translate *ēlpikenai* here as simply,

“to have put hope.”<sup>23</sup>

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relevance interpretation.” [Bentein, K. (2018). The decline of infinitival complementation in Ancient Greek: a case of diachronic ambiguity resolution? *Glotta*, 94(1), 82-108, 94-95.]

<sup>21</sup> As an example of an imperative followed by *mē* + a perfect infinitive in the papyri, see, “*g[e]jinōske ton siton on apesteiles moi mē eilēphenai me auton* (BGU.16.2618, ll. 4–5 (7 B.C.)) ‘You should know that I have not yet received the grain which you sent me’.” [Bentein, K. (2018). The decline of infinitival complementation in Ancient Greek: a case of diachronic ambiguity resolution? *Glotta*, 94(1), 82-108. p. 96.]

<sup>22</sup> Ellicott, C. J. (1883). *The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul: With a critical and grammatical commentary and a revised translation*. Longmans, Green & Co. p. 100. (A pluperfect sense of the perfect infinitive can also be appropriate when used, as here, in indirect discourse.)

Other commentaries note of this passage, “the perfect tense in the infinitive, *ēlpikenai*, conveys the sense of action completed. However, as is the normal characteristics of the perfect, the past action has effects in the present,” [Joshua, N. N. (2018). *Benefaction and patronage in leadership: A socio-historical exegesis of the Pastoral Epistles*. Langham Publishing. Referencing Hanson, A. T. (1982). *The Pastoral Epistles: New century Bible commentary*. Eerdmans. p. 114.]

“The phrase ‘to have hope set’ is a perfect tense form, which suggests that the “hope” commenced in the past and substantially has settled into a fixed disposition.” [Jackson, W. (2007). *Before I die: Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus*. Christian Courier Publications. p. 184.]

“the perfect tense ... looks back to the beginning of the rich man’s hopes” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 23.]

<sup>23</sup> See *ēlpikenai* as “to have put hope” in a literal translation of this verse in Magill, M. J. (2011). *Disciples’ literal New Testament*. Reyma Publishing. See this translation also in interlinear Greek translations such as Christian Publishing House. (2020). *The Greek-English New Testament interlinear (GENTI)*. <https://christianpublishinghouse.co/2020/10/26/the-first-letter-to-timothy-genti/>; New World Bible Translation Committee. (1985). *The kingdom interlinear translation of the Greek Scriptures online*; Walker, D. (2020). *The learner’s Greek New Testament series (LGNT)* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Independently published. <https://lgreent.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/LGNT-PEEK-INSIDE-1-AND-2-TIMOTHY.pdf>



Paul uses *ēlpikenai*. It's a perfect infinitive. But Paul is telling Timothy what to say. That makes the statement "indirect discourse." This matters because,

"The perfect infinitive in indirect discourse generally represents a perfect indicative of the direct form."<sup>24</sup>

Thus, Paul is telling Timothy to deliver his message as a perfect active indicative. This is precisely the same form – and the same word – Paul uses moments earlier. One commentary notes of "nor trust in uncertain riches" that,

"it is the same perfect as 1 Timothy 4:10 and 1 Timothy 5:5".<sup>25</sup>

There, as a perfect active indicative, the verb reads as:

"That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope [*ēlpikamen*] in the living God," (1 Timothy 4:10), and

"Now she who is actually a widow and has been left alone has set her hope [*ēlpiken*] on God". (1 Timothy 5:5).

Notice the parallels:

- Paul writes, "We have set our hope in the living God." (1 Timothy 4:10).
- He then writes, "She has set her hope on God." (1 Timothy 5:5).
- He then tells Timothy to say, "You have not set your hope on uncertain riches, but on God" (1 Timothy 6:17b).

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Another interlinear translates this with the unusual phrase "to-have-had-come-to-expect-to" <http://qbible.com/greek-new-testament/1-timothy/6.html>

<sup>24</sup> Goodwin, W. W. (1890). *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*. 133. Perfect infinitive. Ginn & Company. p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Humphreys, A. E. (1895). *The Cambridge Bible for schools and colleges: The epistles to Timothy and Titus, with introduction and notes*. University Press. p. 149.

The repeated message is the same. We have done this. The poorest among us have done this. The richest among us have done this. All three groups of Christians are the same. All three have set their hope (perfect tense) on God.

***An already completed action with continuing results:  
So what?***

Our verb, *ēlpikenai*, is a perfect active infinitive. This tense references [1] an already completed action [2] with continuing results.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This dual sense can sometimes be difficult to translate into English. For example, in Acts 12:14, Rhoda “announced that Peter was standing [*hestanai*] before the gateway.” It seems like a simple idea. Peter “was standing.” The problem is that this verb is also a perfect active infinitive. So, “was standing” isn’t a complete translation. One commentator notes of this word, “Perfect active infinitive. Literally, ‘She announced Peter to have stood and still be standing before the gateway.’” [Aymer, M. (2016). Outrageous, audacious, courageous, willful: Reading the enslaved girl of Acts 12. In G. L. Byron & V. Lovelace (Eds.), *Womanist interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the discourse* (pp. 265-90). SBL Press. p. 280. fn 27]. This is a literally correct translation. But it does make for a clunky reading! Who wants to read “to have stood and still be standing” rather than simply “was standing”? In the same way, it isn’t easy to read, “to have not put hope and still be not putting hope in riches but in God” although this may give a better sense of the meaning.

Often, translations emphasize either [1] the past completed action or [2] the continuing results rather than simultaneously expressing both. Several translations of other verses emphasize the past completed action aspect of the perfect active infinitive, such as: “I have fully preached [*peplērōkenai*] the gospel of Christ.” (Romans 15:19b); “because Claudius had commanded [*diatetachenai*] all the Jews to leave Rome.” (Acts 18:2); “thinking that he was dead [*tethnēkenai*].” (Acts 14:9); “they heard that He had performed [*pepoiēkenai*] this sign.” (John 12:18); “he had astounded [*exestakenai*] them” (Acts 8:11); “he had committed [*peprachenai*]” (Acts 25:25); “they had also seen [*heōrakenai*]” (Luke 24:23); “it had [*gegonenai*] thundered” (John 12:29); “has found [*heurēkenai*]?” (Romans 4:1).

Other verses tend to emphasize the continuing results aspects. See, e.g., NASB translations of perfect active infinitives in 1 Corinthians 8:2; Philippians 3:4; Luke 13:25; John 14:5; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Corinthians 11:5; Ephesians 1:18; Titus 1:16; Hebrews 11:5; Hebrews 10:15. The strongest emphasis on the continuing results aspects of the past action arises in the “intensive perfect.”

Some passages or contexts convey the dual sense of both [1] the past completed action and [2] the continuing results, such as “so that what is seen has not been made [*gegonenai*] out of things that are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3); or “When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped [*ekpepheugenai*].” (Acts 16:27)

So what? Why does this matter so much? It matters because it prevents misunderstanding Paul's instructions. If we try to read this verse as an accusatory command, it becomes nonsensical.

Think about it. How can we instruct (or command) someone not to have done a past action? How does that even make sense? Can you start a marriage retreat by saying,

“I command you not to have committed adultery!”

No. That makes no sense. A person either has or hasn't committed adultery. No amount of commanding (or instructing) will change the past!

Taken this way, the perfect tense message becomes nonsensical.<sup>27</sup> This has even led some to argue that it must be a manuscript error. The argument is that it must be changed to a present tense.<sup>28</sup> (And indeed, many English translations do just this.)

Yet, there's no evidence of an error. All the manuscripts agree. No variations appear. The word is always the same. It's always perfect tense. This might disappear in an English

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Thus, a translation might emphasize past action or ongoing effects, but the original tense contains both concepts.

<sup>27</sup> The Disciple's Literal Translation, for example, employs this approach, rendering the passage as, “Be commanding the ones rich in the present age not to be-high-minded, nor to have put-hope on the uncertainty of riches, but upon God ...”

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., “Elliott, 66, argues that the perfect infinitive is rare (Acts 14.19; 2 Timothy 2.14; Tit 1.16), and that the present infinitive fits in with the other present tenses in the context. This is not a strong enough argument to upset the MS [manuscript] evidence.” [Marshall, I. H. (1999). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. T & T Clark. p. 670. Referencing Elliott, J. K. (1968). *The Greek text of the epistles to Timothy and Titus*. Studies and Documents XXXVI. University of Utah Press.]

translation. But it would have stood out to Paul’s audience.<sup>29</sup> So, what’s going on here? What is Paul telling Timothy to say?

***The positive message: You are the kind of person who makes gifts like this***

The instruction to be generous begins with the donor’s past and continuing identity. The donor is not high-minded. He’s not above the fellowship community. He doesn’t separate himself. That’s why he’ll share [*koinōnikous*] with his fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. The donor has not placed his hope in riches but in God. That’s why he’ll be generous with those riches.

The perfect tense verb makes this meaning obvious.<sup>30</sup> We can’t instruct a person to have already done something in

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<sup>29</sup> It would have been even more notable to them for another reason. Paul is alluding to a Psalm. See, e.g., “1 Timothy 6:17 alludes to Ps 61:11 LXX” [Kim, K. S. (2011). *God will judge each one according to works: Judgment according to works and Psalm 62 in early Judaism and the New Testament* (Vol. 178). [Doctoral Thesis, University of Aberdeen]. Walter de Gruyter. p 200 fn. 8]

Paul alludes to this Psalm, but he changes the tense. In the New International Version, Psalm 62:10 reads, “Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” Timothy’s audience would have read this in the Greek Septuagint. There, the verse begins with the present tense of *elpizō* (to hope or trust), “*mē elpizete epi ... ploutous.*” In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul makes a parallel statement, but he alters the tense. He replaces the present tense with the perfect tense, “*mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou.*” It’s a familiar passage. And Paul changes it. This change would have stood out for this audience. (Note that in the Septuagint, Psalm 62:10 appears as Psalm 61:11 reading, “*Mē elpizete epi adikian* [Do not set your hope on extortion] *kai epi harpagma mē epipotheite* [and on stolen goods do not lust] *ploutous ean ren mē prostitheste kardian* [if wealth flows in do not set your heart upon it].”

<sup>30</sup> For example, Paul’s use of “not” [*mē*] with a present tense verb to describe the continuation of a current state is explicit in Colossians 1:23, which reads, “if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not shifting [*mē metakinoumenoi*] from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.” 1 Timothy 6:17 combines the present tense “not high-minded” [*mē hypselophronein*] with the perfect tense “to have put hope” [*ēlpikenai*] in infinitive form. In a parallel fashion, Colossians 1:23 combines the present tense “not shifting” [*mē metakinoumenoi*] with the perfect tense *tethemeliōmenoi* [“established”] in participle form. One text notes, “Notice the perfect form *tethemeliōmenoi* (from *themeliō* ‘lay a foundation [for a building]’). The perfect

the past. We can't say, "Stop having done this in the past." (Negative presumption.) We can't say, "Do not have done this in the past." (Neutral presumption.) These make no sense.

But there is something we can do. We can instruct them to continue these past actions. We can show them how being generous matches their past and continuing values, character, and identity. We can instruct them to be generous because they have not placed their hope in wealth but in God.

This instruction to give begins with the donor's backstory. This backstory motivates the action. The donor gives because it reflects his identity. The donor is the type of person who makes gifts like this. This is a compelling message. It's how we effectively instruct someone to be generous.

The text dictates the message. It's a message that connects the donor's life history [past action] with the donor's current identity [continuing results]. In the context of our passage, it's part of a story. It's the donor's story. It's a story that starts with the donor's history. It starts with their backstory. Their backstory motivates their decision to accept the challenge.

### ***The positive message: But is it true?***

Paul is describing an entire group of people – the rich. How can he say they are not high-minded or “above” the

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conveys that the foundation has already been laid, but the Colossian Christians are to remain founded on this base. The state of being founded continues even though the act of laying the substructure is completed; one does not lay a foundation again (1 Corinthians 3:11).” [Baugh, S.M. (2009). *Introduction to Greek tense form choice in the non-indicative moods*. Author. p. 63] The notion in 1 Timothy 6:17 is similar. Rich Christians have already (perfect tense) set their hope in God, not in the uncertainty of riches. They, too, “are to remain founded on this base.” Their continuing state of being not high-minded – not separated from the fellowship community – matches with this past choice.

fellowship community? How can he say they have already set their hope on God, not riches?

His statements are true because he is not simply describing the rich. He is describing the rich who have joined the church.<sup>31</sup> Despite all the costs, they have decided to follow Jesus.

This letter is about managing the church household. It's not about warning outsiders to repent. This is a post-repentance, post-conversion message. It's an instruction for those in the church.

The ministry to older widows is not to all the widows in the city. It's to widows in the church. The ministry to older men is not to all the older men in the region. It's to older men in the church. The same is true for the ministry to the rich.

Thus, these are not simply rich people. These are rich believers. They have put their hope in God. Otherwise, they wouldn't be believers. They have not put their hope in riches. Otherwise, they would never have accepted the teachings of Jesus. If they were high-minded, they would never have joined the fellowship community. They wouldn't have connected themselves with these, mostly poor, Christians.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Commenting on 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Dr. Todd Cederberg writes, "The pastoral epistles also presume the presence of faithful yet wealthy members in their congregations." [Cederberg, T. (2003). *A strategy to promote spiritual and financial healing at the Church of the Good Samaritan*. [Doctoral Thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary] p. 40.]; This also matches the placement of the 6:17-19 passage, which separates, by use of a long break, the discussion of those who are "faithful yet wealthy" from the previous discussion of false teachers who seek money and the sufferings of those who love money in 6:3-10.

<sup>32</sup> For an interesting analysis of economic status within the early church, see Stark, R. (2009). Early Christianity: Opiate of the privileged? *Faith and Economics*, 54, 1-18.

Paul's statements aren't just flattery. They are true statements. He begins the argument by pointing to their character. He explains why they are the kind of people who share generous gifts.

### ***The negative message: Nonsense results***

We've looked at the technical reasons why this is not an attack. Now, let's consider the logic. This is a message to an entire segment of people in the church. What do we know about these rich, other than their temporary economic circumstances? We know they've decided to follow Jesus. They've decided to join the church.

Suppose the message had a negative presumption. Suppose it was, "Stop doing this!" Does that make sense? Does it make sense to say,

- "You joined the fellowship community because you think you are 'above' the fellowship community"?
- "You (in the past) joined the church because you have not (in the past) placed your hope in God"?
- "You decided to follow Jesus because you have placed your trust in money"?

None of these make sense. This approach leads to nonsense results.

There is yet another problem with the negative presumption. These people are going to heaven. That's actually part of the sentence itself. In their giving, they are

"storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." (1 Timothy 6:19).

It would be hard for them to store up treasures in heaven “for themselves” if they weren’t going there.

If they have not placed their hope in God, this result makes no sense. Why are these Godless people going to heaven? The only explanation then becomes even more ridiculous. It becomes this: right now, all rich church members are Godless. They’re all trusting in riches rather than God. But if they give, then they get to go to heaven. The message becomes absurd and even offensive.<sup>33</sup> It becomes nonsense.

All of these nonsense results disappear with a positive presumption. The attack becomes an encouragement. The message is,

“Keep doing the right thing! Continue to be not high-minded. You have not placed your trust in money but in God. So, too, today, keep on doing this. Keep doing this through your generosity.”

The positive presumption makes sense. It fits. And it works. The negative presumption doesn’t make sense. It doesn’t fit. And it doesn’t work.

***The positive message: It’s how to instruct effectively***

Paul’s instruction begins with the rich person’s past and continuing identity. It begins with their positive backstory. This positive backstory will motivate their current generosity. We’ve looked at the grammar. We’ve looked at the context. We’ve looked at the logic.

But let’s say you don’t buy it. Suppose you’re unconvinced. You still see this as a directive to instruct the rich

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<sup>33</sup> Acts 8:20, “But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could acquire the gift of God with money!”



Christians to stop their bad behavior. Or maybe it's to warn them not to start it in the first place. That still leaves a question. How? How can we get them to stop? Or how will we warn them not to start? What instruction will produce that result?

We could simply attack and depart. We could lob an accusatory grenade and run. But here's the problem. That doesn't work. And it's not ministry.

The point of Paul's instruction is to produce a result. It's to produce a specific understanding and behavior by the rich. Attacking and condemning might feel good. But if it doesn't produce the result, then it's not effective instruction. It's not effective ministry.

So, suppose we ignore the timing of the tense.<sup>34</sup> Suppose these are all bad people who need to repent. How do we make that happen? What's the most effective approach?

It actually doesn't change. The practical implementation still looks the same.<sup>35</sup> Paul's many examples of effective

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<sup>34</sup> I've made an argument for reading the perfect infinitive as referencing a past event with continuing effects. However, it need not be taken so narrowly in its time reference in this context. It can be viewed as past and/or non-past. In other words, "perfectivity indicates the view of the situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation." [Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect*. Cambridge University Press. p. 16.] Removing the sense of time entirely, however, does not lessen the emphasis on beginning the message with the donor's character, state, or identity. (Indeed, the grammatical argument to ignore anteriority here is based on treating the perfect infinitive as stative or describing the donor's state of being.) In either approach, the practical application results in the story beginning the same way. It starts with the donors' identity. The donors will give because of who they are. Not being high-minded and not placing their hope in money but in God is their identity. It is their future identity, their current identity, their past identity, their ongoing identity, and their desired or ideal identity. It is who they have been, who they want to be, and who they are being. That basis in personal identity is the motivation for their generous actions.

<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Gregory the Great (540-604), bishop of Rome, takes 1 Timothy 6:17-19 as being a strong negative charge. Yet he concedes that as a practical matter, "Sometimes, however, even the proud rich man must be appeased by the flattery

instruction and persuasion show exactly how this works. He uses it with bad people. He uses it with good people. He uses it with pagans and the godless. He uses it with believers.

The effective story is still the same. It still begins with the person's positive history and identity. That's still the motivation for their action. The universal message is still this:

“You are the kind of person who does things like this.”

***Timothy is the kind of person who does things like this***

Our passage begins with the donor's identity. It cites their personal history. Their past action motivates their present choice. Their life history confirms that they are the kind of person who does things like this.

This appeal to life history was not new for Paul. He did it just a few sentences earlier. The charge to Timothy parallels the charge to the rich Christians. The rich are instructed to

“take hold of the real life.” (1 Timothy 6:19b).

[*epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs*]

Timothy is instructed to

“take hold of the eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12b).

[*epilabou tēs aiōniou zōēs*]

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of exhortation: for even the most severe wounds are softened by soothing fomentations, and the fury of madmen is often reduced to safety by the flattering physician: when he condescends to them in sweetness, the languor of madness is mitigated. For it must not be overlooked that when the spirit attacked Saul, David took hold of the lyre and calmed his agitation. 1 Samuel 18:10. For what is intimated by Saul but the elation of men in power, and what by David but the humble life of the holy?” Gregory, P. (1849). *Sancti Gregorii Papae I Regula pastoralis*. Typis S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide. p. 65-66. [See also <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/36013.htm> ]

The rich Christians will accept this challenge because of their life history. They have (perfect tense)

“not set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God” (1 Timothy 6:17).

Timothy will accept this challenge because of his life history. He will:

“take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Timothy 6:12b).

As one commentary puts it,

“Here Paul emphasizes a past event when Timothy responded to public confirmations.”<sup>36</sup>

Another writes,

“Paul is clearly referring here to a definite fact in Timothy’s life.”<sup>37</sup>

Paul begins his next letter to Timothy using a similar approach. He describes Timothy’s backstory. This backstory motivates accepting Paul’s challenge.

Paul will get to his challenge. He’s going to make big asks of Timothy. He’s going to ask him to

- “Kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you” (2 Timothy 1:6).
- “Not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me” (2 Timothy 1:8).

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<sup>36</sup> The quote continues, “— in prophecy and liturgy — of his sacred call to ministry. He ‘confessed the good confession’ (6:12) before a panel of witnesses that includes God, who called him, and Christ Jesus, who exemplifies the faithful response to God’s bidding (6:13).” [Robinson, A. B., & Wall, R. W. (2012). *Called to lead: Paul’s letters to Timothy for a new day*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 109.]

<sup>37</sup> Meyer, H. A. W. (1885). *Critical and exegetical commentary on the New Testament*.

- “Join with me in suffering for the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:8).
- “Hold on to the example of sound words which you have heard from me” (2 Timothy 1:13).

The challenge is big. But the message to Timothy doesn't start with this challenge. It starts with Timothy's backstory. It starts with his identity. It starts by explaining why Timothy is the kind of person who will do things like this. It starts with:

“For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelled in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.” (2 Timothy 1:5).

He begins with Timothy's backstory. Timothy's identity compels him to follow Paul's instructions. Timothy is the kind of person who will do things like this.

### ***Paul's repeated message of persuasion***

The message in our passage starts with the rich Christian's backstory. It shows how their identity compels them to accept Paul's challenge. This is a standard method Paul used to persuade others. It was probably his favorite approach.

He starts his message with the listener's identity. He starts by explaining why they are the kind of person who will follow his instructions. Paul did this in his writings. He also did it in his speaking.

When Paul entered Athens, he saw that it was a center of pagan worship. This was not a happy circumstance!

“Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he observed that the city was full of idols.” (Acts 17:16).

Paul is brought before the city's leadership council (the Areopagus). He wants to instruct them to follow Jesus. Does he begin with condemnation? No. He does the opposite. He begins with their positive identity. He begins by explaining why they are the kind of people who will listen to his teaching. Luke writes,

“So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects.’” (Acts 17:22).

When Paul is brought before Agrippa, he begins,

“King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I am about to make my defense before you today, especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews;” (Acts 26:2b-3a).

Paul begins with Agrippa's positive identity. Agrippa is,

“an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews.”

He is the kind of person who will understand Paul's argument. Given Agrippa's life history, Paul considers himself “fortunate” to make his defense there.

When first brought before Felix, Paul begins,

“Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,” (Acts 24:10b).

Paul begins with Felix's positive identity. Felix is an experienced judge. Felix is the kind of person who will wisely consider Paul's argument. Given Felix's life history, Paul “cheerfully” makes his defense.

In each of these examples, Paul makes factually true statements. He is not inventing nice things to say. This is not

just random flattery. Instead, he describes those characteristics of the person consistent with the desired decision. He explains why their life history and identity compel them to listen to his teachings.

***You are the kind of person who makes gifts like this***

Our passage is not an accusation. It's not a command to stop being a certain type of person. It's not a command to start being a certain type of person. Instead, it's an instruction to continue being a certain type of person.

The message will challenge the listeners to be generous. They will accept this challenge because of their past, present, and continuing identity. This identity compels them to share generously.

Why will they share generously? Because they are the type of people who make gifts like this!



## Chapter 4

### Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!

- *Biblical fundraising is about wealth conversations.*
- *Ordinary fundraising stays stuck in the world of disposable income decisions.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are **rich** in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of **riches**, but on God, who **richly** supplies us with all things to enjoy [*Instruct them*] to do good, to be **rich** in good works, to be **generous** and ready to share, **storing up** for themselves the **treasure** of a good **foundation** for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### WEALTH SHARING, NOT INCOME SHARING

#### *It's about wealth*

This passage outlines the Biblical ministry of major gift fundraising. It's about wealth. It's about the wealth holders. It's about wealth sharing. The wealth focus isn't subtle. This one Greek sentence references wealth at least seven times.

The message is to those who have wealth. The message is about the use of wealth. The message is not just about giving; it's about wealth sharing. The defining characteristic of this passage and this ministry is a focus on wealth.

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<sup>1</sup> Tois **plousiōis** en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi **ploutou** adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta **plousiōs** eis apolausin, agathoergein, **ploutein** en ergois kalois, **eumetadotous einai**, koinōnikous, **apothēsaurizontas** heautois **themelion** kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs. (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)



This wealth focus makes the passage different. It makes the message different. It makes the ministry different. Understanding why starts by understanding wealth.

### ***Wealth sharing is not income sharing***

This passage references wealth. Wealth is not income. This is true in economics. It's also true in the language used here.<sup>2</sup>

This simple distinction matters. It matters in giving. Wealth sharing is not income sharing. These are two different types of gifts.

The Bible describes many kinds of gifts. Each gift type has its own rules. Tithing, for example, is a gift of income. It's giving from "the fruit of the tree." (Leviticus 27:30). It's giving from "the produce of what you sow." (Deuteronomy 14:22).

Giving from income is important. But our passage is not about income. It's not about weekly budgets. It's not about "pocket change" decisions. It's about wealth sharing. Wealth sharing is not sharing "the fruit of the tree." It's giving the tree itself. It's not giving from "the produce of what you sow." It's giving the land itself.

We see examples of such sharing in the first days of the church:

“and they would sell their property [*ktēmata*] and possessions [*hyparxeis*] and share them with all” (Acts 2:45).

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<sup>2</sup> See the previous chapter, "The people group: To those who are rich," for a discussion of this semantic difference.

Such sharing continued in the church:

“For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land [*chōriōn*] or houses [*oikiōn*] would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales” (Acts 4:34).

A specific named donor, Barnabas, gave

“a tract of land [*agrou*].” (Acts 4:37).

What were they sharing? They were sharing <sup>3</sup>

- *Ktēmata*: a piece of landed property, a field, possessions
- *Hyparxeis*: possessions, goods, wealth, property
- *Chōriōn*: a place, piece of land, field, property, estate
- *Oikiōn*: A house; property, wealth, goods
- *Agrou*: A field; the country, lands, property in land, a country estate

These were not gifts of income. This was not tithing. These were gifts of wealth. This wasn't a gift of the produce from the land. It was a gift of the land itself. This wasn't a gift of rental income from a house. It was a gift of the house itself.

This was not just wealth giving. It was wealth sharing. These gifts weren't given away to outsiders. They weren't given to the poor of the city. They were shared with the

“congregation of those who believed.” (Acts 4:32).

These same concepts apply to our passage. Timothy's instruction is not a message about income. It's a message about

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<sup>3</sup> Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press; Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company.

wealth. It's not a message about giving wealth away. It's a message about sharing wealth.

### ***The audience: The world's banking center***

Paul instructs Timothy on how to minister to the rich Christian. He explains how to have wealth conversations. There's a special reason for that. Timothy was ministering in Ephesus. This was a global financial center.

At about the same time that Paul wrote 1 Timothy, the Greek orator Dio Chrysostom wrote,

“You know about the Ephesians, of course, and that large sums of money are in their hands, some of it belonging to private citizens and deposited in the temple of Artemis, not alone money of the Ephesians but also of aliens and of persons from all parts of the world, and in some cases of commonwealths and kings, money which all deposit there in order that it may be safe.”<sup>4</sup>

The temple of Artemis in Ephesus wasn't just a place for worship. It was a bank. Indeed, the temple was

“the largest and most important bank on the west coast of Asia Minor.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dio Chrysostom. (1940). *Discourses*. 31.54. Tr: J. W. Cohoon and H. Lamar Crosby. Volume I-V. *Loeb Classical Library*.

<sup>5</sup> Immendörfer, M. (2017). *Ephesians and Artemis: The cult of the great goddess of Ephesus as the epistle's context*. Mohr Siebeck. p. 141.

Understood in this context, the Acts 28 protest scene in Ephesus has added significance. If “the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be regarded as worthless,” this would cause a run on the bank. Once faith in the temple/bank disappeared, the money would be removed, and the financial system would collapse. This would be of particular interest to a silversmith. Historically, silversmiths and goldsmiths were integral to the financial system and involved in saving and lending. For example, in 1600s London, goldsmiths became the original indigenous bankers and issuers of banknotes. Threatening belief in the temple would have been analogous to the collapse of The Federal Reserve, Bank of England, or European Central Bank.

Thus,

“It is very likely that Ephesians, strangers, private people, cities or kings kept huge amounts of money in the temple.”<sup>6</sup>

Ephesus also attracted wealthy exiles from across the world because of its asylum law.<sup>7</sup>

Ephesus was wealthy. Beyond this, its economy centered on wealth holding. In modern financial terms, it was Wall Street, the Cayman Islands, Zurich, and The City of London. For those who wanted hidden wealth, Ephesus is where they would hide it!

Paul’s focus on wealth and the wealthy fit Timothy’s location. Timothy’s audience understood accumulated wealth. They understood hidden wealth. And they understood the difference between income sharing and wealth sharing.

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<sup>6</sup> Immendorfer, M. (2017). *Ephesians and Artemis: The cult of the great goddess of Ephesus as the epistle’s context*. Mohr Siebeck. p. 141. [Also here, “rich private parties bequeathed their entire estate to the temple.”]

<sup>7</sup> Immendorfer, M. (2017). *Ephesians and Artemis: The cult of the great goddess of Ephesus as the epistle’s context*. Mohr Siebeck. p. 141.



PART II  
WEALTH WORDS

(Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!)

***The first five wealth words***

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is one sentence in the Greek. In the first half of this one Greek sentence, Paul uses *ploutos* [wealth] four times. He uses it as

“a personal noun, an objective noun, an adverb, and a verb.”<sup>1</sup>

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is a sentence about wealth. It describes a ministry focused on the wealthy and the use of wealth.

If you happen to miss these first four wealth references, don't worry. There are more. The result of generous sharing is a different pile of valuable stuff. The result is:

“thus storing up treasure [*apothēsaurozontas*] for themselves as a good foundation for the future.” (1 Timothy 6:19a, ESV).

The word for “storing up treasure” is *apothēsaurozontas*. Like *ploutos*, this describes a stockpile of valuable stuff. We see this word, for example, in Josephus's “*The War of the Jews*.”<sup>2</sup> He writes,

“Within this fortress was laid up corn in large quantities, also wine and oil in abundance, with all kinds of pulse and dates heaped up together. There was also found a

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, R. F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> Book 7. Chapter 8. Paragraph 4.

large quantity of all sorts of weapons of war, which had been treasured up [*apothēsaūrizmenon*] by that king.”<sup>3</sup>

Or, alternatively, “that had been stored there [*apothēsaūrizmenon*] by the king.”<sup>4</sup>

The word *apothēsaūrizontas* is a compound word. It’s from *apo* [from, away from] and *thēsaūrizō* [to lay up, store up]. Centuries before Paul, Herodotus used *thēsaūrizō*, writing in “*Histories*,”

“This king (they told me) had great wealth [*plouton*] in silver, so great that none of the succeeding kings could surpass or come near it. To store his treasure [*thēsaūrizēin*] safely, he had a stone chamber built, one of its walls abutting on the outer side of his palace ... So when the chamber was finished, the king stored his treasure [*thēsaūrisai*] in it.”<sup>5</sup>

In another story, Herodotus shares,

“The tribute is stored [*thesaurizei*] by the king in this fashion: he melts it down and pours it into earthen vessels; when the vessel is full he breaks the earthenware away, and when he needs money, coins as much as serves his purpose.”<sup>6</sup>

This word means a pile or an accumulation of valuable stuff. It’s not income. It’s an accumulation. It’s wealth. It’s yet another wealth reference.

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<sup>3</sup> Szczesny, M. (2021). *Apothēsaūrizō* [Latin] *thesaurizare*. Resounding the faith. <https://resoundingthefaith.com/2021/11/21/greek-%e1%bc%80%cf%80%ce%bf%ce%b8%ce%b7%cf%83%ce%b1%cf%85%cf%81%ce%af%ce%b6%cf%89-apothesaurizo-latin-thesaurizare/>

<sup>4</sup> Josephus. *The war of the Jews*. Book 7. <http://www.biblical.ie/page.php?fl=josephus/War/JWG7#08>

<sup>5</sup> Godley, A. D. (1925). *Herodotus - Histories*. Harvard University Press. 2.121A.1-2

<sup>6</sup> Godley, A. D. (1925). *Herodotus - Histories*. Harvard University Press. 3.96.2

### ***A sixth reference to wealth***

Got the point? This sentence is about wealth. In fact, it doesn't stop there. It has yet another reference to wealth. Rich donors are,

“thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation [*themelion*] for the future.” (1 Timothy 6:19a, ESV).

*Themelion*, foundation, has a double meaning. It parallels the double meaning of the English word “foundation.”

*Themelion* can reference a physical stone. It can be the foundation at the base of a building. It can be a metaphor. It can reference the first principles of a system. But, like the English word, it also has a financial meaning.

We use the word for charitable foundations. This might be the Gates Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, or others. These foundations are piles of wealth. In Greek, *themelion* can have this same financial meaning. It can reference a financial deposit or fund. It can also reference a bond instrument.<sup>7</sup>

Professor E. F. Scott writes,

“It is possible, too, that he plays on the double meaning of the Greek word, which can signify a ‘fund’ as well as a

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<sup>7</sup> In 1864, John Albert Bengel's commentary defines this word as, “that on which we depend as a security (a bond), a pledge.” [Bengel, J. A. (1864). *Gnomon of the New Testament: Pointing out, from the natural force of the words, the simplicity, depth, harmony and saving power of its divine thoughts* (Vol. 2). Perkinpine & Higgins. p. 536.] Similarly, in 1681, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson, translated this as, “treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good security or pledge against the time to come; I add pledge, because that anciently was the common way, of security for things lent” [Tillotson, J. (1682). A sermon preached at the funeral of the reverend Mr. Thomas Gouge on Nov. 4, 1681. Brabazon Aylmer. p. 48-49.]



‘foundation.’”<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, several have explained the passage in this way. Another commentary notes of *themelion*,

“Thus, the word seems to have taken on a meaning approaching the ambiguous word ‘funds.’”<sup>9</sup>

Different translations render the phrase as

“storing up for themselves a good reserve”<sup>10</sup>

“laying up for themselves a good deposit”<sup>11</sup>

“treasuring up for themselves a good fund”<sup>12</sup>

### ***Allusions, music, and the sixth wealth reference***

Like the English word “foundation,” *themelion* has a double meaning. It can reference a financial fund, deposit, or bond instrument. But it can also reference a heavy rock at the base of a building.

However, *themelion* is a compound word. Separating the two parts, *thema* and *lian*, narrows the meaning. The definition of *thema* is:

“1. Money deposited; (of grain) deposit; treasure; 2. (of loaves) Pile.; 3. Coffers.”<sup>13</sup>

When separated, this word no longer has a double meaning. It’s just a pile of treasure or valuable stuff. It’s an explicit wealth reference.

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<sup>8</sup> Scott, E. F (1936/1957). *The Pastoral Epistles*. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 81

<sup>9</sup> Dibelius, M. & Conzelmann, H. (1972). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Fortress Press. p. 91

<sup>10</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible

<sup>11</sup> Charles Thomson Translation

<sup>12</sup> Riverside New Testament

<sup>13</sup> Liddel, H. G., & Scott, R. (1901). *Greek-English lexicon*. American Book Company.

Some have even suggested separating these two parts as a correction to the text.<sup>14</sup> This separated form matches a related passage on giving. The Septuagint's Tobit 4:9 also describes the results of giving. It reads,

“For thou layest up [*thesaurizeis*] a good treasure [*thema*] for thyself against the day of necessity.” (KJV).<sup>15</sup>

In comparison, 1 Timothy 6:19 reads,

“Laying up in store [*apothēsaurontas*] for themselves a good foundation [*themelion*] against the time to come” (KJV).

The book of Tobit was written around 200 B.C. Paul's audience would have been familiar with this parallel passage. Thus, they would likely have understood *themelion* as a wealth reference.

Still, a reference to *thema* would have been clearer. It's purely financial. It has no double meaning as a big heavy rock. So why use the compound word *themelion* with its double meaning? Why not use *thema* and *lian* separately instead?

One commentary suggests an interesting reason. Using *themelion* matches a beat. Using *thema* and *lian* separately do not. The word choice is necessary if this is a hymn. Professor Luke Timothy Johnson explains,

“Everything from v. 15b through v. 16 is indented by the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Nestle-Aland critical text, indicating

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<sup>14</sup> “Tobias 4:9 suggests the emendation *thema lian* (conj. Bos.) for *themelion*, or simply *thema* (Hitchcock, *Expositor*, Oct 1919)” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner's Sons. p. 75.]

<sup>15</sup> “*thema gar agathon thēsaurois seautō*”; An English interlinear of Tobit 4:9 translates *thema* as “treasure; pile (noun)” and *thēsaurois* as “treasure; store up (verb).” Ralhfs, A. (1935). Septuagint. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. <https://biblebento.com/index.html?lxx1i&170.4.9>

its editorial judgment that this is another hymnic fragment. It is possible: the clauses are well balanced, and there are elements of rhyme, which occur frequently in hymns as well as in other forms of prayer. We find a deliberate wordplay in 6:17-18 using variations on ‘rich’ (*plousiois, ploutou, plousios, ploutein*) ... We can note as well that there is some assonance in v. 19 in the sequence *themelion kalon eis to mellon* (a noble foundation for the future), which may help account for the choice of *themelios ...*<sup>16</sup>

This “hymn” idea has additional support.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Paul already quoted another hymn earlier in this letter.<sup>18</sup> His doing so again would be no surprise.

Also, Paul’s argument matches and extends that made in a well-known theatrical scene about generosity.<sup>19</sup> This playwright’s works were often repurposed into short segments or maxims. Thus, that scene itself may have been sung or adapted into song lyrics. The idea of Paul “Christianizing” a well-known song matches his rhetorical approach in other places.

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<sup>16</sup> [Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul’s delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Trinity Press International. p. 206.] See also “note the assonance in the phrase *themelion kalon eis to mellon*” [Witherington, B. (2006). *Letters and homilies for Hellenized Christians*. Vol. 1. IVP Academic. p. 297.]

<sup>17</sup> E.g., “1 Timothy 6:17 probably reflects doxological language” [Cosgrove, C. H. (2011). *An ancient Christian hymn with musical notation: Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1786: Text and commentary* (Vol. 65). Mohr Siebeck. p. 27.]

<sup>18</sup> 1 Timothy 3:16. See, e.g., Gundry, R. H. (1970). *The form, meaning, and background of the hymn quoted in 1 Timothy 3:16*. Paternoster Press; Karris, R. J. (1996). *A symphony of New Testament hymns: Commentary on Philippians 2: 5-11, Colossians 1:15-20, Ephesians 2:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:16, Titus 3:4-7, 1 Peter 3:18-22, and 2 Timothy 2:11-13*. Liturgical Press; Edwards, D. R. (2022). “Taken up in glory”: Early Christian traditions of the ascension in light of 1 Timothy 3:16. *Journal of Early Christian History*, 1-21.

<sup>19</sup> For references and an extended discussion of this argument, see Chapter 13-III, “A literary allusion: How Menander’s *Dyskolos* adds meaning.”

Whether or not this was a hymn, Paul's letters were often read aloud.<sup>20</sup> He commands this practice in other epistles.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Paul was writing, in part, for public performance. This makes memorable sound patterns particularly valuable. Using *themelion* achieves this. It creates the lyrically balanced:

*themelion kalon eis to mellon.*

Substituting *thema* and *lian* ruins the cadence.

There's another reason to read *themelion* as a financial deposit or fund. It's simple. Otherwise, the words don't make sense. Why would someone

“store up for themselves the treasure of” a big heavy rock?

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<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., “Paul writes to his co-worker Timothy with the intention of having the letter read to all the congregations under Timothy's watch care.” [Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul's theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 143]; Similarly, Malherbe maintains that early Christian writing was intended to be read aloud. [Malherbe, A. (1986). *Moral exhortation: A Greco-Roman sourcebook*. Westminster. p. 68.]; This was the common practice in antiquity. See, e.g., “historical sources warrant the conclusion that, when letters in antiquity were received, they were not read silently as is done today, but were generally read aloud” [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul's style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 201]; “It can be said, without exaggeration, that ‘all classical Greek authors composed for the ear.’ ... it is likely that all of the compositions of the NT were written expressly for public, oral performance.” [Aune, D. (1986). *The apocalypse of John and the problem of genre. Semeia*, 36, 77-78.]; “Paul's letters acted as a substitute for the writer's presence and were oral (or perhaps, ‘aural’) in their immediate context. His letters were a way of bringing the speech, instead of the speaker, to the audience. They were read out loud to the audience by the letter carriers – those mentioned in the opening greeting – who acted also as interpreters of his thought and messengers to the audience when they didn't understand something or didn't react to the effect Paul tried to create.” [Hester, J. D. (1996). *The invention of 1 Thessalonians: A proposal*. In S. E. Porter & T. H. Olbricht (Eds.), *Rhetoric, scripture and theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria conference* (pp. 251-279), JSOT Press. p. 253-254.]

<sup>21</sup> Colossians 4:16, “When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part, read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.” 1 Thess 5:27, “I put you under oath by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.”

It's like saying,

“You'll store up for yourselves the treasure of a chunk of concrete.”

That's not exactly a persuasive argument.

The solution to this metaphorical awkwardness is obvious. As one commentary notes,

“The language of the clause is awkward, for storing up (the Gk. Verb is *apothesarizein*: lit. ‘to amass treasure’) and foundation represent two quite different ideas (although the Greek word for the latter, *themelion*, can also, in a transferred sense, mean ‘fund’).”<sup>22</sup>

As Professor Linda Belleville explains,

“A good foundation is not the concrete slab of a building but a substantial nest egg or retirement account.”<sup>23</sup>

### ***A seventh wealth reference: This “generous” means wealth sharing***

The word generous (or generosity) appears frequently in the New Testament. It appears in Romans 12:8, 2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:11, 13, and James 1:5. Each time, it's from the Greek word *haplotēs*.

Our passage is an exception. When 1 Timothy 6:18 references “to be generous” it's not *haplotēs*. It's *eumetadotous*.

What's special about *eumetadotous*? For one thing, it's a new word. Paul made it up. He added the *eu-* prefix to

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<sup>22</sup> Kelly, J. N. D. (1963). *A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Adam & Charles Black. p. 149

<sup>23</sup> Belleville, L., Laansma, J. C., & Michaels, J. R. (2008). *1-2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews*. [Kindle]. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 122

*metadotous*. *Metadotous* means sharing. *Eu-metadotous* is a special kind of sharing. The *eu-* prefix often references wealth. We see this in Greek words such as:

- *Eu-botrys*: rich in grapes
- *Eu-bous*: rich in cattle
- *Eu-karpos*: rich in fruit, fruitful
- *Eu-krithos*: rich in barley
- *Eu-kteanos*: wealthy
- *Eu-ktēmōn*: wealthy
- *Eu-mēlos*: rich in sheep
- *Eu-olbos*: wealthy, prosperous
- *Eu-patheō*: to be well off, enjoy oneself
- *Eu-piōn*: very fat, very rich
- *Eu-pokos*: rich in wool
- *Eu-prageō*: to do well, be well off, flourish
- *Eu-soia*: happiness, prosperity
- *Eu-stachus*: rich in corn
- *Eu-chimaros*: rich in goats
- *Eu-chrysos*: rich in gold

*Eu-sharing*, *eu-metadotous*, is a special kind of sharing. It's wealth sharing. It's not just normal generosity. It's the generosity of wealth sharing.

***But wait, there's more!***

This is a single sentence with seven references to wealth. One commentary argues for yet another. It argues that both

“treasuring up” [*apothēsaourizontas*] and “they may take hold” [*epilabōntai*] in verse 19 are financial terms. It explains that both

“belong to the same semantic domain as the ‘riches’”<sup>24</sup>

One translation adds a ninth reference. It translates *koinōnikous* in verse 18 as

“to be sharers of possessions.”<sup>25</sup>

This is sharing from one’s accumulated stock. It’s wealth sharing, not income sharing.

But by now, you get the point. This message is not about income. It’s about riches. It’s about wealth. It’s not about sharing income – whether a tenth or otherwise. This message is about a different type of giving. It’s about sharing wealth. It’s not about a paycheck. It’s not about a weekly budget. It’s about what a person owns.

### ***The reason for the repetition***

Why this semantic overkill? Why use riches as

“a personal noun, an objective noun, an adverb, and a verb”?<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “The verbs ‘store up’ (*apothēsaourizontas*) and ‘obtain’ (*epilabōntai*; see 6:12) belong to the same semantic domain as the ‘riches’ (*plous-*) about which the Pastor has been writing. In verse 19 the Pastor employs these financial terms to speak of real gain.... In modern terms they would be investing in their future.” [Collins, R. F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. p. 171.] See, e.g., Aristotle’s *Politics* 1.1259a referencing, “but all the same he made a profit [*epelaben*] of a hundred talents on his capital of fifty.”

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul’s delegates: I Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Trinity Press International. p. 202

<sup>26</sup> Collins, R. F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. p. 169.

Why reference wealth seven, eight, or even nine times? And all in one sentence! Is this really necessary?

Paul thought so. He repeats it for a simple reason. Wealth conversations are scary! We don't want to talk to other people about their wealth. It's uncomfortable! It's the scariest thing about this ministry. It's the thing we're most likely to avoid.

Given the chance, we would skip over this part. We would slip back into talking about disposable income gifts. We would talk about weekly giving or tithing. We would talk about small, easy, comfortable gifts. Paul doesn't give us this chance. He makes clear that this ministry is about assets. It's about wealth. It's about riches.

This is a different kind of giving. It's also a different kind of fundraising. And, it's what actually works. Focusing on gifts of wealth can dramatically transform all kinds of charities, churches, and ministries. The words are true. They worked two thousand years ago. They still work today.





## Chapter 5

### Message 3: People like us enjoy doing things like this!

- *Biblical fundraising shows a shared social norm of generosity from others' examples.*
- *Ordinary fundraising asks for isolated donation decisions.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies **us** with all things to enjoy [*Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### ***Paul flips the script: "Us" vs. "them"***

This passage gives instructions for Christians with wealth. It describes their past and continuing identity. It describes the treasure they can build up for themselves. It describes the life they can take hold of. It tells a story. It's a story about wealthy Christians.

But in the middle of this story, Paul switches the perspective. He's been writing about "them" – the wealthy Christians. But then, he reverses. Paul does not describe

"God, who richly supplies them with all things."

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti **hēmin** panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

Nor does he describe simply

“God, who richly supplies all things.”

Instead, he does something different. He describes

“God, who richly supplies us [*hemin*] with all things”.

Professor Bill Mounce explains,

“By using *hemin*, ‘to us,’ and not *autois*, ‘to them,’ Paul shows that he is stating a general truth applicable to all people, whether they are rich or not.”<sup>2</sup>

The message switches. In English, this switch can appear subtle. It’s easy to miss. But in Greek, it’s not subtle. The “us” is emphatic. It’s special.

In Greek, the person referenced is not normally stated separately. An “I,” “you,” “us,” or “them” is inferred by the form of the main word. (For example, from its conjugation.) But here, it is stated separately. It’s stated as its own word. The word is *hemin*. This word is “only expressed when emphatic.”<sup>3</sup> It creates special emphasis or force. It grabs the reader’s attention.

Why is this “us” so important? It’s important because it affects the meaning of all three verses in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

### ***Sharing is for “us” not “them”***

The passage describes,

“God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

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<sup>2</sup> Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary Volume 46: Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 367.

<sup>3</sup> A plural form of *egō*. “A primary pronoun of the first person, I (only expressed when emphatic): -- I, me.” Strong, J. (1890/1990). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 25.

In English, this often ends the first sentence. In Greek, it does not. All three verses are a single sentence. This phrase is followed by a list:

“... to enjoy [*eis apolausin*]

- To do good [*agathoergein*]
- To be rich in good works [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]
- To be generous ready-to-share [*eumetadotous einai koinōnikous*].<sup>4</sup>

The list explains the first item. This reads as,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

Because the list explains how “to enjoy,” the list applies to “us.” God richly supplies “us” with all things “to enjoy.”

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<sup>4</sup> In the earliest manuscript, the fourth-century *Codex Sinaiticus*, there is no punctuation around or within the list. The words and letters appear together with no spacing between words. The Codex Sinaiticus Project. (nd). 1 Timothy, 6:9 - 6:21 / 2 Timothy, 1:1 - 1:15 library: BL folio: 295b scribe: A. <https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=47&chapter=6&lid=en&side=r&verse=17&zoomSlider=0>

The next oldest manuscript of the passage is found in the *Codex Alexandrinus*. It dates to the first half of the fifth century. Here, each item on the list is separated by a small raised dot. This generally indicates a pause or slight break, but it would not distinguish between our modern colon, comma, or semicolon. These raised dots appear after *apolausin*, *agathoergein*, *kalois*, and *koinōnikous*. Note that there is no dot following *einai* that would correspond to the comma appearing there in some modern Greek texts. This would group “*eumetadotous einai koinōnikous*” [to be generous and ready to share] together as a single phrase. Also, the longest space within the passage occurs after *apolausin*. Whether this relates to the mid-line break used by Masoretic scribes to represent a closed section, a small thematically related unit, is discussed in a later chapter. However, if so, it would match with the sense of a colon following *apolausin* rather than just a comma. [British Museum. (1955). *The Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Alexandrinus*. Trustees of the British Museum. London. [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal\\_ms\\_1\\_d\\_viii\\_f121r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=royal_ms_1_d_viii_f121r) ]

Adding a sentence break and new words (“Instruct them”) in English changes this meaning. It implies that receiving and enjoying is for “us,” but sharing is only for “them.” This is incorrect.

The list explains “for enjoyment.” It explains how to enjoy the things God richly supplies to “us.” The list doesn’t apply just to “them.” It also applies to “us.”

An alternate approach takes “to enjoy” as part of a list explaining the various uses for “all things.”<sup>5</sup> The result is still the same. The list still applies to “us.” It spells out the intended uses of God’s gifts of all things. This intent applies to everyone who receives those gifts. It’s not just for the rich. It’s for “us” all.

The “us” language applies to both receiving and sharing. Otherwise, God would be supplying all of us richly, but only the rich would then use it,

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

That would make no sense. And that’s not what it says.

### ***Where does “us” end?***

After “ready to share,” Paul returns to “them” language. He describes the results of sharing as

“treasuring up for themselves [*heautois*]”.

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<sup>5</sup> Here, each item gives one of the various uses God intends when supplying us with “all things.” This could read as,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things

- for enjoyment,
- to do good,
- to be rich in good works,
- to be generous and ready to share”

Does this “them” refer back only to the rich? No. It refers back to those who have shared generously. Professor Stan Porter explains,

“Paul defines those who are generous sharers as ‘those storing up for themselves a good foundation for the future’ ... The generous sharers are here said to be storing up ‘for themselves’ (*heautois*), the reflexive dative plural pronoun of the complement indicating that the action is in relation to themselves.”<sup>6</sup>

Professor Richmond Lattimore’s New Testament translation emphasizes this understanding. He renders the passage with,

“God, who provides us richly with all means for enjoyment, to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be liberal, sharing, laying away for ourselves a good foundation for the future so that all may partake of what is really life.”<sup>7</sup> (1 Timothy 6:17b-19, emphasis added).

The idea is this. God richly provides all of us with all things. But not all of us will use it for the purpose he intended. Not all of us will use it for enjoyment. Some will use it to feed a life of excess and addiction, leading to despair. Some will just bury it and die with it.

But others will follow God’s intended purpose. They will use it “for enjoyment.” They will enjoy it by using what He has richly provided

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

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<sup>6</sup> Porter, S. E. (2023). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. Baker Academic. 6:19. par. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Lattimore, R. (2015). *The New Testament*. [Kindle Edition]. North Point Press. p. 456.

It is these people who will be

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19).

This opportunity is not limited to

“those who are rich in this present world” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

It’s available to all. It’s available to “us.” God richly supplies us with all things. We’re all in this together. We’re not all rich, but we’ve all been richly supplied. We’ve all been richly supplied, just in different ways.

Other scriptures make the same point.<sup>8</sup> We each must decide what to do with the gifts God has given. This applies whether God has richly supplied us with wealth or something else. It applies to all of us.

### ***We’re all in this together***

In any interpretation, this “us” phrase is a departure. The passage begins with “them” language. Then, it breaks from that.

So, why this shift? Why this abrupt change in who is being described? The beginning of the message is about “them” – Christians with wealth. The next part is not. It’s about “us.”

Paul’s message might feel more attractive if it were only about the rich. It’s tempting to think,

“Those rich people over there are different. God has given them so much! It should be so easy for them to be generous.”

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., 1 Peter 4:10; Romans 12:6-8; Matthew 25:14-30.

This feeling is natural. It's comfortable. But it's not reality.<sup>9</sup> And it doesn't encourage generosity.<sup>10</sup> This feeling implies that their generosity doesn't really count. It doesn't count because they're different. They're different from us.

This attitude increases separation. It compounds an existing problem. The rich already have a natural tendency towards isolation. They may feel that they can't trust others. They may feel that they are above others.

These feelings lead to separation. They separate rich Christians from the rest of the fellowship community. Paul combats this separation. He pulls them into the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. He pulls them in through sharing [*koinōnikous*].

The message here is not that rich Christians are different. The message is that they're the same. No, not everyone is wealthy. Not everyone must decide what to do with their wealth. But each of us has been richly supplied in different ways. We each must make the same choice. We must answer the same question. What will we do with the things God has richly supplied to us?

Paul's phrasing emphasizes this shared experience. The rich are to be rich "in good works." This phrase is *ergois kalois*. Paul uses this exact phrase only twice. These two uses appear

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<sup>9</sup> People who become, or stay, wealthy often do so because they don't spend money – except to make more money. This desire to hold money and not spend it can lead to wealth accumulation. However, this same personality characteristic can also be a major barrier to giving. It can make giving more difficult than it is for other people.

<sup>10</sup> Consider your own feelings if the roles were switched. Suppose someone is visiting from a much poorer country. Now, you are the relatively rich person. They ask for money, arguing, "You're rich. That must make it so easy for you to give! You're different because you've been given so much." How might you react to the argument? You might be a little defensive. You might think, "I don't have that much money! Look at these other people. They're rich, not me. Talk to them. I have some, but I had to work hard for it. It didn't just fall on my head!"



just a few sentences apart. In 1 Timothy 6:18, it describes the responsibilities of the richest Christians. In 1 Timothy 5:10, it describes the responsibilities of the poorest Christians. It's required of elderly widows seeking financial support from the church. As one commentator explains,

“The community benefits from the *good works* of both the widows (cf. 5:10) – the poorest of the poor – and the wealthy people in its midst.”<sup>11</sup>

The parallels continue. In 1 Timothy 6:18, the rich person is also to do good [*agatho-ergein*]. The poor elderly widow must do the same. In 1 Timothy 5:10, she must “work good” [*ergō agathō*].

The rich person is also to be a good sharer [*eu-metadotous*]. So, too, the poor person. In Ephesians 4:28, Paul directs,

“The one who steals must no longer steal; but rather he must labor, producing with his own hands what is good [*agathon*], so that he will have something to share [*metadidonai*] with the one who has need.”

The rich person's decision to share wealth is not different. It's not special. It's not above. It's the same. Everyone must make the same decision. They are like us. We all face the same scenario. We all face the same choice. We're all in this together!

***Social norms: People like us enjoy doing things like this***

This passage is about sharing wealth. At first, that decision appears to be special. It's only for the wealthy. Here,

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<sup>11</sup> Thompson, J. (1996). *Equipped for change: Studies in the Pastoral Epistles*. HillCrest Publications. p. 82.

scripture explains that it's not special.

The decision to generously share what God has supplied is universal. Because of this, others' examples can be motivational. They create a "social norm." They show that generous sharing is normal. It's what we all do.

This "social norm" message works in fundraising. Showing that others who are like the donor have made similar contributions is powerful. Paul's message does this. It shows how others have made similar decisions to share generously. Only the specific gift varies from person to person.

Paul uses the "social norm" fundraising message elsewhere. His fundraising appeal to the Corinthians doesn't start with how exciting the project is. It doesn't start with how great the need is. It starts with a donor story. It starts with an example of others who have already given.

The Macedonians gave joyfully. Relative to what they had, they also gave much. He opens with,

"Now, brothers and sisters, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave voluntarily, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (2 Corinthians 8:1-4).

Paul's donor story sets an example.<sup>12</sup> It sets a "social norm." But for a "social norm" to work, it's not enough to show

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<sup>12</sup> Several commentators point out that this section is a "paradigm" or "example." See, e.g., Betz, D. (1985). *2 Corinthians 8 and 9: A commentary on two*

that other people do things like this. The message must be that people like us enjoy doing things like this. The effective donor story is about someone who is, in some way, “like me.”

Paul’s donor story does this. He motivates the Corinthian church by using the example of the Macedonian church. These were nearby regions. These areas shared a long history of connections. These churches were part of the same fellowship. These connections make the donor story more powerful.

The same idea is at work in our passage. Using the things God richly supplies to share generously is what we all do. Together, the fellowship community mutually shares. The donor is part of a community of mutual, reciprocal sharing. The donor is part of “us.”

***Social norms: People like us enjoy doing things like this***

In giving experiments, social norms are powerful. People look for what is normal. They look for what is socially expected. Examples of others’ giving set this expectation. If the example gift is \$1, people are more likely to give \$1. If the example gift is \$50, they’re more likely to give \$50.

It might seem like the best fundraising answer is easy. Just set the expectation to a high amount. Then, we’ll raise more money. But that’s not how it works.

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*administrative letters of the Apostle Paul.* Hermeneia - Fortress. p. 41; Martin, R. P. (2014). *2 Corinthians*. Zondervan. p. 255.; Verbrugge, V., & Krell, K. R. (2015). *Paul and money: A Biblical and theological analysis of the Apostle’s teachings and practices*. [Kindle]. Zondervan Academic. p. 166; Professor Raymond Collins notes, “In Hellenistic rhetoric the giving of examples (*epideigmata exempla*) was considered an important means of persuading people.” [Collins, R. F. (2013). *Second Corinthians*. Baker Academic, 169-170.]

People rarely make a gift that is lower than the example amount. Instead, they will choose not to give at all. Giving something less than the accepted amount makes no sense. It's costly, but it still violates the social norm. So, people instead give nothing.

Using just one example amount for everyone is problematic. Those planning to give much less will instead give nothing. Those planning to give much more will instead give only the example amount.

Consider this example. Suppose a church needs \$100,000 for a project. Often, someone will suggest,

“We just need to find a hundred people to give \$1,000.”

This feels natural. But it's a bad idea. It's the most difficult way to raise the money. What works better is to find one person to give \$50,000, three people to give \$10,000, ten people to give \$1,000, and twenty people to give \$50.

This works better. Any experienced fundraiser will agree. But notice something else. This also allows more people to give generously. A single amount, like \$1,000, will be the best gift for only a few. For most, it will be either stingy or unattainable.

### ***People like us give abundantly and generously***

Our passage creates a social norm. It implies, “people like us enjoy doing things like this.” But what, exactly, do people like us do? The social norm is not giving a set amount. It's not easier for the wealthy to meet. The social norm is giving abundantly or generously. It's giving abundantly or generously from what God has supplied.

Scripture inspires by using donor stories. These set a social norm. The social norm is abundant, generous giving. The Macedonian church wasn't as rich as the Corinthian church. But the Macedonian church still set the social norm. They gave even beyond their ability. They gave abundantly and generously. In our passage, the social norm is the same.

***Conclusion: Following the social norm***

The rich Christian must decide what he will do with his temporary wealth. But he is not alone in this decision. He is surrounded by the examples of others who share generously.

They may not have wealth. But God has supplied them richly, too. They have taken what God has supplied and used it. They've used it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

The rich Christian will do the same. He will do the same because,

“People like us enjoy doing things like this!”

## Chapter 6

### Message 4: Giving is more enjoyable because everything comes from God!

(Gratitude, stewardship, and abundance)

- *Biblical fundraising focuses on the past, present, and future story of the donor's wealth.*
- *Ordinary fundraising focuses only on the charity's story.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on **God, who richly supplies us with all things** to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### GOD THE PROVIDER

### *Making giving more fun*

This passage creates a mindset that makes giving enjoyable. It does so, in part, by pointing to three facts.

1. Everything we have was a gift. (A gratitude mindset leads to joyful giving.)
2. It's disappearing anyway. (A stewardship mindset leads to joyful giving.)

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi **Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs** eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

3. There will be plenty more where that came from. (An abundance mindset leads to joyful giving.)

Each of these mindsets lead to joyful giving. And each starts from the same place: God is the one who richly supplies us with all things.

### ***God, the up-close-and-personal provider***

The rich person has wealth. The passage here describes the source of that wealth. It comes from God. Indeed, God supplies all things. The word for “supplies” here is *parechonti*. It’s the present participle active of *parechō*. One source describes it this way:

“*paréchō* (from *pará*, ‘from close-beside’ and *échō*, ‘have’) – properly, have close beside, i.e., give (offer) in a ‘up-close-and-personal’ way. Note the force of the prefix (*para*).”<sup>2</sup>

This uses the same “up-close-and-personal” prefix as in *para-klētos*, Holy Spirit. It’s also the same prefix used earlier in this passage. It’s used for the “up-close-and-personal” ministry relationship to the rich, *para-angelle*.

God is the one richly providing us with all things. This is not the word for a disconnected provider. It’s not for the one who just mails a check. As one translation puts it, this is God who

“takes care of us richly” (1 Timothy 6:17b).<sup>3</sup>

This is an up-close-and-personal relationship.

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<sup>2</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).

<sup>3</sup> Easy-to-Read Version (ERV).

How “up close” are we talking here? Luke 6:29 uses the same word. It reads,

“Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer [*pareche*] him the other also;”

That’s “up close!” Indeed, this word can be so “up close” as to be annoying. Luke 18:5 reads,

“yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.”

The phrase “bothers me” is, more literally, “gives [*parechein*] me trouble.” This persistent widow was exhaustingly “up close.”

*Parechō* means giving or providing. But this is not detached giving. It’s providing “up-close-and-personal.”

### ***God, the ongoing provider***

*Parechō* is up-close-and-personal providing. As used here, it is also ongoing. The present tense in Greek has the sense of continuous or repeated action. It’s not just the past, but it includes the past. It’s not just the present, but it includes the present. It’s not just the future, but it includes the future.

One translation reads,

“God, the One who is constantly offering us all things” (1 Timothy 6:17b).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “but upon God, the One who is constantly offering us all things in a rich manner to enjoy;” [Wuest, K. S. (1952). *The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament for the English reader*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. p. 102.]



Others translate this using,

“continually gives”<sup>5</sup> or

“ceaselessly provides”<sup>6</sup>

Professor Linda Belleville explains,

“The present-tense substantive participle *tō parechonti* emphasizes that God is a giver who keeps on giving.”<sup>7</sup>

The source of the donor’s wealth is God’s rich provision. That’s the story of the donor’s past wealth. It’s the story of the donor’s current wealth. It will also be the story of the donor’s future wealth or other rich provision.

In our passage, providing [*parechonti*] is not just a one-time action. It’s not just something God did in the past. (Although he has.) It’s not just something God is doing right now. (Although he is.) It’s not just something God will do in the future. (Although he will.) Instead, this describes an enduring characteristic of God.

It’s a continuous action because this is who God is.<sup>8</sup> The reference to God’s identity is specific in the Greek. He is,

“God [*Theō*] the One [*tō*] providing [*parechonti*] us [*hēmin*] all things [*panta*] richly [*plousiōs*]” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

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<sup>5</sup> Belleville, L., Laansma, J. C., & Michaels, J. R. (2008). *1-2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews*. [Kindle Edition]. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 117.

<sup>6</sup> The Amplified Bible.

<sup>7</sup> Belleville, L. (2017). Investments for abundant life. In J. S. Duvall & V. Verbrugge (Eds.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to inspire and instruct*. Zondervan Academic. p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Ellul gives the extreme summary, “God’s sole behavior is the gift.” [Debergé, P. (1983). *L’argent dans la Bible: ni pauvre ni riche*. Nouvelle Cite. p. 168. (Cited in Chasteney, P. (2022). Giving under God’s gaze: Figures of the gift in the Bible and in the work of Jacques Ellul. In J. M. Rollison (Ed.), C. Roy (Tr.), *Jacques*

He is “the One” providing all things.<sup>9</sup> He is God the provider.<sup>10</sup> He is Jehovah-Jireh.<sup>11</sup> It’s part of His identity. That’s just who God is.

This identity is why He provided in the past. It’s why He provides now. It’s why He will provide in the future.

### ***God, the provider of every individual thing***

Of course, God supplies much more than just wealth. He supplies “all things” [*panta*]. It all comes from God.<sup>12</sup> This word, *panta*, has the sense not only of “all” but also of “each individual thing.” One lexicon defines it as

“each, every; each ‘part(s) of a totality’”<sup>13</sup>

God supplies it all. He supplies each individual part. And He doesn’t just supply this to the rich person. He supplies it to all of “us” [*hēmin*].

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*Ellul and the Bible: Towards a hermeneutic of freedom* (pp. 168-188). The Lutterworth Press. p. 168.)]

<sup>9</sup> The Berean Literal Bible uses “God, the One richly providing us all things”.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Psalm 145:15-16, “The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”

<sup>11</sup> Providing is a characteristic of God from the Garden of Eden forward. Genesis 22:14 reads, “And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, ‘On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.’” Some use the name of this place, Jehovah-jireh or Yahweh Yireh as equivalent to a name for God, referencing “God the provider.”

<sup>12</sup> Of course, this is nothing new. See, e.g., James 1:17, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”; John 3:27, “John replied, ‘A person can receive not even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven.’”; 1 Chronicles 29:14, “But who am I and who are my people that we should be able to offer as generously as this? For all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given to You.”; Deuteronomy 8:18, “But you are to remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

<sup>13</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1989). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains. Vol. 1 Introduction and Domains*. United Bible Society. 59.24.

This is not limited to riches. It's not limited to the rich. It's a shared experience for all of us. Together, we're all being richly supplied by God.<sup>14</sup> He provides each of us with every individual thing. Together, we can each share from that rich supply.

### ***God, the ideal partner***

Partnership is a theme throughout 1 Timothy 6:17-19. That same theme occurs here. Yes, God provides us with all things. But it's part of a relationship. God's provision is "up close and personal." It's part of an ongoing partnership. It's part of the best possible ongoing partnership.

This is the ultimate partnership. It has the ultimate partnership benefits. God provides [*parechonti*]. But He does so in an amazingly abundant way. He does so richly [*plousiōs*]. Beyond just providing, *parechonti* includes the idea of

"to hold beside" or

"hold in readiness"<sup>15</sup>

This creates an inspiring image of abundance. God is holding at the ready rich provision. It's all stacked up, just waiting for you! You want to be part of that partnership. You want to connect with that partner. He's already given it to you. He's done so richly. He's waiting for your response. He's holding in readiness even more!

God is the ideal partner. He provides ultimate partnership benefits. This is not just a matter of money. It's

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<sup>14</sup> Professor Ronald Ward explains in his commentary on the passage, "He it is who supplies us, all of us, rich or poor, with everything." [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 122.]

<sup>15</sup> Liddel, H. G., & Scott, R. (1889/1975). *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon*. Oxford University Press. at *parexō*.

not a financial exchange. It's about all things. His provision is the source of each and every good thing. It's the source of all the things we've received in the past. It's the source of all the things we have now. It's the source of all the things we may receive in the future.



## PART II

### THE WEALTH ORIGIN STORY AND GRATITUDE GIVING

(Message 4: Giving is more enjoyable because everything comes from God!)

#### ***The origin story of the donor's wealth***

1 Timothy 6:17-19 repeatedly focuses on wealth. This one sentence uses wealth as

“a personal noun, an objective noun, an adverb, and a verb.”<sup>1</sup>

It uses

- *Plousiois* [the rich]
- *Ploutou* [riches]
- *Plousiōs* [richly]
- *Ploutein* [rich]

It uses *apothēsaourizontas* [storing up treasure]. It uses *themelion* [foundation or fund].

This passage tells the story of wealth. It starts with the end of the story. The end of the wealth story is this: we don't get to keep it. Those who are rich are rich only “in this present world.” We can't take it with us when we die. (1 Timothy 6:7). Even while we live, wealth is uncertain. It's subject to disappearing at any moment [*adēlotēti*].

Next, it tells the beginning of the story. This is the “origin story” of the donor's wealth. It's the origin story of the

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, R. F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. p. 169.

donor's past, present, and future wealth. The donor's wealth, along with everything else, is richly supplied by God.<sup>2</sup>

This origin story encourages generosity. It does so in many ways. It does so through

- Gratitude reciprocity
- Stewardship reciprocity
- An abundance mindset

Each attitude flows naturally from understanding the origin of the donor's wealth. This origin story is why each argument makes sense. Without it, none of them do.

### ***The origin of gratitude reciprocity***

God gives. We respond. How? With gratitude. But what is gratitude? It may not be what you think it is. In scripture, gratitude is not just saying, "Thanks!" It's not a statement. It's an action. Gratitude is an action that confirms a reciprocal relationship.

In both the ancient world and scripture, giving necessitates an appropriate response.<sup>3</sup> Sharing is a partnership. It requires reciprocity. A gift is not a mere

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Matthew 7:11, "So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"; Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"; James 1:17a, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights,"; 2 Peter 1:3a, "for His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness,"

<sup>3</sup> Cicero wrote, "No duty is more imperative than that of proving one's gratitude." [Cicero, M. T. (1913). *De officiis* (W. Miller, Trans.). Harvard University Press. 1.47.] Indeed, gift exchange, including the necessity of a response to the gift, is at the heart of sharing not just in the ancient world but across pre-industrial cultures. [Mauss, M. (1923/1967). *Essai sur le don. The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies* (I. Cunnison, trans.). Norton. (A translation of the 1923 essay).]

transfer of assets. It's not just wealth redistribution. A gift is part of an ongoing relationship. It's part of a mutual relationship of reciprocated gifting.

God gives to us. We respond to Him with reciprocal actions of gratitude. We respond by giving to others. They, in turn, also respond to us and our God with reciprocal actions of gratitude.<sup>4</sup>

Why does God give? Because He cares for us. Why do we respond with our gifts? Because we care for Him and others. Why do others respond to our giving? Because they care, too.

These are relationships, not market transactions. But they're also not entirely one-sided. If I give and the other person never responds, that probably means something. It probably means they don't want to be in a relationship. It means we're not in a partnership.

A partnership requires some type of mutual reciprocity. It requires a response. A person who receives but doesn't respond is a bad partner. A person with no gratitude is a bad partner.

### ***Giving and gratitude prove partnership emotion***

Both the initial gift and the response gift are part of mutual, reciprocal relationships. They are tangible evidence of

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<sup>4</sup> "Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal." (2 Corinthians 8:14 NLT); Paul writes of the gift recipients, "Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you." (2 Corinthians 9:13-14).



partnership emotion. They are actions that prove a relationship. Paul encourages the Corinthians' giving, writing,

“I am not saying this as a command, but as proving, through the earnestness of others, the sincerity of your love as well.” (2 Corinthians 8:8).

“Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.” (2 Corinthians 8:24).

The gift is not a simple transfer of assets. It's not mere wealth redistribution. It's proof. It's proof of an emotion. It's tangible evidence of a relationship.

This is true of the donor's gift. It's also true of the recipient's response. Paul describes the recipient's response to the Corinthians' planned gifts writing,

“while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Cor 9:14).

Another translation explains,

“while they themselves also in supplications on your behalf pour out their longing love towards you because of God's surpassing grace which is resting upon you.” (2 Cor 9:14, Weymouth).

The recipients respond with action on behalf of the donor. They respond with action that confirms the emotional relationship.

### ***Gratitude by the rich***

In our passage, the rich person has received. They've been richly supplied by God. They've been given a gift. How will they respond?

Will they ignore the gift? If so, they're bad partners. This would violate partnership values. Will they acknowledge the gift but do nothing in return? Again, they would be bad partners. This would violate partnership values.

A good partner responds to the gift. He acts. He expresses reciprocal gratitude. His action reflects an appreciation of the relationship. It is proof of that emotion. When given the chance, he responds. He does something his benefactor would want.

In our passage, the rich person is being a good partner with God. He responds to God's gifts. God richly supplies him. He, in turn, uses this to do the good works that God desires.

He responds by "paying it forward." It's not a transaction. It's an expression of a relationship. It reflects a desire to do what the giver wants. It expresses appreciation for who God is. It does this by imitating God's generous behavior.

The rich person is being a good partner with God. He is not just acknowledging the gift. He is expressing gratitude through action. He is giving proof of the importance of the relationship.

### ***Remove the gift roots, and the gratitude tree falls***

In this passage, the rich person fulfills partnership expectations. He responds to God's gift with gratitude. His gratitude is proven by action. He returns the favor. He does things to please the giver.

All of this starts with one foundation. It starts with one idea: the donor has received a gift. Otherwise, none of this makes sense. If the origin story of the donor's wealth has

nothing to do with God, then gratitude to God makes no sense. Without a gift, there can be no gratitude.

Suppose my wealth was not richly supplied by God. Suppose, instead, it was entirely from me. I earned it. Or I own it by birthright. God had nothing to do with it.

In that case, gratitude makes no sense. The wealth comes from me. It belongs to me. It's because of me. It's because of who I am or what I've done. I did it and others didn't. This also makes it easy to think of myself as above others. It's easy to become "high-minded."<sup>5</sup>

And if it's not a gift, why would I be grateful? To whom? Myself? For what? Working hard? Being smart? Having a birthright? That doesn't make sense. Scripture describes this attitude. It says,

"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.'"  
(Deuteronomy 8:17 NIV).

It then provides the antidote to this attitude.

"But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18a NIV).

Responding with gratitude requires recognizing the gift. In our passage, the rich person responds with gratitude. The root of this is that God has given first. God has richly supplied. Remove this root, and the tree falls. Gratitude requires a gift. Without a gift, there can be no gratitude.

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<sup>5</sup> Scott LaPierre explains, "Keeping in mind that we have what we do only because God provided it leaves no room for haughtiness. Riches are not an indication of how great we are; instead, they are an indication of how gracious God has been to us." [LaPierre, S. (2002). *Your finances God's way: A Biblical guide to making the best use of your money*. Harvest House Publishers. p. 79.]

## PART III

### THE WEALTH ORIGIN STORY AND STEWARDSHIP GIVING

(Message 4: Giving is more enjoyable because everything comes from God!)

#### ***Our story role***

This passage tells the story of wealth. That wealth story starts and ends like this:

- 1) It's richly supplied to us by God.
- 2) We don't get to keep it.

This beginning and ending do something else. They define our role in the story. We are temporary managers.

The wealth was provided to us. And it's not ours to keep. We just get to manage it for right now. Later, we'll report how we used it. Did we manage it wisely? A lot depends on the answer to that question.

#### ***The steward in scripture***

Search for “stewardship” online and you’ll get mostly religious references. But originally, this was not a religious word. Instead, it was an economic word. In fact, it was the economic word. A steward is an *oikonomos*. The word “economics” comes from the Greek *oikonomos*. One lexicon describes this as

“the manager of a household or of household affairs; especially a steward, manager, superintendent; the manager of a farm or landed estate, an overseer.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 440-441.

In Romans 16:23, Paul writes, “Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you.” The phrase for “city treasurer” is “*oikonomos* [steward] *tēs poleōs* [of the city].” *Oikonomos* [steward] is just a job title. For example, a restaurant manager is an *oikonomos*. He runs the restaurant, but he doesn’t own it. A city treasurer is an *oikonomos*. He manages the treasury, but it’s not his money.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 describes stewardship. But it doesn’t use that word. However, Peter does use “steward” in a parallel teaching. He writes,

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good [*kaloī*] stewards [*oikonomoi*] of the multifaceted grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10).

Peter explains that we each have received gifts. 1 Timothy 6:17 does the same. God has richly supplied us with each individual thing. Peter explains how we use what we’ve been given. We

“employ it in serving one another as good [*kaloī*] stewards [*oikonomoi*]” (1 Peter 4:10b).

In 1 Timothy 6:18 this is also true. We use what we’ve been given. We use it

“to be rich in good [*kalois*] works” (1 Timothy 6:18a).

Peter describes this job as *oikonomoi*. 1 Timothy 6:17-18 doesn’t use that word, but it does describe the same job. God supplies. We use it as instructed to serve one another. In both cases, the job is the same. We are managers. We are stewards.

Being a good steward is not limited to managing money. In the New Testament, stewards manage all sorts of things.

They manage

- Cities (Romans 16:23)
- Households (Luke 12:42)
- The church (Titus 1:7)
- The mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)
- Children (Galatians 4:2)
- And even noncash assets (Luke 16:1-8)

The broadest stewardship is in 1 Peter 4:10 and 1 Timothy 6:17-18. 1 Peter 4:10 includes whatever special gift we've received. 1 Timothy 6:17 includes all things richly supplied to us by God.<sup>2</sup>

Whether wealthy or not, we all have the same job. We've all been given something. And we don't get to keep it forever. We're all just temporary managers.

### ***Stewardship reciprocity in scripture***

Steward (manager) is a job title. As with other jobs, performance matters. The good manager gets bonuses! Our passage describes performance bonuses. Good managers get to store up treasure for themselves. They get to take hold of that which is truly life. This is a job with great benefits!

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, John Locke uses this verse as a basis for his political philosophy on stewardship of natural resources. God's rich provision is to be enjoyed but not abused. Professor Joanne Tetlow explains, "Further, Locke explains that the law of nature that gave mankind common property also placed limits on its use. Quoting 1 Timothy 6:17, that 'God has given us all things richly' and calling this scriptural passage 'the Voice of Reason confirmed by Inspiration,' Locke interprets this verse as freely permitting the use of property, but only to the extent of enjoyment. Spoilage or destruction of property are not within the bounds of the law of nature." [Tetlow, J. (2017). Locke's political theology and the 'Second Treatise'. *Locke Studies*, 17, 197-232. p. 218.]

This reciprocity for a job well done is explicit. Professor Patrick Fairbairn notes of this passage,

“The doctrine could scarcely be more unequivocally put, and is the more remarkable as coming from him who was emphatically the preacher of grace; he saw no incompatibility between a free salvation, the gift of sovereign grace to the sinful, and the placing of those who have become partakers of grace under the law of recompense.”<sup>3</sup>

Paul describes a job. It’s a job with reciprocity benefits. Jesus describes the same job in his parables. He describes the same reciprocity. In Jesus’s description, the reciprocity is even more explicit. In fact, it’s often extreme.

### ***Stewardship reciprocity in parables***

Jesus’s stewardship parables have common elements. An owner leaves for a time. He puts a manager in charge. On his return, the good manager is rewarded. The bad one is punished. The good manager follows the owner’s instructions. The bad one doesn’t.

For example, in Luke 19,

“A nobleman went to a distant country” (Luke 19:12b).

He gave money, a mina, to each of ten servants. He said,

“Do business with this money until I come back.” (Luke 19:13b).

On his return, there was reciprocity. It was extreme. The one who earned 10 minas was put in charge of 10 cities.

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<sup>3</sup> Fairbairn, P. (1874; 2002). *A commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. The Banner of Truth Trust. p. 249.

The reciprocity was also symmetrical. The one who earned 5 minas was put in charge of 5 cities.

The reciprocity could also be negative. The one who kept his mina “tucked away in a handkerchief” was punished. He was called “worthless.” His money was taken from him.

Jesus shares a similar story in Matthew 25:14-20. Again, the owner went on a journey. Again, he placed servants in charge of money. Again, the good managers put their money to work [*ergasato*]. Again, they were rewarded. They were put in charge of even more. Again, the bad manager hid the money. Again, he is called “worthless.” Again, his money is taken from him.

The reciprocity in this parable is, again, explicit. And it’s extreme. Jesus explains,

“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. And throw the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”  
(Matthew 25:29-30b).

In Luke 12, Jesus shares another parable. This time, he specifically uses the word for steward. Again, the owner is away. This time, the owner is at a wedding feast. (Luke 12:36). Again, the “faithful and sensible steward [*oikonomos*]” does his job. (Luke 12:42). Again, he is rewarded. Again, his reward is to be put in charge of more.<sup>4</sup>

Again, the other manager does not “act in accordance with” the owner’s will. (Luke 12:47). He abuses his position.

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 12:44, “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”



Again, the bad manager is punished. Again, the punishment is extreme. The owner scourges him or cuts him to pieces.<sup>5</sup>

Timothy's audience would have been familiar with these parables. Paul's words remind them that they, too, are temporary managers. Wealth comes from God, and it's not theirs to keep. They can manage wisely and gain great benefit. Or they can manage poorly. They can bury it in the ground and face the consequences.

### ***Stewardship reciprocity in an unusual parable***

Jesus uses steward [*oikonomos*] in one other parable. This is the Parable of the Unjust Steward. (Luke 16:1-13). At first, this might seem to be a strange fit for stewardship. It's a story of a steward who did not benefit the owner. He sought his own gain. Yet, he is commended.

This odd parable matches with our passage. John Stott writes of 1 Timothy 6:17-19,

“Perhaps the best commentary on this teaching is Jesus’ parable of the unjust steward or shrewd manager.”<sup>6</sup>

How do these match? In this parable, the steward is managing wealth. But that job is ending. The assets he manages will soon be useless to him. So, he gives them away to benefit others. He trades them for beneficial friendships that will last. He helps those who

“will welcome me into their homes.” (Luke 16:4b).

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<sup>5</sup> This is literally “to cut in two parts.” However, Thayer argues, “But in the text the words which follow, and which imply that the one thus ‘cut asunder’ is still surviving, oppose this interpretation; so that here the word is more fitly translated cut up by scourging, scourge severely.” [Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 153 at *dichotomeō*.]

<sup>6</sup> Stott, J. W. R. (1996). *The message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. InterVarsity Press. p. 162.

Jesus explains the point of the parable. He says,

“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it is all gone, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9).

This parable parallels 1 Timothy 6:17-19. The scenario is the same. The wealthy are also managing wealth. Their management is also ending. They don't get to keep it. They have wealth, but only at this moment.

They are also instructed to convert those assets into treasure that lasts. They are instructed to generously share [*koinōnikous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. These are not just friends. These are friends who

“will receive you into the eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9b).

In both cases, the wise move is to make a trade. Exchange temporary wealth for lasting treasure. In both cases, the trade is urgent. The wealth manager role is ending. It's temporary. It can end at any moment. Once that happens, it's too late. Right now is the opportune moment.

Jesus reiterates the point of the parable. He explains,

“So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:11).

In both cases, using wealth the right way leads to a reward. In Luke, the reward is to be trusted “with true riches.” In 1 Timothy, the reward is,

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19).

That certainly qualifies as “true riches.”

Reciprocity and reward are common themes in the stewardship parables. Managing wisely results in getting either more or better things. It results in a reward.

The same is true in 1 Timothy 6:17-19. The rich are temporary wealth managers. But they can store up for themselves treasure that lasts into the future. They can convert wealth into that which is truly life. Managing wisely results in getting more and better things.

### ***The fun of stewardship giving***

Suppose you’re serving a term on a board. The board manages a charitable foundation. The foundation has rules. These rules come from the foundation’s creator. They come from the one who supplied the funds. The rules require that the funds be used for charitable purposes. They require giving.

Now, suppose you learn of an opportunity to give. You get a request for funds. You decide that the project has merit. It fits the foundation’s purposes. So, you make the gift. Your gift then creates a good work. You get to see it come to life.

Is making that gift painful? No. Why not? Because the money wasn’t yours. It wasn’t yours to keep; it was just yours to manage. This is giving, but it’s giving as a steward. That gift doesn’t hurt. In fact, it’s fun.

This steward role makes giving fun. It retains all the joy of normal giving. It makes the same impact. But there’s no pain of loss. The pain disappears because you’re just the temporary manager.

This giving is cheerful giving. It's no longer a tradeoff between the pain of losing money and the joy of making an impact. It's all the joy with none of the pain.

***Remove the roots, and the tree falls***

A stewardship approach to wealth encourages generosity. A gratitude approach to wealth does the same. They both depend on the answer to one question. Is God the one who richly provides us with all things?

If the answer is yes, then stewardship makes sense. Otherwise, it doesn't. If it wasn't provided to me by another, then I'm not managing it for anyone else.

If the answer is yes, then gratitude also makes sense. Otherwise, it doesn't. If it all came from me, then I have no one to be grateful to.

The roots of generosity and stewardship are the same. They spring from the origin story of wealth. If it comes from God, then both make sense.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise, neither do.

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<sup>7</sup> In 1887, Alfred Rowland noted of 1 Timothy 6:17, "The remembrance of the fact that God gave you money adds sacredness to it, a sense of responsibility in the use of it, and arouses the gratitude and praise which are His due." [Rowland, A. (1887). *Paul's first letter to Timothy*. James Nesbit & Co. p. 281-282.] More recently, John Cook explains, "It is vital to acknowledge that whatever riches men have are due to God's generous giving and therefore they must regard them as held in trust for him, to whom they must give account for the use of them." [Cook, J. W. (2009). *Let's study 1 Timothy*. The Banner of Truth Trust. p. 114.]



## PART IV

### THE WEALTH ORIGIN STORY AND ABUNDANCE GIVING

(Message 4: Giving is more enjoyable because everything comes from God!)

#### ***Wealth origins: Scarcity or abundance?***

Suppose you're in the desert. You have a full canteen of water. You'll be drinking from it later, but you're not thirsty right now. Someone else is. Do you share?

That's a hard choice. You might need it in the future. Whatever you share now, you won't be able to drink later. Even if you choose to share, it's a stressful tradeoff.

Let's change one thing. You know of a nearby stream. It's where you've filled your canteen many times in the past. Now, do you share? That's an easy choice. Your canteen might be emptied, but your source of water is still there.

In both cases, you give the same thing. But in the second scenario, giving isn't stressful. It's enjoyable. If God is the one who richly supplies us, then we have a nearby stream. Giving is no longer a stressful tradeoff. It's sharing from an abundant ongoing supply.

#### ***Scripture and the abundance mindset***

A scarcity mindset says, "There's only a little. Hold tightly to every dime!" It says, "Be careful! Any loss will be tragic." It plays a zero-sum game. Winning means avoiding loss. A scarcity mindset makes giving painful.

An abundance mindset says, “Don’t worry; there will be more where that came from!” It is gain-focused, not loss-focused. It plays a mutual-benefit game. It allows for managing wealth more open-handedly. It allows for casting bread on the waters.<sup>1</sup> It allows for putting wealth to work. An abundance mindset makes giving enjoyable.

The scarcity and abundance mindsets are different. Which approach does scripture describe? It describes both. In parables, people receive wealth to manage. One manager has a scarcity mindset. He focuses on avoiding loss. So, he buries the wealth in the ground. Or he hides it in a handkerchief.

At the end, he reports back. Because of his scarcity mindset, he feels he has done a good job. He has protected the asset. He has suffered no loss. It’s all in place just as it started.

What’s the result of this scarcity mindset? The result is more scarcity. What he has is taken from him. The manager is punished.

The other managers have a different mindset. They focus on capturing a gain. The wealth is not there to be hidden. It’s there to be used. They manage the wealth open-handedly. They send it out to earn a return. They put the wealth to work.

What’s the result of this abundance mindset? The result is more abundance. The wealth increases. Then, the owner rewards them. They receive massively more.

### ***The results of abundance stewardship***

The result of close-fisted scarcity stewardship is even more scarcity. The result of open-handed abundance

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 11:1

stewardship is even more abundance. That's the point of the Parable of the Talents. In case we missed it, Jesus states it plainly. He summarizes,

“For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance [*perisseuthēsetai*]; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.” (Matthew 25:29).

The result for the good manager is that “he will have an abundance.” The word for “abundance” here is from *perisseuō*. This can mean

- Abundance <sup>2</sup>
- Abounding <sup>3</sup>
- More than enough <sup>4</sup>
- Increasing <sup>5</sup>
- Living in prosperity <sup>6</sup>
- Overflowing <sup>7</sup>

Definitions of the root word *perissos* include

“to superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess.”<sup>8</sup>

The connection to our passage is made more explicit in the Amplified Bible. It translates Matthew 25:29a as,

“For to everyone who has [and values his blessings and

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:5

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:7, 5:15, 15:13; 2 Corinthians 3:9, 8:7

<sup>4</sup> Luke 15:17

<sup>5</sup> Luke 21:4

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 4:12

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:2

<sup>8</sup> Strong, J. (1990). A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament. In J. Strong, *New Strong's exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson. at *perissos*.



gifts from God, and has used them wisely], more will be given, and [he will be richly supplied so that] he will have an abundance” (brackets in original).

Paul emphasizes this same abundance outcome in his fundraising appeal letter in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. By giving, we become a good partner for God. He responds by providing more. He provides more so that we can continue blessing others. Our generosity leads to abundance. As Paul explains, God provides

“an abundance [*perisseusai*] for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8b).

Also, the donor

“will be enriched for everything for all liberality” (2 Corinthians 9:11a).

This is giving that leads to abundance. Jesus explains, “give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap.” (Luke 6:38a ESV).

Jesus then simplifies the results of the scarcity and abundance mindsets. He explains,

“For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38b ESV).

Paul mirrors this with his own description:

“Now I say this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows generously will also reap generously.” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Simply put, God responds to generosity. Abundance stewardship results in even more abundance. Understanding this makes giving more enjoyable. It also makes wealth management much less stressful.

## ***Wealth origins and the abundance mindset***

The origin story of wealth changes wealth management. Suppose God is not the ongoing, richly supplying provider of all things, including wealth. This makes wealth management stressful. Wealth is a pool, not a river. If the pool drains, that's it. It's gone forever.

If the wealthy person's community standing was based on wealth, that's also gone. If their friendships were based on wealth, those disappear, too. Because wealth is so uncertain, they are constantly on the edge of losing everything.

It's a stressful way to live. Giving only adds to that stress. It drains that pool. It creates anxiety about what's been lost. It puts their future at risk.

This all changes if God is the one who richly supplies us with all things. He's the source of our past, present, and future wealth. This allows us to be open-handed with wealth.

If we lose something given to us by our rich father, it's not the end of the world. Our father is still rich. He still loves us. He will still provide. He can replace the gift. He can replace it with something even more valuable!

Wealth is no longer a shrinking pool to be protected. Instead, it's like water from a river.<sup>9</sup> Why would we hoard

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<sup>9</sup> David uses the river analogy to describe God's abundant provision in Psalm 36:7-9, "How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You allow them to drink from the river of Your delights." Professor Mirolave Volf writes, "We are not simply final destinations in the flow of God's gifts. Rather, we find ourselves midstream, so to speak. [God's] gifts flow to us, and they flow from us." [Volf, M. (2005). *Free of charge: Giving and forgiving in a culture stripped of grace*. Zondervan. p. 49.]; John Rowell puts it simply, "we are to be rivers, not reservoirs." [Rowell, J. (2007). *To give or not to give: Rethinking dependency, restoring generosity, and redefining sustainability*. InterVarsity Press. p. 221.]; In 1657, Richard Baxter explained, "If you gather Riches for your selves, you are standing pits: If you are Rich to God, you will be running Springs" [Baxter,

water when we have access to a river? Professor Dan Lioy writes of 1 Timothy 6:17-19,

“Hoarding resources would reveal that they neither understood the source of their wealth nor its temporary nature.”<sup>10</sup>

Professor Thomas G. Long explains that,

“[Paul] is attempting to change the frame on wealth. Instead of looking to riches as a means to provide security for the present and hope for the future – which leads naturally to a life spent jealously hoarding and guarding – look at the things of this world as free gifts from the abundance of God. Seen this way, they relax our grip on them. We can receive them as means for joy, and we can open our hands in generosity towards others”<sup>11</sup>

Tilly Dillehay notes of 1 Timothy 6:17,

“Their enjoyment is not the clutching enjoyment of the glutton or a miser; it’s the enjoyment of a child sitting in front of something his father made for him especially. It’s freely felt, free in the knowledge that because of the Father we have, there’s more where this came from.”<sup>12</sup>

If we stay connected to the one who richly provides all things, we don’t have to stress. We can use wealth open-

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R. (1657/1707). The crucifying of the world by the cross of Christ: The preface to the nobility and gentry, and all that have riches of this world. In *The practical works of the late reverend and pious Mr. Richard Baxter*. Vol 3. Thomas Parkhust. p. 442.]

<sup>10</sup> Professor Dan Lioy writes of 1 Timothy 6:17-19, “Hoarding resources would reveal that they neither understood the source of their wealth nor its temporary nature.” [Lioy, D. (2008). *The divine sabotage: an expositional journey through Ecclesiastes*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 66.]

<sup>11</sup> Long, T. G. (2016). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A theological commentary on the Bible*. [Kindle Edition]. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 179. (Original reference to “The Pastor” omitted and replaced with “[Paul]” for consistency in the main body text.)

<sup>12</sup> Dillehay, T. (2020). *Broken bread: How to stop using food and fear to fill spiritual hunger*. Harvest House Publishers. p. 85.

handedly. We can use it to do good. We can enjoy it. Giving from abundance is fun. The origin story of the wealth changes the giving experience.

***Conclusion: Fun giving starts here***

This passage establishes a mindset under which giving is the most enjoyable.

- Everything we have was a gift. (It was richly supplied by God.) A gratitude mindset leads to joyful giving.
- It's disappearing anyway. (It's not ours to keep.) A stewardship mindset leads to joyful giving.
- There will be plenty more where that came from. (It will continue to be supplied from God.) An abundance mindset leads to joyful giving.

All of these rely on one fact. God is the one who richly supplies us with all things. Otherwise, none of these make sense. Without this starting point, there is no gratitude to God. There is no ongoing partnership with God. There is no ongoing abundance from God.

But if God is the one who richly supplies us with all things, everything changes. Gratitude makes sense. (Giving is more fun because it was a gift to us in the first place.) Stewardship makes sense. (Giving is more fun because we're just temporary managers anyway.) Open-handed sharing from abundance makes sense. (Giving is more fun because there will be plenty more where that came from!)

It all starts at the same place. It all comes from having placed our trust in

“God, the One richly providing us all things for enjoyment;” (1 Timothy 6:17b BLB).



Story Elements

**The Call to  
Adventure**  
(Challenge)



## Chapter 7

### Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!

- *Biblical fundraising is about advising the donor to enjoy their wealth.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is about asking the donor to give away money.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things **to enjoy** [*Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### ENJOYING WEALTH: THE "HOW-TO MANUAL"

#### ***What is not there***

Exegesis starts with the text. But not this time. This time, we're not starting with what is there. Instead, we're going to start with what is not there.

Our translation has a period after "enjoy." That's not in the Greek. In Greek, 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is all one sentence.

Adding a new sentence creates a new problem. We can't have a sentence without a verb. But there's only one verb, not two. So, our translation adds that as well. It restates the earlier

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs **eis apolausin**, agathoergein, plutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)



verb. It adds, “Instruct them”. Those extra words aren’t in the Greek, either. (The italics in this translation reflect that.)<sup>2</sup>

### ***What is there***

In Greek, there is no sentence break. There is no restatement of “Instruct them”. There is just an unbroken list. It’s this:

“to enjoy [*eis apolausin*]  
to do good [*agathoergein*]  
to be rich in good works [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]  
to be generous ready-to-share [*eumetadotous einai koinōnikous*]”

This list<sup>3</sup> is not broken into two sentences. There is no repeated verb. This matters because it affects the meaning.

The infinitive phrases, starting with “to do good [*agathoergein*],” explain the previous phrase. Professor Abraham Malherbe writes,

“The infinitives thus describe how wealth is to be enjoyed, namely in the ways it is used: first, simply by doing good, stated in a verbal form (*agathoergein*) that captures the favorite *ergon agathōn* of the Pauline Epistles; second, stating the same thing with a similar favorite expression, *erga kala*, but explicitly describing

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<sup>2</sup> This is the standard practice in the New American Standard Bible. I also add brackets to emphasize that this insertion does not appear in Greek.

<sup>3</sup> “‘And to be generous.’ There is no ‘and’ in Greek. In fact, there are no conjunctions at all between ‘but’ (*alla*) in v. 17 and ‘so that’ (*hina*) in v. 19. The literary device in play here, probably intuitive rather than intentional on Paul’s part, is asyndeton, a style of writing that omits conjunctions that could easily be inserted. As noted above, the result (in Greek) is a list-like feel.” [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 336-337]

the doing of such works as being rich in them (*ploutein en ergois kalois*); third, giving specificity to these general directions, to be generous and sharing (*eumetadotous, koinōnikous*).”<sup>4</sup>

We are to enjoy what God has richly supplied. That’s why he supplied it. But how do we do that? The list explains how. The text sequence is this:

- God richly provides us all things. [*Theō tō parechonti hemin panta plousiōs*]
- He does so for a purpose. [*eis*]
- That purpose is enjoyment. [*eis apolausin*]
- That purpose is achieved by using what He has provided in the following ways:
  - To do good [*agathoergein*]
  - To be rich in good works [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]
  - To be generous ready-to-share [*eumetadotous einai koinōnikous*]

### ***Replacing the period: A colon? A comma?***

We know there is no period. This is not two sentences. There is no second statement of “Instruct them”. Professor Robert Yarbrough explains that

“the imperative is not actually restated here. By not restating the command, the rhetorical feel is of a list of

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<sup>4</sup> Malherbe, A. J. (2011). Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 89.

positive outcomes the rich can attain, not on Timothy's need to be in their face.”<sup>5</sup>

This is just one sentence with one verb. So, what should go here instead of a period and “Instruct them”?

The list shows how to enjoy what God has richly supplied. For the rich Christian, these are examples of how to enjoy wealth. This meaning becomes explicit with a colon. This would read as,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

Using a comma after “enjoy” allows for this meaning as well. However, that also allows another meaning. It might appear to be giving separate purposes. God richly supplies. We use some for enjoyment, some for sharing, some for good works, etc.<sup>6</sup> (Of course, these different purposes can still be interrelated. One gift can do several of these things.)

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<sup>5</sup> “18. ‘Command’ is carried into the NIV from near the beginning of v. 17, although the imperative is not actually restated here. By not restating the command, the rhetorical feel is of a list of positive outcomes the rich can attain, not on Timothy’s need to be in their face.” [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 335.]

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., the translation in the New Matthew Bible of “God, who gives us abundantly all things, to enjoy them; and to do good, and to be rich in good works, and ready to give and distribute”;

See also, “The Pastor identifies four uses for riches. The first is enjoyment.” [Collins, R. F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. ProQuest Ebook Central. p. 170.];

“Sandwiched in between his mandates to be generous and not trust in wealth, this clause suggests that once believers have established regular practices and habits to obey these commands, they may then take pleasure in the good, material possessions that they still retain.” [Blomberg, C. L. (2013). *Christians in an age of wealth: A Biblical theology of stewardship*. Zondervan Academic. p. 59];

For an older example of an argument presenting enjoyment as being distinct from giving in this passage, consider this explanation published in 1717, “God does not make Rich Men such mere Conduit-pipes of Wealth, that they must pass all, without retaining any Thing themselves; but rather, like the Earth, which though she conveys the Springs through her Veins, yet is allowed to suck in so much, as

Yet, that’s not the likely meaning. Why not? Because this isn’t a list of separate purposes. There is only one purpose. The first item is the purpose. This translation uses “to” in each phrase. But the first item, “to enjoy,” is actually different. (Several translations use “for enjoyment” to distinguish this first phrase.<sup>7</sup>) It’s not a simple infinitive like the others. Instead, it uses *eis*.

Using *eis* can be a big deal.<sup>8</sup> It shows the purpose of a thing. In this case, it shows the purpose for which God richly supplies all things.<sup>9</sup> He provides them for the purpose of enjoyment.

This is a unique distinction for the first phrase. This isn’t a list of different purposes. It’s one purpose. The purpose – the *eis* – is enjoyment. What follows that one purpose is a list of examples. What follows is the “how-to manual” for accomplishing that purpose.

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may give her a competent Refreshment; and he that does this moderately, and with a thankful Reflection on that liberal Providence, which thus gives him all Things richly to enjoy, I Tim. 6, 17, falsifies no Part of his Truth, nor abuses his Stewardship; the being, as it were, the allowed Fees of his Place, a Pension allotted him by the Bounty of His Lord.” [Allestree, R. (1717/1976). *The gentleman’s calling*. University Microfilms International. J. L. p. 56.]

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Amplified Bible; Aramaic Bible in Plain English; Berean Literal Bible; Berean Standard Bible; Good News Translation; Literal Standard Version; International Standard Version; New English Translation (NET) Bible; New International Version; New Living Translation; New Revised Standard Version

<sup>8</sup> For example, its use in Acts 2:38 is the source of many discussions about the role of baptism.

<sup>9</sup> Given the repeated financial references in the passage, it is interesting that “There is also evidence in the papyri to show that *eis* was used in connection with contributions and payments of accounts, e.g., ‘for the rent.’ [O’Brien, P. T. (2009). *Introductory thanksgivings in the letters of Paul*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 24, fn 24.] Roughly contemporaneous examples include, “I acknowledge that I have received from you for [*eis*] the rent ... fifty-seven artabae of wheat,” “8 drachmae on account of [*eis*] interest,” or a payment “to the account of [*eis*] Sarapias.” [Milligan, G. (1929). *The vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 186-187.] In these accounting terms, God thus richly provides so that it can be used in the budget category labeled “for enjoyment.”

***Other translations: A colon, comma, period, semi-colon, space, or dash***

So, what is the right marking here? The Greek is one sentence, not two. Thus, literal English translations don't use the period. Neither do the older English translations. What do they use instead?

The various punctuation choices in English translations have shifted over time. The Wycliffe Bible of 1397 uses a space.<sup>10</sup> The Tyndale Bible of 1526 uses a space followed by "and".<sup>11</sup> The Coverdale Bible of 1535 uses a colon and a closing parenthesis. The Bishops' Bible of 1568 uses just the colon without a closing parenthesis. The Geneva Bible of 1587 uses just the closing parenthesis without the colon. The King James Version of 1611 and subsequent classic translations use the semi-colon.<sup>12</sup> William Whiston's 1745 translation uses a colon.<sup>13</sup> So does John Wesley's 1755 translation.<sup>14</sup> Alexander Campbell's 1826 translation uses a colon followed by an em-dash.<sup>15</sup>

Modern translations have added a few more options. Some use a comma.<sup>16</sup> One uses a comma and a closing

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<sup>10</sup> The Egerton MS 618 (c. 1390-1397) of the Wycliffe Bible folio 141r reads "forto use forto do wele, forto be maad riche in good werkis"  
[[https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=egerton\\_ms\\_618\\_fs001r](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=egerton_ms_618_fs001r)].

<sup>11</sup> The Tyndale translation reads, "to enioye them and that they do good."

<sup>12</sup> American Standard Version (1901); Darby Bible Translation (1867); English Revised Version (1881); Webster's Bible Translation (1833)

<sup>13</sup> William Whiston New Testament (1745)

<sup>14</sup> John Wesley New Testament (1755)

<sup>15</sup> The Living Oracles New Testament (1826). Some versions have this as simply a dash "for enjoyment - to do good, to be rich in good works," others as "for enjoyment: -- to do good, to be rich in good works,".

<sup>16</sup> Anderson New Testament; Aramaic Bible in Plain English; Catholic Public Domain Version; Hart's The New Testament: A Translation; Worsley New Testament

parenthesis.<sup>17</sup> Two use an em-dash.<sup>18</sup> One uses both a semi-colon and an em-dash.<sup>19</sup>

So, what's the answer? The options, depending on the translation, include:

- A space
- A colon
- A comma
- A closing parenthesis
- A colon and closing parenthesis together
- A semi-colon
- An em-dash
- A semi-colon and em-dash together
- A colon and em-dash together
- A period

That's a lot of options! So, which one is right? Let's consider the earliest evidence.

### ***Back to the first manuscripts***

What's going on here? What is actually in the Greek text? Modern Greek texts may show a comma,<sup>20</sup> but these

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<sup>17</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>18</sup> Literal Standard Version; The Message. This is an interesting option because, depending on the context, the em dash can take the place of a comma, parenthesis, or colon.

<sup>19</sup> Young's Literal Translation

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Aland, K., Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., Robinson, M. A., & Wikgren, A. (1994). *The Greek New Testament*. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

markings are not original. The oldest appearances of this passage<sup>21</sup> are in

- The *Codex Sinaiticus* (mid-fourth century)
- The *Codex Alexandrinus* (late fourth or early fifth century)
- The *Codex Freerianus* (fifth century)
- The *Codex Claromontanus* (fifth or sixth century)

What was the original punctuation? Unfortunately, it's complicated. These earliest manuscripts rarely use punctuation.<sup>22</sup> When they do, it's not our modern punctuation. For example, English uses the period – a lower dot. Early Greek texts can use a lower dot, a middle dot, or a raised dot. They can also use an overdot or underdot. Thus, a word might end with any of the following markings:



And it gets worse. The scribes run all words together. And every letter is capitalized. So, there's no split between words. And they're often written in fixed-width columns. So, line breaks frequently occur in the middle of words.

### ***The earliest punctuation***

We're considering the best English punctuation between

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<sup>21</sup> Of the four great uncial codices, 1 Timothy 6:17-19 appears only in the *Codex Sinaiticus* and the *Codex Alexandrinus*. It also appears in the *Codex Freerianus* and the *Codex Claromontanus* but appears in no other Greek papyri or uncials. *Codex Vaticanus 2061* has 1 Timothy 6:17, but not 18-19.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Smith, W. A. (2014). 4 Scribes. In W. A. Smith (Ed.), *A study of the Gospels in Codex Alexandrinus* (pp. 182-246). Brill. p. 190. [Correcting mistaken claims that the earliest manuscripts had no punctuation].

two items: “for enjoyment” [*eis apolausin*] and “to do good” [*agathoergein*]. In the *Codex Sinaiticus*, the letters run together in narrow columns. So, we don’t get the modern, “*panta plousios eis apolausin agathoergein ploutein en ergois kalois eumetadotous*”. Instead, we get this:

TAPLOUSIOSEISA  
POLAUSINAGATHO  
ERGEINPLOUTEINE  
 NERGOISKALOISEU

This is still a list of items. It still makes sense to separate them in an English translation. But how? What marking should we use? We get no guidance from this earliest manuscript. However, the next one gives us something different.

The *Codex Alexandrinus* uses wider columns. Our words (underlined here) appear as follows:

CHONTIHEMINTAPANTAPLOUSI  
OSEISAPOLAUSIN AGATHOERGEI<sup>̄</sup>  
 PLOUTEINENERGOISKALOIS  
 EUMETADOTOUSEINAIKOINO  
 NIKOUSAPOTHESAURIZONTAS<sup>23</sup>

There is a mid-line space between “for enjoyment” and “to do good.” The space is the width of a single wide letter. Additionally, we get several middle dot notations. They appear like this:

CHONTIHEMINTAPANTAPLOUSI  
OSEISAPOLAUSIN · AGATHOERGEI<sup>̄</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Folio 121r (labeled as p. 146 top middle, 121 top right)

*AGATHOERGEIN* appears as *AGATHOERGEI* with a correction marking above noting the missing ending letter. Similarly, earlier in the passage *THEO* appears as *THO* with the same correction marking noting the missing letter.



PLOUTEINENERGOISKALOIS ·  
EUMATADOTOUSEINAIKOINO  
NIKOUS·APOTHESOURIZONTAS

Thus, this text contains divisions between our items. It appears as follows:

“for enjoyment”

[Mid-line space + middle dot] “to do good”

[Middle dot] “to be rich in good works”

[Middle dot] “to be generous and ready to share”

[Middle dot] “treasuring up”

### ***The setumah***

How do these influence meaning? First, let’s consider the mid-line space. Writing of such intralinear spacing in the *Codex Vaticanus*, Dr. Jesse Grenz references,

“a similar feature in the Judean Desert texts, in which these mid-line breaks represent Masoretic ‘closed sections’—small ‘thematically related’ units.”<sup>24</sup>

In Masoretic terminology, this spacing is called a “setumah.” (Others have noted the use of setumah in the *Codex Alexandrinus* as well.<sup>25</sup>) Professor Marjo C. A. Korpel explains,

“A fairly wide space in the middle of a line indicates the beginning of a “closed” section after the space.

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<sup>24</sup> Grenz, J. R. (2018). Textual divisions in Codex Vaticanus. A layered approach to the delimiters in B (03). *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*, 23, 1-22. p. 6. (Citing Tov, E. (2009). *Scribal practices and approaches reflected in the texts found in the Judean Desert*, STDJ 54, Society of Biblical Literature. p. 136.)

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., “In Codex Alexandrinus (1936) Habakkuk 1 is subdivided into smaller sections by various means. Noteworthy is the space left open in lines (setumot) between 1:4 and 5 and 1:11 and 12.... Codex Alexandrinus (1936) subdivides Habakkuk 2 by the following means: ‘Large letters’ (2:2a, 5a, 9a, 10a, 12a, 15a, 16a, 18a, 19a, 20a); lines left open (petuhot) between 2:1d and 2a, 4c and 5a, 15c and 16a, 19e and 20a; spaces left open (setumot) in a line between 2:6d and 6e, 11b and 12a, 14c and 15a, 15c and 16a.” [Prinsloo, G. T. (2008). *Petuh.ot/Setumot and the structure of Habakkuk: Evaluating the evidence*. In R. de Hoop, M. Korpel & S.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
*setumah* → XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX”<sup>26</sup>

This notation of a closed section could be relevant for our interpretation because

“scholars have established that *setuma* (‘a closed section’) denotes a subdivision of a larger unit.”<sup>27</sup>

Or, as Professor Emanuel Tov explains,

“the closed section often referred back to a previous unit of a larger order.”<sup>28</sup>

Thus, this spacing in the *Codex Alexandrinus* matches the idea that what follows “for enjoyment” is a closed section. It is a subdivision referring back to “enjoyment.” It gives examples or types. To communicate a closed section in English, we use the colon. A closed section would read,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

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Porter (Eds.), *The impact of unit delimitation on exegesis, pericope, 7*, Brill. 196-227. p. 212.]

<sup>26</sup> Korpel, M. C. A., & Oesch, J. (2021). *Delimitation criticism: A new tool in Biblical scholarship*. Brill. p. 3

<sup>27</sup> “Besides the Kampen School, scholars such as J Oesch, E Tov, C Perrot, J W Olley and O H Steck investigated various types of spacing and marginal measurements in Qumran documents and discussed the guiding principles behind the division.... The former group of scholars have established that *setuma* (“a closed section”) denotes a subdivision of a larger unit, while *petucha* (“an open section”) denotes the beginning of a long paragraph.” [Park, S. J. (2013). Application of the Tiberian Accentuation System for colometry of Biblical Hebrew poetry. *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*, 39(2), 113-128. p. 114-115.]

<sup>28</sup> Tov, E. (2018). *Scribal practices and approaches reflected in the texts found in the Judean Desert*. Brill. p. 144.

## *The middle dot*

In addition to this mid-line space, The *Codex Alexandrinus* also uses middle dots. These separate the items in this list. The *Codex Freerianus* uses similar middle dot notations in the passage.<sup>29</sup> (The *Codex Claromontanus* divides the passage in similar places, using line breaks rather than middle dots.<sup>30</sup>)

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<sup>29</sup> The markings occur at the same locations with two exceptions. First, no middle dot appears between *agathoergein* [“to do good”] and *ploutein* [“to be rich”]. The second difference is more complicated. The location where the space and middle dot occur after *apolausin* in the *Codex Alexandrinus* is, in the *Codex Freerianus*, at the end of a line. The *Codex Freerianus* marking there uses a terminal *nu* rather than a middle dot. This terminal *nu* is a darker high dot with a lighter horizontal line to the right about two letters in length and ending with a 90-degree lower bending curve approximating a horizontal “J” shape:



The location of the word at the end of the line prevents the insertion of a space. The terminal *nu* likely prevents the use of a middle dot. Attempting to do so would result in a potentially confusing double-dot symbol appearing as our modern colon, but with the horizontal “J” shape attached to the higher dot. This could easily create potential confusion with the use of the underdot below the terminal *nu*, which does appear in the *Codex Alexandrinus* in *hymōn* of 2 Corinthians 7:7, *ēsthenēkamen* of 2 Corinthians 11:21, *legō* of Hebrews 10:8, *hymōn* of Hebrews 13:17, and *pistōn* of 1 Timothy 4:10. Conversely, the terminal *nu* appears 69 times in the *Codex Freerianus* but is nowhere accompanied by a middle dot. Thus, it is likely that the use of the terminal *nu* prevents the insertion of the additional middle dot at this location. See Soderquist, J. (2014). *A new edition of Codex I (016): The Washington Manuscript of the Epistles of Paul* (Doctoral dissertation). Trinity Western University.

<sup>30</sup> In the *Codex Claromontanus*, the text appears in all caps with no spaces between words with the following line breaks:

EIS APOLAUSIN  
 AGATHOERGEIN  
 PLOUTEIN EN ERGOIS KALOIS  
 EUMETADOTOUS EINAI  
 KOINŌNIKOUS  
 APOTHĒSAURIZEIN HEAUTOIS

See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84683111/f818.item>

Note also the use of the present infinitive active *apothēsaurizein*, rather than the present participle active *apothēsaurizontas*. This division is a weaker indication than the middle dots in the *Codex Alexandrinus* and *Codex Freerianus* because line breaks are frequent throughout the text. Nevertheless, these line breaks do reflect intentional choice because these are not fixed-width columns.

So, what is the best way to translate these middle dots? In this case, it may be to keep them as middle dots. In other words, these middle dots act as bullet points in a list.<sup>31</sup> This would appear as

“God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment:

- to do good
- to be rich in good works
- to be generous and ready to share
- treasuring up for themselves” (1 Timothy 6:17b-19a).

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<sup>31</sup> The middle dot can translate to various modern punctuations. It is often used to elucidate or explain a previous item, as proposed here. For example, in a 2nd century Greek-Latin bilingual glossary (P. Oxy. LXXXII 5302) and later works, it separates the word from its definition/translation. “In the second pair, line 1, due to the exceeding length of the first Greek lemma, lemma and gloss are separated by a middle dot. This device is used with similar function in later evidence.” [Ammirati, S., & Fressura, M. (2017). Towards a typology of ancient bilingual glossaries: Palaeography, bibliology, and codicology. *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology*, 47, 1-26. p. 3.]

Writing of the *Codex Freerianus* [*Codex I* (16)], Justin Soderquist explains, “The only punctuation used throughout Codex I is a middle dot. It almost always denotes a strong break (albeit not as strong as the incipit/paragraphos combinations mentioned earlier), though Sanders notes two exceptions to this: “It rarely equals a very weak division mark, like a comma, notably in Hebrews 11:32, where a succession of proper names is separated by punctuation marks, and at 1 Timothy 4:12, where a succession of prepositional phrases is so separated.” [Soderquist, J. (2014). *A new edition of Codex I (016): The Washington Manuscript of the Epistles of Paul* (Doctoral dissertation). Trinity Western University. p. 33. Quoting Sanders, H. A. (1918). *The New Testament manuscripts in the Freer Collection Part II: The Washington Manuscript of the Epistles of Paul*, University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series 9/2. Macmillan. p. 256.]

In the referenced example of 1 Timothy 4:12 in the *Codex Freerianus*, the middle dots separate,

“in speech · in conduct [end of line]

in love · in faith · in purity ·”

These illustrate the preceding phrase admonishing Timothy to be “a pattern for the believers.” Again, this matches the idea proposed for the present passage in that the list provides examples or applications of the previous concept.

This matches the idea of one purpose followed by different examples. As Professor Malherbe writes,

“The infinitives thus describe how wealth is to be enjoyed, namely in the ways it is used.”<sup>32</sup>

Writing a century earlier, Professor Marvin Vincent notes,

“The true character of such enjoyment is shown in the next verse.”<sup>33</sup>

A quarter century before that, Henry Spence explains,

“These words – coming directly after the statement that the good and pleasant things of this world ... are, after all, the gifts of God, who means them for our enjoyment – these words seem to point to the highest enjoyment procurable by these ‘rich’ – the luxury of doing good, of helping others to be happy, the only enjoyment that never fails, never disappoints.”<sup>34</sup>

The *eis* clause gives the purpose; the infinitives give the examples. This makes sense logically. And it also matches the

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<sup>32</sup> Malherbe, A. J. (2011). Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Vincent, M. R. (1905). *Word studies in the New Testament. Vol IV.* Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 282.

<sup>34</sup> The full statement is, “These words – coming directly after the statement that the good and pleasant things of this world, which are possessed in so large a share by the ‘rich,’ are, after all, the gifts of God, who means them for our enjoyment – these words seem to point to the highest enjoyment procurable by these ‘rich’ – the luxury of doing good, of helping others to be happy, the only enjoyment that never fails, never disappoints.” [Spence, H. D. M. (1882). Timothy. In C. J. Ellicott (Ed.), *The Epistles to the Colossians, Thessalonians, and Timothy. The Commentary for Schools.* Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co. p. 270.]

A modern commentary expresses a similar idea, explaining, “Our greatest enjoyment to be derived from the discretionary wealth God has entrusted to us is in giving and sharing those material and spiritual resources by doing good, being rich in good works, and being ready to generously share (6:18; Acts 20:32-34). [Borden, M. J. (2016). *Godly living with contentment for every Christian: We are now becoming what we are going to be.* WestBow Press.]

oldest punctuation.<sup>35</sup> If one were trying to convey exactly this meaning in the late 300's A.D., what punctuation would be the best way to do so? It would be exactly that found in the *Codex Alexandrinus*.

The language, the logic, and the punctuation all match. What follows “for enjoyment” explains how to achieve that enjoyment. It’s a “how-to manual” for wealth enjoyment.

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<sup>35</sup> The markings are consistent with such an interpretation, but they are not conclusive. The mid-line space may not represent the idea of a *setumah*. Even if it does, the *setumah* can be used in different ways other than the closed-section applications described here. The middle dot, too, can represent various punctuation concepts depending on the context.



PART II  
ENJOYING WEALTH: DON'T MISS THE POINT!  
(Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!)

***The why and the how of wealth enjoyment***

This passage has a purpose. Professor Stanley E. Porter writes,

“the purpose of God’s bringing about these things is ‘for enjoyment’ (*eis apolausin*). The preposition *eis* indicates the intention of the action, which is *apolausin*, with the noun appearing here and in Hebrews 11:24 and denoting enjoyment or pleasure”<sup>1</sup>

The purpose – the *eis* – is enjoyment. Everything before it explains why those who are rich should enjoy their wealth. Everything after it explains how they can enjoy their wealth.

Why should they enjoy their wealth? In other words, why shouldn’t they just hold on to it tightly? The passage explains why:

- Because they’re not haughty or “above” others. They don’t need to hold wealth just to feel superior. That’s not who they are.
- Because they haven’t put their hope in the uncertainty of riches. They know it can disappear at any moment. They’re not hoping in their wealth to save them.
- Because they have put their hope in God, who richly provides us with all things. Sharing isn’t stressful when

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<sup>1</sup> Porter, S. E. (2023). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. Kindle edition, Baker Academic. p. 488.



we're connected to the source of abundance. It's like sharing water from a river.

- Because God gave them wealth for a purpose.<sup>2</sup> That purpose is not for storage; it's for enjoyment.<sup>3</sup>
- Because this is how each of us is to use whatever God has richly provided.

That's why they should enjoy their wealth. Next, the passage explains how they can do so:

- They can use it to do (inherently) good things.
- They can use it to become rich in (attractively, beautifully) good things.
- They can use it to become a generous person.
- They can use it to become a deeply connected fellowship community sharer.
- They can use it to store up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.
- They can use it to take hold of that which is truly life.

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<sup>2</sup> "The qualification 'for our enjoyment' fits within the positive view of creation elsewhere in this letter, particularly the statement that God created things 'to be received with thanksgiving' and that nothing created by God as good was to be rejected but was to be received with thanksgiving (4:3-4)" [Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul's delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Trinity Press International. p. 207];

Commenting on this passage, Sharon Riddle explains, "Recognize that when God gives us good gifts, it is because He wants us to enjoy them." [Riddle, S. K. (2004). *Warring at the window (Vol. 2)*. Olive Leaf Publications.]

<sup>3</sup> That enjoyment is both immediate and future. Professor Bill Mounce explains, "The time frame for this enjoyment is the present; Paul is speaking to the rich *en tō nyn aiōni*, 'in the present age,' and *parechonti*, is gnomic. (In v. 19 Paul will move to the rewards in the future.)" [Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary Volume 46: Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 367.]

### ***It's an enjoyable process***

If God richly supplies us, but we don't enjoy it, we're missing the point. How can we enjoy what God has richly supplied? We put it to work. We use it,

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

This is enjoyable. It's an enjoyable process. Making an impact – doing good – is enjoyable. Becoming rich in good works is enjoyable.

Being a generous person is also enjoyable. In fact, the word itself implies enjoyment. Professor Ceslas Spicq explains that the prefix (*eu*) in “generous” (*eu-metadotous*),

“emphasizes the nuance either of liberality, or the ease, promptitude, and **joy** with which one makes one's wealth useful to others.”<sup>4</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Finally, being connected to the fellowship community through sharing is enjoyable. This describes an entirely enjoyable process. It's the way to use what God has richly blessed us with for enjoyment.

This enjoyable process gets even better. It leads to outcomes that are even more enjoyable. Sharing in this way helps the donor to

“store up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a)

So, the enjoyment isn't just for today. It's for the future, too.

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<sup>4</sup> Spicq, C. (1994). *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (Volume 2). (J. D. Ernest, Trans.). Hendrickson. p. 121.

Sharing in this way also helps the donor to

“take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19b)

What could be more enjoyable?

### ***The point of giving and receiving***

The central focus of the passage is enjoyment. Enjoyment is the purpose. This purpose is accomplished through an enjoyable process. This enjoyable process produces results that are even more enjoyable.

Being richly supplied isn't the purpose. It's an external circumstance. Giving isn't the purpose. It's an external action. The purpose is enjoyment. Professor Malherbe explains it this way:

“What is striking is that the purpose for the gift of wealth is not the proper use of it, which is attended by enjoyment; rather, the purpose is enjoyment, which is explicated by the three infinitives that follow.”<sup>5</sup>

We can receive what God richly supplies. But if we don't enjoy it, we're missing the point. Being richly supplied just to bury it in the ground is pointless.

We can also give. But if we don't enjoy it, we're missing the point. Giving grudgingly and under obligation is pointless. Without enjoyment, both giving and receiving are pointless. The purpose – the point – is enjoyment. Don't miss the point!

### ***Poetry with a point: Chiasmus***

The point of the passage is wealth enjoyment. This is

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<sup>5</sup> Malherbe, A. J. (2011). Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 91-92.

clear from the words. But Paul goes even further. He uses a special poetic form called chiasmus to emphasize this point. Chiasmus is

“the use of bilateral symmetry about a central axis.”<sup>6</sup>

More formally, it is

“the use of inverted parallelism of form and/or content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component.”<sup>7</sup>

Writing of Paul’s letters, Professor Kenneth Bailey explains,

“The key to Biblical poetry has long been recognized as parallelism. The relationships between two parallelistic lines can best be described as ‘correspondences’ ... it is a *rhyme of ideas* that dominates the poetry along with a very sophisticated structure.”<sup>8</sup>

Chiasmus is a literary form common in the Old Testament,<sup>9</sup> as well as in Greek<sup>10</sup> and Roman<sup>11</sup> literature. Paul

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<sup>6</sup> Norrman, R. (1986). *Samuel Butler and the meaning of chiasmus*. St. Martin’s. p. 276.

<sup>7</sup> McCoy, B. (2003). Chiasmus: An important structural device commonly found in Biblical literature. *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal*, 9(2), 17-34. See also, “Many of the examples we find in Hebrew scriptures take the pattern ABXB’A’, with the X being the crucial point or important message in the chiasm.... Without the middle X point in the Hebrews’ chiasmus, there would not be any elevation of a single thought or belief since it is found amidst parallel passages. The middle X point allowed the ancient Hebrew writers to convey their important themes and ideas without it blending into the surrounding text. The theme, instead, is able to enhance the text and gives new meaning to other elements in the structure.” [Eckerman, H. (2024). *The ancient Hebrew chiasm: A window into culturally significant themes*. <https://qc-writers.com/2024/01/21/1964/> ]

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, K. E. (1975). Recovering the poetic structure of I Corinthians i 17-ii 2. *Novum Testamentum*, 17(4), 265-296, pp. 266-267.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Lund, N. W. (1930). The presence of chiasmus in the Old Testament. *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 46(2), 104-126.

<sup>10</sup> Myres, J. L. (1953). *Herodotus: Father of history*. Clarendon.

<sup>11</sup> Duckworth, G. E. (1962). *Structural patterns and proportions in Vergil’s Aeneid*. University of Michigan Press.

uses it repeatedly in his letters.<sup>12</sup> He uses it here in his discussion of wealth. Adding the wealth references in 1 Timothy 6:7, 9-10 to our passage results in this chiasmic structure:

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<sup>12</sup> Professor Bailey and others visually demonstrate Paul's chiasmic style of repeatedly using parallelisms with groupings of outer and inner parallel units. A failure to recognize Paul's poetic structure of parallelistic lines has led many to see the lack of simple linearity as evidence of the amalgamation of text from different sources.

For a similar defense of 1 Corinthians, see Bailey, K. E. (1983). The structure of 1 Corinthians and Paul's theological method with special reference to 4:17. *Novum Testamentum*, 25(2), 152-181. For one of 2 Corinthians, see Blomberg, C. (1989). The structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7. *Criswell Theological Review*, 4(1), 3-20.

For chiasmic/concentric symmetrical structure in Philippians, see Luter, A. B., & Lee, M. V. (1995). Philippians as chiasmus: Key to the structure, unity and theme questions. *New Testament Studies*, 41(1), 89-101.

For the same in 1 Timothy 6:5b-11, see Keller, G. (2007) Infusing values triangularly: An exegetical analysis of I Timothy 6:5b-11. *Biblical Perspectives*. May. 1-21. <https://regent.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/keller.pdf> .

For additional perspective, See also Harvey, J. D. (1998). *Listening to the text: Oral patterning in Paul's letters*. Baker Books. p. 104-17.

**A**-Riches [Death]<sup>13</sup>

**B**-Riches [Now/temporary]<sup>14</sup>

**C**-Riches [Leading to community separation]<sup>15</sup>

**D**-Riches [Tightly grasped as one's hope]<sup>16</sup>

**E**-Riches [Hidden/disappearing/uncertain]<sup>17</sup>

**F**-Riches [Godly source/inflow]<sup>18</sup>

**G**-Riches [Purpose: for enjoyment]<sup>19</sup>

**F'**-Riches [Godly use/outflow]<sup>20</sup>

**E'**-Riches [Visible/beautiful good works]<sup>21</sup>

**D'**-Riches [Open-handedly shared]<sup>22</sup>

**C'**-Riches [Leading to community connection]<sup>23</sup>

**B'**-Riches [Future/permanent]<sup>24</sup>

**A'**-Riches [Life]<sup>25</sup>

The point in the structure is “for enjoyment.” Enjoyment is the “central axis.” It’s the “strategic central component.” It’s the purpose of God’s rich provision. For wealth, the key yes/no

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<sup>13</sup> 6:7 is a direct death reference. 6:9-10 then uses seven death-related words: *pagida, blaberas, bythizousin, olethron, apōleian, kakōn, periepeiran, odynais*. The unit sequence is death[7]–pause[8]–death[9-10]–pause[11-16]. See Chapter 15-III, “Paul’s death reminders trigger permanence desires.”

<sup>14</sup> 6:17b “rich in the now time” (time as age, *aioni*, or as the present opportune moment, *kairo* from the Codex Sinaiticus)

<sup>15</sup> 6:17c “not being high-minded”

<sup>16</sup> 6:17d “Nor to-have-hoped in of-riches”

<sup>17</sup> 6:17e “of-riches uncertainty/hiddenness”

<sup>18</sup> 6:17f “but on God the-One providing us all-things richly”

<sup>19</sup> 6:17g “for [the purpose of] enjoyment”

<sup>20</sup> 6:18a “to-do-good [intrinsically good]”. This word appears nowhere else in Greek literature except in Acts 14:17 where it describes God richly providing to all. Here is our matching godly provision to others.

<sup>21</sup> 6:18b “to-be-rich in works good [beautiful, visible, noble]”

<sup>22</sup> 6:18c “generous in distributing” also “open-handed” in some translations

<sup>23</sup> 6:18d “ready-to-share” *koinōnikous*

<sup>24</sup> 6:19a “treasuring-up for-themselves a-foundation good for the future”

<sup>25</sup> 6:19b “so-that they-may-take-hold of that-which-is-indeed life”

decision is enjoyment. The miser and the ascetic say no. Paul says yes.

The structure points to the centrality of enjoyment. Professor John Breck explains,

“the uniqueness of chiasmus, as distinct from other forms of parallelism, lies in its focus upon a pivotal theme, about which the other propositions of the literary unit are developed.”<sup>26</sup>

What precedes “enjoyment” answers the “Why” question. Why should the rich person say yes to enjoying wealth in this way? It’s the justification.

What follows “enjoyment” answers the “How” question. How can the rich person best enjoy his wealth? It’s the “how-to manual.” It explains how God’s rich provision can be enjoyed.

Enjoyment is also the central point of the story. The challenge is to enjoy wealth (rather than to bury it and die with it). This is the story’s “call to adventure.” Accepting this “call to adventure” leads to the rest of the story. It leads the rich Christian

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.” (1 Timothy 6:18).

It leads to

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

It leads them to

“take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19b).

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<sup>26</sup> Breck, J. (1994). *The shape of Biblical language*. St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press. p. 18.

Paul's poetic structure emphasizes this call to adventure. It emphasizes this central point. The point is enjoyment. In giving, receiving, and fundraising the best advice is this: Don't miss the point!

### ***Missing the point of receiving***

It's possible to have the exterior circumstances without the interior enjoyment. This is true in giving. It's also true in receiving. We can receive what God richly supplies, but if we don't enjoy it, we're missing the point.

- If we just bury it in the ground, we're missing the point.
- If we rush towards the self-destruction of excess consumption and wild living, we're missing the point.
- If we stress out, tightly clutching every dime, we're missing the point.
- If we suffer to stack up even more – just to bury that in the ground, too – we're really missing the point.

Don't miss the point of receiving. The point is to enjoy it.

In 1899, J. H. Bernard explained the passage this way:

“riches (as all other gifts of God) are not given to be *possessed* merely, but to be *enjoyed*, and (as is immediately explained in the next verse) to be used for good purposes.”<sup>27</sup>

Professor David Downs explains the passage this way,

“One's true enjoyment of wealth is found in the employment of material resources to perform good

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<sup>27</sup> Bernard, J. H. (1899/1980). *The Pastoral Epistles*. Baker Book House. p. 102.



works, most specifically through the generous and charitable disposal of wealth.”<sup>28</sup>

This idea applies for each of us. We can do this with whatever God richly supplies. If God supplies us with the ability to build wealth, this is how we enjoy that gift.<sup>29</sup> If God supplies us with the ability to teach or to serve, this is still how we enjoy that gift. We use it.<sup>30</sup> We put it to work. We use it to do good. We use it to be rich in good works. We generously share it.

This is how we enjoy whatever God has richly supplied. Enjoyment is the point. It’s the purpose – the *eis* – for which God provided it to us in the first place. If we don’t enjoy the gift, we’re missing the point.

### ***Missing the point of giving***

We can be richly supplied by God and not enjoy it. That misses the point. We can also be charitable and not enjoy it,

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<sup>28</sup> Downs, D. J. (2013). The God who gives life that is truly life: Meritorious almsgiving and the divine economy in 1 Timothy 6. In D. J. Downs, D. Downs, & M. Skinner (Eds.), *The unrelenting God: Essays on God’s action in Scripture in honor of Beverly Roberts Gaventa* (pp. 242-260). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 254.

Similarly, Jonathan Edwards, in his 1743 sermon on 1 Timothy 6:19 explains, “The words imply Rich men -- that in complying with the duty being prescribed - will be in the likeliest & surest way to provide for themselves & promote their own Happiness with their Riches.” [Edwards, J. (1743). Sermons, series II, (Jonathan Edwards Center, Eds.). *WJE Online*, Vol. 65, 877. | Tim. 6:19.]

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 8:18b, “But you are to remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, in order to confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

<sup>30</sup> In 1874, Professor J. C. K von Hofmann explained the passage this way: “*eis apolausin* did not emphasize that one should not set one’s heart on possessions, which is not a contradiction at all, nor that one should not deny oneself enjoyment with dark severity, but only that one should not, as the miser does, merely possess it unused.” [von Hofmann, J. C. K. (1874). *Die briefe Pauli an Titus und Timotheus*, vol. 6 of *Die heilige schrift Neuen Testaments*. Nördlingen: Beck. p. 202. Translation by Joe Jordan.]

either. This, too, misses the point. Professor Malherbe explains of 1 Timothy 6:17-18,

“the author wishes the benevolent use of one’s wealth to be an expression or means of enjoyment rather than, say, something done out of duty or compulsion.”<sup>31</sup>

God is not looking for joyless givers. Paul explains,

“Each one must do just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

God loves a cheerful giver. That’s what He wants. But it is possible to give without joy or love. What’s the result? Paul explains,

“And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good.” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Giving is not the goal. Joyful giving is the goal. Giving willingly, wholeheartedly, with joy and love is the goal. Giving without enjoyment misses the point.

### ***The point of giving has always been the same***

Even in the Old Testament, giving was about the emotion attached to the gift. David led the “capital campaign” for the temple. After reaching the campaign goal, they celebrated. The celebration wasn’t about the amount raised. The celebration was about the donors’ hearts:

“Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly, for they made their offering to the Lord

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<sup>31</sup> Malherbe, A. J. (2011). Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 92.

wholeheartedly, and King David also rejoiced greatly.” (1 Chronicles 29:9).

David then spoke, “in the sight of all the assembly”. What was his message? First, he acknowledged that God was the one who richly supplied all these things. Then, he focused on the heart of the donors. He said,

“Since I know, my God, that You put the heart to the test and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You. Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intentions of the hearts of Your people, and direct their hearts to You;” (1 Chronicles 29:17-18).

David’s message mirrored that from an earlier “capital campaign.” This was the fundraising campaign to build the Tabernacle. God said to Moses,

“Tell the sons of Israel to take a contribution for Me; from everyone whose heart moves him you shall take My contribution.” (Exodus 25:2).

Notice that God didn’t want every kind of gift. He wanted only a specific kind of gift. He wanted only gifts accompanied by the right feeling. Moses later said to them,

“Take from among you a contribution to the Lord; whoever is of a willing heart is to bring it as the Lord’s contribution.” (Exodus 35:5).

This same idea applies to other gifts, too. Deuteronomy 15 directs giving to “your poor brother.” It explains,

“You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him” (Deuteronomy 15:10a).

***The point is enjoyment***

Giving is not the goal. It never has been. The goal is giving with the right emotion. It's giving willingly, wholeheartedly, with joy and love. This is not just giving wealth. It's not just sharing wealth. It's wealth enjoyment.

Is it possible to pressure a reluctant giver into giving? Yes. Is it possible to put someone under compulsion to give? Yes. Giving under obligation can generate a gift. But it misses the point.

The point is not just giving; it's joyful giving. The point is not just to donate wealth. The point is to enjoy the wealth. The point is to enjoy it by using it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).



## PART III

### ENJOYING WEALTH: THE ENJOYMENT IS EXTREME

(Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!)

#### ***What's the point?***

The message in this passage centers on enjoyment: *apolausin*. That's the purpose of the purpose clause: *eis apolausin*. What comes before this explains why wealth should be enjoyed. What comes after it explains how wealth should be enjoyed. Enjoyment – *apolausin* – is the point.

So, what, exactly, is this? What is *apolausin*? English translations are similar. Almost all use for “enjoyment” or to “enjoy.” The few alternatives include for “our comfort,”<sup>1</sup> for “profit,”<sup>2</sup> to “enjoy life,”<sup>3</sup> to “make us happy,”<sup>4</sup> or for “our happiness.”<sup>5</sup>

These translations work. But they miss something. Paul is not just using a normal word for enjoyment. He's using an extreme word. He's using a shocking word. It's over the top. It's outrageous.

This is not just enjoyment; this is “party-time” enjoyment. In the Bible, the word appears in only one other

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<sup>1</sup> Aramaic Bible in Plain English; Lamsa Bible (also from Aramaic)

<sup>2</sup> Smith's Literal Translation

<sup>3</sup> Contemporary English Version

<sup>4</sup> Worldwide English (New Testament)

<sup>5</sup> New Life Version; *See also* “In fact, wealth is a gift from God, who ‘out of his riches, gives us all we need for our happiness’ (1 Timothy 6:18).” [Reinhardt, J. (2021). “God, who giveth us richly”: Wealth, authorship, and audience in 1 Timothy 6. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*, 2(1), 101-114. p. 109.]

place:<sup>6</sup>

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy [*apolausin*] the temporary pleasures of sin,” (Hebrews 11:24-25).

The enjoyment of 1 Timothy 6:17 is the same word that Hebrews applies to “the temporary pleasures of sin” in Pharaoh’s palace. This is extreme. It’s shocking.

This sensual nature is how the word is normally used. Professor Linda Belleville explains,

“*Eis apolausin* does not have to do with spiritual enjoyment but instead with material pleasures.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1910, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* explained,

“*eis apolausin*: This is a greater concession to the sensuous view of life than the *eis metalēmpsin* of 1 Timothy 4:3. It approaches the declaration of the Preacher that for a man to ‘eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour ... is from the hand of God’ (Ecclesiastes 2:24), ‘the gift of God’ (Ecclesiastes 3:13; Ecclesiastes 5:19). No good purpose is served by pretending that God did not intend us to enjoy the pleasurable sensations of physical life.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “to enjoy] Lit. ‘for enjoyment’; the word in N.T. recurs only Hebrews 11:25 of Moses at court, ‘to have enjoyment of sin for a season.’” [Humphreys, A. E. (1895). *The Epistles to Timothy & Titus*. In J. Perowne (Ed.), *The Cambridge Bible for schools and colleges*. University Press. p. 149.]

<sup>7</sup> Belleville, L. (2017). Investments for abundant life. In J. S. Duvall & V. Verbrugge (Eds.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to Inspire and Instruct*. Zondervan Academic. p. 110.

<sup>8</sup> White, N. J. D. (1910). 1-2 Timothy. In W. R. Nicoll (Ed.), *The expositor’s Greek Testament* (Volume 4: Thessalonians through James). Dodd, Mead & Company. [Ellipses occur in the original];

In 1899, John Bernard explained,

“*apolausin* is a strong word, almost connoting sensual enjoyment.”<sup>9</sup>

This strongly sensual usage of the word was typical among Greek authors.<sup>10</sup> For example, in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes of

“enjoyment [*apolausei*], which in all cases comes through touch, both in the case of food and in that of drink and in that of sexual intercourse.”<sup>11</sup>

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*See also* in a commentary on this verse, “This is another of the many sayings of the old man St. Paul, in which he urges on the people of God, that their kind Master in heaven not only allows men reasonable pleasures and gratifications, but even Himself abundantly provides such for them.” [Ellicott, C. J. (1879). *The commentary for schools: Colossians, Thessalonians, and Timothy*. Cassell Petter & Galpin. p. 270.]

<sup>9</sup> Bernard, J. H. (1899/1980). *The Pastoral Epistles*. Baker Book House. p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> *See, e.g.*, Demosthenes who writes, “For knowing that among good men the acquisition of wealth and the enjoyment [*apolauseis*] of the pleasures that go with living are scorned” [Demosthenes. (1949). Funeral speech, 60.2. In *Demosthenes with an English translation*. (N. W. DeWitt & N. J. DeWeitt, Trans.). Harvard University Press.];

Clement, bishop of Rome (88-99 A.D.), refers negatively to “the present enjoyment” [*enthade apolausin*], writing, “For if we be diligent in doing good [*agathopoiein*], peace will pursue us. For this cause is a man unable to, seeing that they call in the fears of men, preferring rather the present enjoyment [*enthade apolausin*] than the future [*mellousan*] promise. For they know not how great torment the present enjoyment [*enthade apolausin*] bringeth, and what delight the future [*mellousa*] promise bringeth.” [Clement. (1896). *St. Clement's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* 10:2-4. In A. Menzies (Ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Vol. 9). Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.) <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1011.htm#> ]

<sup>11</sup> “Temperance and self-indulgence, however, are concerned with the kind of pleasures that the other animals share in, which therefore appear slavish and brutish; these are touch and taste. But even of taste they appear to make little or no use; for the business of taste is the discriminating of flavors, which is done by winetasters and people who season dishes; but they hardly take pleasure in making these discriminations, or at least self-indulgent people do not, but in actual enjoyment [*apolausei*], which in all cases comes through touch, both in the case of food and in that of drink and in that of sexual intercourse.” [Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics*. 1118a. (W. D. Ross, Trans.). Batoche Books. p. 50];



In *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle writes of

“the nature and quality of the pleasure connected with the body and with enjoyment [*apolauseis*], and the means that procure it, are not hard to see.”<sup>12</sup>

A comment on this word in Aristotle explains,

“The Greek word is specially associated with sensual pleasures.”<sup>13</sup>

Are donors supposed to enjoy their giving? Paul’s answer is extreme. It’s shocking. This is not just enjoyment; it’s extreme, sensual enjoyment. It’s as sensually enjoyable as “the temporary pleasures of sin.” (Hebrews 11:25b). But it’s not temporary. And it’s not sinful.<sup>14</sup> It’s exactly what God intends.

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<sup>12</sup> Aristotle. (1981). *Eudemian Ethics*. 1.1216a. In *Aristotle in 23 Volumes* (Vol. 20). (H. Rackham, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>13</sup> From footnote 4 in “What has been said, therefore, demonstrates that all men ascribe happiness to three modes of life—the political, the philosophic, and the life of enjoyment [*apolaustikon*] [fn 4]. [Aristotle. (1981). *Eudemian Ethics*. 1.1216a. In *Aristotle in 23 Volumes* (Vol. 20). (H. Rackham, Trans.). Harvard University Press. Footnote 4.]

<sup>14</sup> A few ancient Greek and Hellenistic Jewish usages also include this idea of appropriate enjoyment. For example, 4 Maccabees 5:9, “It is senseless not to enjoy [*apolauein*] delicious things that are not shameful, and wrong to spurn the gifts of nature.”; 3 Maccabees 7:16, “But those who had held fast to God even to death and had received the full enjoyment [*apolausin*] of deliverance began their departure from the city, crowned with all sorts of very fragrant flowers, joyfully and loudly giving thanks to the one God of their ancestors, the eternal Savior of Israel, in words of praise and all kinds of melodious songs.”

The Greek philosopher Isocrates writes, “Set not your heart on the excessive acquisition of goods, but on a moderate enjoyment [*apolausin*] of what you have. Despise those who strain after riches, but are not able to use what they have; they are in like case with a man who, being but a wretched horseman, gets him a fine mount. Try to make of money a thing to use as well as to possess; it is a thing of use to those who understand how to enjoy [*apolauein*] it, and a mere possession to those who are able only to acquire it. Prize the substance you have for two reasons—that you may have the means to meet a heavy loss and that you may go to the aid of a worthy friend when he is in distress; but for your life in general, cherish your possessions not in excess but in moderation.” [Isocrates. (1980). *To Demonicus*. In *Isocrates with an English translation in three volumes* (G. Norlin, Trans.). Harvard University Press. 27-28];

## ***Extreme enjoyment in Paul's fundraising letter***

The idea of extreme enjoyment from sharing God's blessings is not limited to 1 Timothy 6:17. Paul doesn't just tell Timothy to deliver this fundraising message. Paul also delivers it himself.

In his fundraising appeal letter, he delivers a parallel message:<sup>15</sup>

“And God is able to bestow every blessing on you in abundance, so that richly enjoying all sufficiency at all times, you may have ample means for all good works.” (2 Corinthians 9:8, Weymouth)

Both 1 Timothy 6:17 and 2 Corinthians 9:8 begin with a message of abundance:

- Paul tells Timothy to instruct that God is the one who “richly supplies.”
- Paul himself instructs that “God is able to bestow every blessing on you in abundance.” The word “blessing” is

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*See also* Dionysius of Halicarnassus, “these two things by the possession of which he conceived the State would become prosperous and great: first, piety, by informing his subjects that the gods are the givers and guardians of every blessing to mortal men, and, second, justice, through which, he showed them, the blessings also which the gods bestow bring honest enjoyment [*apolauseis*] to their possessors.” [Dionysius of Halicarnassus. (1917). *Roman Antiquities*, Book 2.62. In *Dionysius of Halicarnassus*. (E. Cary, Trans.). *Loeb Classical Library*. p. 319.];

*See also* Diogenes Laertius writing a description of the notorious “party-time” hedonistic philosopher, Aristippus, “He was capable of adapting himself to place, time and person, and of playing his part appropriately under whatever circumstances. ... He derived pleasure from what was present, and did not toil to procure the enjoyment [*apolausin*] of something not present.” [Diogenes Laertius. (1925/1972). *Lives of eminent philosophers* 2.8. (R. D. Hicks, Trans.). Harvard University Press.]

<sup>15</sup> “It is curious that commentators do not compare or contrast 6:17-19 with 2 Corinthians 9:8, which deserves more attention than I can give it here.” [Malherbe, A. J. (2011). *Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth* 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 76, fn. 10.]

*charis*: a gift, blessing, favor, or grace.

The message is the same. God supplies you richly. God gives you gifts in abundance.

In both cases, God's rich provision or abundant giving has a purpose. In 1 Timothy 6:17, the purpose is *apolausin*. It's *apolausin* through doing good work [*agatho-ergein*]. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, the purpose is *autarkeian*. It's *autarkeian* for all good works [*ergon agathon*].

What is *autarkeian*? It's sufficiency or contentment. In scripture, this noun appears elsewhere only once. It appears as Paul opens his discussion of wealth and wealth sharing:

“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment [*autarkeias*].” (1 Timothy 6:6).

The adjective form also appears only once. It appears as part of Paul's donation acknowledgement to the Philippians:

“I have learned to be content [*autarkēs*] in whatever circumstances I am.” (Philippians 4:11b).

In 1 Timothy 6:17, God provides richly. The purpose is for enjoyment. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, God blesses abundantly. The purpose is for having contentment.

At first, sufficiency or contentment [*autarkeian*] might feel more sedate than party-time enjoyment [*apolausin*]. But this isn't just normal contentment. It's extreme contentment. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, this is not just *autarkeian*. It's *en panti pantote pasan autarkeian*. This is contentment

- *En panti* – in every way
- *Pantote* – always, at all times, ever

- *Pasan* – all, the whole, every kind [an intensive]<sup>16</sup>

The purpose [*hina*] is not just normal contentment. It's 3X intensified contentment: *panti pantote pasan*. It's hyper-extreme contentment on steroids! This extreme contentment matches the “party-time” enjoyment of *apolausin*.

In both cases, Paul's language is extreme. The process of receiving and giving is supposed to be fun. It's supposed to create a contentment that is intense in every way. It's supposed to create “party-time” enjoyment.

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<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com) ; Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company.



PART IV  
ENJOYING WEALTH: ASCETICISM AND THE DANGER OF  
“SACRIFICIAL” GIVING

(Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!)

***Enjoyment vs. greed or asceticism***

When writing about giving and receiving, Paul focuses on enjoyment. In his fundraising instructions to Timothy, he writes about extreme enjoyment. (1 Timothy 6:17). In his fundraising appeal letter, he writes about extreme contentment. (2 Corinthians 9:8). Even in his donation acknowledgement letter, he writes about contentment. (Philippians 4:11).

Why is enjoyment so important in giving and receiving? It's important because Paul is fighting a theological battle. He's fighting a battle on two fronts.

Paul is fighting a theology of greed and a theology of asceticism.<sup>1</sup> He is fighting both endless accumulation and total rejection. Paul instead teaches enjoyment but without

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<sup>1</sup> In about 199 A.D., Clement of Alexandria explained, “The Gnostic sects are all exposed to these two dangers; either a culpable indifference as to morals, or an extravagant abstinence, founded upon the impious hatred of the creation.” [Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata*, Book III, Chapter v, Vol. I. p. 529 (Oxon. 1715). Cited and translated in Chastel, E. L. (1853/1857). *The charity of the primitive churches: Historical studies upon the influence of Christian charity during the first centuries of our era, with some considerations touching its bearings upon modern society* (G. A. Matile, Trans.). JB Lippincott and Company. p. 72.]; See also, another translation reading, “Either they teach that one ought to live on the principle that it is a matter of indifference whether one does right or wrong, or they set a too ascetic tone and proclaim the necessity of continence on the ground of opinions which are godless and arise from hatred of what God has created.” [Oulton, J. E. L., & Chadwick, H. (Eds. & Trans.). (1954). *Clement's Stromata, Book III. In The library of Christian classics: Volume II, Alexandrian Christianity: Selected translations of Clement and Origen with introduction and notes* (pp. 40-92). Westminster Press. Chapter V, Paragraph 40. <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book3-english.html> ]

attachment. He explains,

“I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.” (Philippians 4:11b-12).

The greedy don’t “know how to get along with little.” Ascetics don’t “know how to live in prosperity.” Paul knows how to do both. He teaches contentment while holding loosely. This is enjoyment without attachment. He instructs,

“those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7:30b-31 NIV).

Notice, Paul doesn’t say, “Don’t buy.” He doesn’t say, “Don’t use.” His message is different. It’s this: use it, but know that it’s all passing away. Buy it, but know that you can’t keep it. Wealth is uncertain and disappearing. And you can’t take it with you when you die.

If you have it, be content with it. If you don’t, be content without it. The message isn’t, “Don’t hold.” Instead, the message is, “Hold it lightly.”<sup>2</sup> It’s, “Hold it open-handedly.”

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<sup>2</sup> “It is interesting that God provides these things ‘for our enjoyment.’ We are to trust in God and then totally enjoy what we have – enjoy, but hold lightly.” [Ortlund, J. (2011). *Fearlessly feminine: Boldly living God’s plan for womanhood*. Multnomah. p. 66];

Commenting on 1 Timothy 6:17, Jim Ware summarizes, “Enjoy the treasures of this world, but hold them lightly.” [Ware, J. (2006). *Finding God in The Hobbit*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 15.]

Holding open-handedly matches the Biblical concept of generosity.<sup>3</sup>

Paul fights against the greedy miser. He also fights against the harsh ascetic. These two might seem like opposites. But they live the same way. The one who buries wealth never enjoys it. Neither does the one who rejects wealth. Professor Richard Lenski puts it this way:

“‘For enjoyment’ is significant. God does not bestow wealth merely in order that we may hold it, live as beggars, as ascetics, but that as Christians we may use and enjoy it with all gratitude. Refusal to enjoy it is as much a sin as misuse, waste, or overindulgence.”<sup>4</sup>

Both the ascetic and the miser refuse to enjoy wealth. Both view this as a virtue. The ascetic looks down on the one who enjoys wealth. So does the miser. Paul’s instruction that

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<sup>3</sup> In 1 Timothy 6:18, the instruction “to be generous” – *eumetadotos* – also implies “open-handed.” Some even translate *eumetadotos* here as “open-handed.” See, e.g., Centenary Translation of the New Testament; Goodspeed New Testament; Moffatt New Testament; Montgomery New Testament; Twentieth Century New Testament; Weymouth New Testament; Williams New Testament;

“*eumetadotos* describes someone who ‘open-handedly’ (willingly) shares” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.] See also Kelly, J. N. D. (1963). *A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Adam & Charles Black. p. 147.

In 2 Corinthians 8:2, the New English Bible translates “generosity” – from *haplotētos* – as “open-handed.” This matches the literal concept of *haplotēs*, which combines *a-* “not,” and *plotēs* from *pel* “folded,” thus literally, “not folded.” [See Brown, C. (1977). *The new international dictionary of New Testament theology*, Vol. 3, Zondervan. p. 572.]

In Proverbs 31:20, the virtuous woman “is generous” (Good News Translation). Literally, she “opens her hand” (English Standard Version). From *kap·pāh* [כַּפָּה] “Her hand” *pā·rə·śāh* [פָּרְשָׁה] “she spreads.”

Deuteronomy 15:11 reads, “For the poor will not cease to exist in the land; therefore I am commanding you, saying, ‘You shall fully open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.’” This is from “wide” *pā·tō·ah* [פָּתוּחַ] “you shall open” *tīp·tah* תִּפְתַּח “your hand” *yā·dā·kā* [יָדְךָ].

<sup>4</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1946). *Interpretation of St Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Augsburg Fortress. p. 729.



God richly provides us all things for the purpose of enjoyment opposes them both.

### ***Paul's battle against asceticism***

This is not just an issue of better living. It's not just a practical issue. For Paul, it was also a spiritual matter.

Greed is destructive. He explains this in 1 Timothy 6:9-10. But he's even harsher on asceticism and material rejection. These are also spiritually destructive, but they're worse. They're worse because they appear to be wise. They appear to be spiritual. They appear to be religious.

The world sees material rejection as spiritual. Paul sees it as opposed to Christ. He writes,

“Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism ... If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’ (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.” (Colossians 2:18a, 20-23 ESV).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Holman Christian Standard Bible uses, “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on ascetic practices ... although these have a reputation of wisdom by promoting ascetic practices.” The Christian Standard Bible uses, “Let no one condemn you by delighting in ascetic practices.” The Amplified Bible uses, “These practices indeed have the appearance [that popularly passes as that] of wisdom in self-made religion and mock humility and severe treatment of the body (asceticism), but are of no value against sinful indulgence [because they do not honor God].” The Weymouth New Testament uses, “an affectation of humility and an ascetic severity.”

The ascetic “holy man” who rejects all material things has “the appearance of wisdom.” It’s attractive. It feels spiritual. But this is a “self-made religion.” Paul warns against this false religion. He presents it as an alternative to Christ. In Paul’s words, “If you have died with Christ, why ...?” Why would you embrace asceticism?

The ascetic focuses on the rejection of material things. The miser focuses on the hoarding of material things. Both reject the enjoyment of material things.

### ***Rejection vs. enjoyment***

1 Timothy 6:17-19 gives instructions for the rich Christian. It encourages generosity. But notice what it does not do. It does not call for the rejection of material things. It does not embrace poverty as a spiritual discipline. It does not direct us to reject God’s rich provision. Instead, it shows us how to enjoy God’s rich provision.

This instruction about enjoyment is not just a matter of helpful advice. It’s a matter of religious doctrine. Paul connects wealth and doctrine repeatedly in 1 Timothy 6. In 6:3-16 Paul connects doctrine with both contentment and greed.<sup>6</sup>

In 6:17-19, he shows how to enjoy wealth as God intended. Verse 17 explains that enjoyment is the reason God richly provided these things in the first place. This is a

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<sup>6</sup> One parsing of the 1 Timothy 6 doctrine and wealth topics is, sequentially, bad doctrine from those seeking wealth [3-5], wealth contentment [6], truth that leads to wealth contentment [7], wealth contentment [8], falsehood that leads to wealth discontentment [9-10], flee bad doctrine and pursue good doctrine [11a], good doctrine defined [11b-16], falsehood that leads to wealth discontentment [17a], wealth contentment [17b: from “but”], truth that leads to wealth contentment [18-19a], wealth contentment [19b: from “so that”], and protect good doctrine and avoid bad doctrine [20-21].

doctrinal statement. Professor Homer Kent notes bluntly of 1 Timothy 6:17,

“Here asceticism is branded a lie.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1 Timothy 4, Paul makes a similar argument about enjoyment. He writes that appropriate sensual experiences, like food and marriage, are experiences

“which God has created to [*eis*] be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.” (1 Timothy 4:3b).

God created these sensual experiences for a purpose [*eis*]. His purpose is our taking, receiving, or sharing in them.<sup>8</sup> This, too, is an argument for enjoyment of what God has richly provided. It, too, describes this as the purpose [*eis*] for God’s provision.

Professor Robert Yarbrough makes this connection succinctly. Commenting on 1 Timothy 6:17, he directs the readers to “recall the demonic, anti-enjoyment views mentioned in 4:1-3”<sup>9</sup>

The next verse continues,

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;” (1 Timothy 4:4).

The contrast is clear. Rejecting is prohibited. Receiving is directed.

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<sup>7</sup> Kent, H. A. (1958). *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus*. Moody Press. p. 207

<sup>8</sup> *Metalempsin* in 1 Timothy 4:3 from *metalempsis*. This is “taking” or “participation” in. [Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 47.] Also, “sharing in” [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 157.]

<sup>9</sup> Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 334.

## ***Ascetic rejection vs. aggressively grabbing enjoyment***

The ascetic rejects material things. He is above such things. He is separated from or removed from them. This separation gives him “the appearance of wisdom.”

Paul’s instructions point in the opposite direction. He directs enjoying material things. (1 Timothy 6:17). He directs sharing in material things. (1 Timothy 4:3). He directs receiving material things. (1 Timothy 4:4). He directs aggressively grabbing hold of real life. (1 Timothy 6:19).

Paul’s directions are a contrast. They’re a contrast with the detached separation of asceticism. The specific words make this contrast extreme.

The English words sometimes miss this extreme contrast. In 1 Timothy 4:4, the English word “received” feels passive. The Greek word is not. It’s a form of *lambanō*. This means

“to lay hold of by aggressively (actively) accepting what is available (offered).”<sup>10</sup>

It means to “accept with initiative.”<sup>11</sup> It emphasizes the volition (assertiveness) of the receiver.<sup>12</sup>

In 1 Timothy 4:3, the word for “shared in” is similar. It’s a variation of *meta* [“with,” “among”] + *lambanō*. This word

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<sup>10</sup> *Lambanomenon* in 1 Timothy 4:4 from *lambanō*. [Quotation from Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com)]

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* See *lambanō* in, e.g., Matthew 5:40, “If anyone wants to sue you and take [*labein*] your shirt, let him have your coat also.”; Matthew 7:25, “From whom do the kings of the earth collect [*lambanousin*] customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?”;

also means “taking.”<sup>13</sup> It, too, is “an ‘aggressive’ receiving.”<sup>14</sup>

So, too, to “take hold of” or “seize upon” real life in 1 Timothy 6:19 is aggressive. It’s a form of *epi* [“on”] + *lambanō*. All three examples use forms of *lambanō*. These are not different types of responses. They’re all variations of the same response. They’re all actively aggressive.

1 Timothy 6:17 is not just enjoyment. It’s “party-time” enjoyment. 1 Timothy 6:19 is not just passively receiving life. It’s taking hold or seizing upon true life. 1 Timothy 4:3 is not just receiving. It’s aggressively laying hold of. 1 Timothy 4:4 is not just sharing in. It’s also taking or aggressively receiving.

These are not passive responses to God’s rich provision. These are energetically active responses. They “go for the gusto!” They strongly contrast with the detached separation of asceticism.

### ***Paul’s battle against asceticism gets extreme***

This message of enjoyment is not simply good life advice. It’s part of a battle. It’s part of a spiritual battle within the church. It’s part of Paul’s ongoing fight against asceticism.

Paul’s attack is extreme. Those who reject God’s rich provision and forbid its enjoyment are not just missing good experiences. Paul says they

“fall away from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4:1b).

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<sup>13</sup> *Metalēmpsin* in 1 Timothy 4:3 from *metalēmpsis*: taking, receiving, sharing in.

<sup>14</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com)

That’s an extreme attack. In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul continues his attack on asceticism. He makes another extreme anti-ascetic statement. He does it by defining who God is. He describes,

“God [*Theō*] the one [*tō*] providing [*parechonti*] us [*hemin*] all things [*panta*] richly [*plousiōs*] for [*eis*] enjoyment [*apolausin*]” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

Don’t miss how extreme this attack is. The ascetics reject the enjoyment of material things. This rejection gives them an appearance of wisdom. They appear spiritual, at least in their “self-made religion.” Paul objects. But he doesn’t just write,

“Things aren’t evil. It’s OK for us to enjoy them.”

Instead, Paul defines who God is. His definition shows that the ascetics are worshipping a different God. That’s extreme.

The ascetics do not follow the

“God who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

They reject the enjoyment of God’s rich provision. Thus, they reject this definition of God. Their god and Paul’s God are not the same.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> God’s original plan of the Garden of Eden, *ay’-den*, or Garden of pleasure, uses a word that parallels Paul’s definition of God as the One who richly provides all things for enjoyment, *apolausin*. The Hebrew word Eden, *ay’-den* [אֵדֶן], is the word meaning pleasure or luxury. David also uses this word to describe God’s nature: “How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures [’ā-dā-ne-kā]. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.” (Psalm 36:7-9 NKJV).

Using this same word, Sarah laughed at God’s promise of pleasure in Gen 18:12, “So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, am I to have pleasure [’eḏ-nāh], my lord being old also?’”

Just as with the Greek *apolausin* – used to describe the sinful pleasures of Pharaoh’s palace in Hebrews 11:25 – the pleasure of the Hebrew *ay’-den* also

Paul continues this attack in the next sentence after 1 Timothy 6:17-19.<sup>16</sup> He warns Timothy against

“worldly, empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’— which some have professed and thereby have gone astray from the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

Asceticism is secular spirituality. It follows harsh, man-made rules. It glories in extreme demonstrations of self-denial. It focuses on the external. It “earns” God’s acceptance. It appears to others as spirituality. But Paul explains that it’s not what God wants.

Paul does teach Godly self-discipline. We don’t abuse food, drink, power, wealth, or our bodies. But nor do we reject material things as evil. We treat them as God intends. That’s the way to enjoy them.

Wealth enjoyment is not simply good advice. It’s not just a motivational fundraising message. It’s serious. It’s part of a serious spiritual battle within the church.

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includes the sense of extravagant luxury. David laments in 2 Sam 1:24, “O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you *luxuriously* [ǎ·dā·nīm] in scarlet, Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.” And in Jer 51:34, “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me and crushed me, he has set me down like an empty vessel; he has swallowed me like a monster, he has filled his stomach with my delicacies [mê·’ǎ·dā·nāy]; he has washed me away.”

<sup>16</sup> Understood in this context, neither our passage nor the concluding verses are an abrupt departure. Paul concludes his letter (1 Timothy 6:3-21) by addressing how theology relates to wealth. False theology focuses on outward, worldly appearances (asceticism, appearances of wisdom, and superior knowledge). But it does nothing to correct the inward reality of the heart (greed, envy, strife, evil). This is the same false theology of the Pharisees that Jesus attacked so strongly. At the beginning (3-5), the middle (11-16), and the ending (20-21) of this message, Paul commands the rejection of this false theology. (Breaking the discussion of wealth and its uses for a direct command addressing the reader’s responsibilities towards God in 11-16 also mirrors the structure of Ecclesiastes. This is fitting as Paul is mirroring the arguments of Ecclesiastes regarding the appropriate and inappropriate uses of wealth.) For a critical interpretation identifying 20-21 as a possible reference to asceticism, see Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul’s delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Trinity Press International. p. 204-205.

***That was then; this is ... still a problem***

Paul fought against asceticism. He does so here at 1 Timothy 6:17. Several commentators note this. For example, Professor Jouette Bassler explains of this verse,

“With this last notion, the author’s basic anti-ascetic stance reappears strongly (see also 4:4).”<sup>17</sup>

Professor Donald Guthrie points out,

“These words would incidentally provide an answer to excessive abstinence, for if God has ordained everything for enjoyment (who giveth us richly all things to enjoy) the ascetic approach cannot be right.”<sup>18</sup>

But that was then. Paul was fighting against asceticism. He was fighting the Gnostics.<sup>19</sup> That’s not a problem today, right? We aren’t still fighting Gnostics or ascetics, right? Although these labels aren’t common, some of these ideas persist.

Consider this. Is being a rich Christian a contradiction? If we take the ascetic view, it is. A rich Christian is, at best, just barely a Christian. He isn’t fully spiritual. The higher-level Christian has rejected all material, worldly things. He’s much more committed. That ascetic Christian – now, he is the real deal!

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<sup>17</sup> Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 119.

<sup>18</sup> [Guthrie, D. (1990). *The Pastoral Epistles: An introduction and commentary* (Vol. 14). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 130.] Guthrie also notes at p. 117-118, “The approach to wealth is strikingly moderate. There is no suggestion of denunciation.”

<sup>19</sup> “17. to enjoy. This takes up the theme of 4:3; the author no doubt has in mind the Gnostic teachers who condemned some foods as unclean” [Hanson, A. T. (1966). *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the first and second letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus*. Cambridge University Press. p. 72.]



Paul says no. Paul says don't be fooled by these things that "have the appearance of wisdom." The "real" Christian? He's not only good at being poor. He will also "know how to live in prosperity." (Philippians 4:12). He will know how to live when "having abundance." (Philippians 4:12). The ascetic can't do this. He can't "live in prosperity." He can't live while "having abundance."

### ***Asceticism and the ministry to the rich***

Is a rich Christian a contradiction? No. It's no more a contradiction than a Christian widow or a Christian slave. It's just a circumstance. Whatever our circumstance, we can use it appropriately.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 outlines a ministry to the rich. It's a ministry to those in particular circumstances. It's like the ministries outlined to older widows, older men, younger men, younger women, and even slaves. So why is this ministry to the rich the only one that feels uncomfortable?<sup>20</sup> Because of asceticism.

The ascetic would be comfortable with every other ministry Paul outlined – except for this one. Even today, asceticism – rejecting material things – has "the appearance of wisdom." Asceticism is still attractive. But it's not Biblical.

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<sup>20</sup> Susan Pudelek writes of one lecture by a bishop who focused on poverty relief, "Then he paused and said, 'I don't really pay attention to the wealthy in my diocese. I'm uncomfortable around people who have money.' The audience nodded and murmured their approval. Most were members of religious orders, people entrusted with the care and feeding of souls. The consensus in the room was clear. Here is a shadow belief that having money somehow renders one suspect. And, perhaps, being near people who are wealthy may cause one to become suspect oneself. With such shadow beliefs, we do not know how to treat the wealthy. On some level, we exile them to a distant shore of contact." [Pudelek, S. M. (2002). The dance of giving and receiving: Spirituality and the development officer, volunteer, and donor. *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*, 35, 119-130. p. 122.]

### ***Asceticism and the ideal donor***

Paul had to fight against greed and endless accumulation. We still do today. And we know that. Paul had to fight against asceticism. We still do today. But we don't know that. Asceticism can be more dangerous because it appears religious or spiritual.

So, let's talk about donors. Imagine your spiritually ideal donor. Is it the one who gives "sacrificially"? By this, do you mean someone who,

"Gives until it hurts"?

Or is it maybe someone who,

"Gives until it hurts and then gives some more"?

Is it perhaps even someone who,

"gives away all their possessions to charity"? (as in 1 Corinthians 13:3).

If so, be careful. Check this "ideal" against scripture. Is this model from scripture? Or is it from religious asceticism?

Consider these questions. Does God want painful giving, or does He want joyful giving? If you, as a fundraiser, had the magic ability to convince someone to "give until it hurts and then give some more," should you? Is that what God wants? Is that how our passage describes giving?

Asceticism embraces personal sacrifice because it is painful. It embraces "severe treatment of the body" because it is painful. That's what makes the person feel religious. Their painful sacrifice gives them "the appearance of wisdom."

But wait; don't we want donors to give big? Don't we want them to give a lot? Don't we want them to be generous? Yes, yes, and yes.

But what God wants isn't simply the act of the gift. What God wants is the right emotion with the gift. If we get the action right but the emotion wrong, it's a big failure. It's a failure, no matter how much the gift is. It's a failure, even if it's everything. Paul explains,

“And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good.” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Giving without the right emotion does no good. Biblical fundraising doesn't just raise money. It doesn't just produce giving. It produces giving with the right emotion. It produces giving that is

- “Party-time” enjoyable (1 Timothy 6:17)<sup>21</sup>
- “Hilariously” joyful (2 Corinthians 9:7)<sup>22</sup>
- Super/hyper contented (2 Corinthians 9:8)<sup>23</sup>
- Overflowing from the abundance of joy (2 Corinthians 8:2)<sup>24</sup>
- Happy/blessed (Acts 20:35)<sup>25</sup>

How does this fit with the painful, somber, “sacrificial” giving of asceticism? It doesn't. Painful giving doesn't just

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<sup>21</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17 [*apolausin*]

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7 [*hilaron*]

<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:8 [*en panti pantote pasan autarkeian*]

<sup>24</sup> In Paul's motivational example in 2 Corinthians 8, the donors “are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.” (2 Corinthians 8:2 NLT)

<sup>25</sup> Acts 20:35 [*makarion*]

miss the point; it contradicts the point. It's not just different; it's the opposite.

### ***The ideal donor and the widow's mite***

Does the story of the widow's mite show us the ideal donor?<sup>26</sup> The ascetic would say yes. She "put in all she owned."<sup>27</sup> That makes her the ideal donor, right?

That's not what scripture says. Jesus says only one thing about the widow. He says simply, "She put in more."<sup>28</sup> He doesn't say, "She did it the right way." He doesn't say, "Go and do likewise." He says simply and truthfully, "She put in more."

Did Jesus tell others to copy the widow? Quite the opposite. He ends the story by explaining why giving to the temple – both for the poor widow and for the rich – was pointless. The temple they were donating to was about to be destroyed. Jesus explains,

"Not one stone will be left upon another" (Mark 13:2b).

This is not a story of praise. It's a story of condemnation and destruction. It's not a story of "Go and do likewise." It's a story of "Beware!" It begins with Jesus telling his disciples,

"Beware of the teachers of the law." (Luke 20:46).

Or,

"Watch out for the teachers of the law" (Mark 12:36b).

Jesus explains,

"They devour widows' houses and for a show make

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<sup>26</sup> Mark 12:40-13:2; Luke 20:47-21:6

<sup>27</sup> Mark 12:44b

<sup>28</sup> "this poor widow has put in more than all the others" (Luke 21:3b); "this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others." (Mark 12:43).

lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.” (Luke 20:47).

This is a story of punishment. Would their religious philanthropy save them? No. The next verse explains,

“As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins.” (Luke 21:48a).

The teachers of the law stole from widows. What little this widow had left, they ended up controlling as part of the temple treasury. They got everything.

Then, they tried to appear righteous. They gave part of their money to the temple. But Jesus says their gifts were small and pointless. Their gifts were small. The widow “put in more.” Their gifts were pointless. The temple their gifts supported was about to be destroyed.

So, was this widow an ideal donor? There are two correct answers: We don’t know, and it doesn’t matter.

We don’t know because we don’t have that information. Jesus says she “put in all she owned.” Scripture tells us that giving away all our possessions does no good without the right emotion. What was the widow’s emotion? We don’t know.

We don’t know, and it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter because that’s not the point of the teaching. This is about bad people and bad giving. Stealing from widows and then using part of it to make small, pointless gifts won’t work. Jesus never said, “Be like this widow.” Instead, his message was, “Don’t be like these evil scribes.” (Literally, “Watch out” or “Beware!”)

Scripture provides many positive instructions on how to give the right way. This just isn't one of them.

### ***Isn't giving supposed to be sacrificial?***

Giving is supposed to be “party-time” enjoyable [*apolausin*]. (1 Timothy 6:17). God loves a cheerful, “hilariously” joyful [*hilaron*] giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving is supposed to be even happier [*makarion*] than receiving a gift. (Acts 20:35).

But wait a second. Isn't giving supposed to be sacrificial? Doesn't that mean it's supposed to be painful? Isn't that painfulness what makes it sacrificial? How can a sacrifice be happy, fun, and joyful?

Let's see what scripture says. First, can a gift be a sacrifice? Yes. Hebrews 13:16 explains,

“And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices [*thusiais*] God is pleased.”<sup>29</sup>

In his gift acknowledgment, Paul writes

“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice [*thusian*], pleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18).

Clearly, a gift can be a sacrifice. What is a sacrifice? It is the thing offered to God. It is the offering. The Greek word here is *thusia*.<sup>30</sup> It means a sacrifice or an offering. The

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<sup>29</sup> The wording of “doing good and sharing” [*eu-poiias kai koinōnias*] in Greek parallels our passage “to be generous and ready to share” [*eu-metadotous einai koinōnikous*].

<sup>30</sup> Strong's NT 2378: Sacrifice (the act or the victim). Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 37.

Septuagint uses *thusia* for the Hebrew word *zebach*<sup>31</sup>: sacrifice. It also uses *thusia* for the Hebrew word *minchah*<sup>32</sup>: gift or offering.<sup>33</sup>

In a Biblical context, “sacrificial” does not mean “painful.” Instead, “sacrificial” describes the use of the gift. In the Old Testament, a bull, a goat, a dove, or even flour could be used as a sacrifice or offering to God.

Suppose a priest performed an animal sacrifice poorly, and the animal suffered a lot. This didn’t make the gift any more sacrificial. Or suppose the priest was quick, and there was no suffering. This didn’t make the gift any less sacrificial. An animal couldn’t be sacrificed “just a little bit” or “a whole lot.” Either it was sacrificed, or it wasn’t.

Saying that a gift is sacrificial describes its function or use. A dove can be a sacrifice. A bull can be a sacrifice. A bull costs more than a dove. But a bull cannot be “more sacrificial”

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<sup>31</sup> זָבַח – Strong’s H2077: properly, a slaughter, i.e., the flesh of an animal; by implication, a sacrifice (the victim or the act):—offer(-ing), sacrifice. Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Hebrew Bible*. Thomas Nelson. p. 34.

<sup>32</sup> מִנְחָה – Strong’s H4503. This can include animal sacrifices. For example, I Samuel 2:16-17, “Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing [זָבַח – haz-zō-bê-ah, “to slaughter for sacrifice”] ... And so the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for the men treated the offering [מִנְחָתָ – min-ḥat, “offering”] of the Lord disrespectfully.”

<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the Greek word for gift or offering, *dōron*, can also reference a sacrifice at the altar. Its definition includes “a gift, present ... of sacrifices and other gifts offered to God.” Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 161.

“So if you are presenting a sacrifice [*dōron*] at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you,” Matthew 5:23 (New Living Translation);

“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Listen! Don’t tell anyone, but go straight to the priest and let him examine you; then in order to prove to everyone that you are cured, offer the sacrifice [*dōron*] that Moses ordered.’” Matthew 8:4 (Good News Translation);

Although, note that Hebrews 5:1 references both *dōra* and *thysias*.

than a dove. Either the gift is a sacrifice (an offering), or it's not.

Being a sacrifice (an offering) is a binary characteristic. It's a yes/no question. Asking, "How sacrificial was this gift?" makes no sense. It's like asking, "How dead was the dove?" Either it was sacrificed, or it wasn't. Either it was offered to God, or it wasn't.

A gift can be sacrificial. It can be an offering to God. But it cannot be "more" sacrificial. It cannot be "less" sacrificial. It can't be sacrificed just a little bit. It can't be sacrificed a whole lot.

In the Bible, "sacrificial" is binary. A gift was either offered to God or it wasn't. It was either sacrificed or it wasn't. Unfortunately, the English word also has other meanings. These non-Biblical, English meanings can cause confusion. They can accidentally lead to asceticism. They can lead to asceticism's celebration of painful giving.

### ***Bad sacrificial gifts***

Answering, "Was the gift sacrificial?" is easy. Either the gift was offered to God, or it wasn't. Either it was sacrificed, or it wasn't. Saying that a gift was sacrificial describes the use of the gift. But it does not describe the giver.

The difficult question is not, "Was the gift a sacrifice?" The difficult question is, "Was the sacrifice pleasing (or acceptable) to God?" This question is different. It doesn't just depend on the usage of the gift. It also depends on the giver.

The Old Testament describes many sacrificial gifts that were not pleasing to God. Sacrifices and offerings that violated



God's instructions were not acceptable.<sup>34</sup> Even those that followed the rules wouldn't work if the giver's heart wasn't right. Sacrifices from the wicked and unjust didn't work. Sacrifices from those who had turned away from the Lord were not acceptable.<sup>35</sup>

These gifts were still sacrifices (*zebach*).<sup>36</sup> They were still sacrificial. They were still offerings to God.<sup>37</sup> But unless the giver's heart was right, they weren't acceptable.

So, too, in the New Testament, the giver's heart and emotion must be right. Otherwise, the gift, offering, or sacrifice won't be acceptable. It won't be pleasing to God. It can be as big or as painful as we can imagine. It still won't do a thing. Paul writes,

“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:3 ESV).

We can't give bigger or more painfully than this. We can't give more than everything we have. We can't endure more pain than being burned alive. This is the most extreme donor imaginable. It's the ascetic's ideal donor.

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Nadab and Abihu's use of strange fire (Leviticus 10) was rejected. Saul's decision to take the sheep and cattle from the Amalekites “to sacrifice to the Lord” (1 Samuel 15:21) was also rejected.

<sup>35</sup> Amos 5:22; Proverbs 15:8, 21:27; Isaiah 1:11-15; Jer 6:20; Mal 1:10, 2:13.

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., use of sacrifice, *זָבַח* – Strong's H2077, in Jer 6:20b, “Your burnt offerings are not acceptable And your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me.”; Isaiah 1:11, “What are your many sacrifices to Me? Says the LORD. ‘I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fattened cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.’”; Proverbs 15:8, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.”; Proverbs 21:27a, “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination”

<sup>37</sup> Amos 5:22, “Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fattened oxen.”; Mal 2:13, “because He no longer gives attention to the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.”

And yet, Paul says it all amounts to nothing. It does nothing for the donor – unless the emotion is right. If the heart is right, the gift is acceptable. Otherwise, it's not – no matter how painful it is.

What makes a gift acceptable or pleasing? Is it painfulness? Clearly not. Paul describes the most painful gift possible, and it was a failure. Does it mean the gift should be big? That won't get it, either. Paul describes the biggest possible gift, and it was a flop.

The answer is consistent. God doesn't want giving. God wants only a certain type of giving. Scripture describes acceptable giving as

- Not under compulsion<sup>38</sup>
- Not reluctant<sup>39</sup>
- Not grudging<sup>40</sup>
- Willingly<sup>41</sup>
- Freely willing<sup>42</sup>
- From the heart<sup>43</sup>
- With love<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7 (*anankēs*)

<sup>39</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7 (*lypēs*)

<sup>40</sup> Deuteronomy 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:7 (*lypēs*)

<sup>41</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:9, 17, 18

<sup>42</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:3 (New King James Version); *See also* "of their own free will" (New Living Translation, Good News Translation, Weymouth New Testament), "by their own free will" (GOD'S WORD® Translation, International Standard Version), "voluntarily" (NASB, Amplified Bible).

<sup>43</sup> Exodus 25:2, 35:5; Deuteronomy 15:10; 1 Chronicles 29:9, 17, 18; 2 Corinthians 9:7 (*tē kardia*)

<sup>44</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:3

- Happy and blessed<sup>45</sup>
- Hilariously cheerful<sup>46</sup>
- “Party-time” enjoyable<sup>47</sup>

These descriptions all match. They fit together. They describe a consistent attitude, emotion, and feeling. And what’s the opposite of all these? The opposite is “painful.”

If we misunderstand “sacrificial” as “painful,” then we aren’t just missing the point – we’re inverting it. We’re rejecting the

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

We’re replacing Him with something else. This replacement may “have the appearance of wisdom,” but it is a “self-made religion.”

### ***Making extreme – extremely fun – gifts***

Rejecting the notion of painful giving doesn’t mean we don’t want big gifts. It doesn’t mean we don’t want people to give much – sometimes even beyond their ability. But we want them to do so because it is enjoyable!

Paul describes the giving of those in Macedonia:

“They gave as much as they could afford and even more” (2 Corinthians 8:3a CEV).

They gave. They gave a lot. They gave even beyond their ability. Does Paul praise the painfulness of their giving? No.

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<sup>45</sup> Acts 20:35

<sup>46</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7 (*hilaron*)

<sup>47</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17

He does the opposite. He describes how much fun they were having. Paul explains,

“They gave as much as they could afford and even more, simply because they wanted to. They even asked and begged us to let them have the joy of giving their money for God’s people.” (2 Corinthians 8:3b-4 CEV).

The Macedonians were making extreme gifts. They were also making extremely joyful gifts. A big gift can be a joyful gift. And that’s the point. The goal is not big, painful giving. The goal is not small, apathetic giving. The goal is big, joyful giving.

We want big giving. We want donors,

“to be rich in good works” (1 Timothy 6:18b).

We want them to

“abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8b NIV).

We want them

“to be generous [*eumetadotous*]” (1 Timothy 6:18c).

Are donors who make big, painful gifts being generous [*eumetadotous*]? Actually, no. They’re not. Professor Raymond Collins explains,

“The basic meaning of ‘generous’ (*eu-metadotous*) is giving what one has to someone else. The prefix (*eu*) implies liberality and/or **joy** in doing so.”<sup>48</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Generous giving is joyful giving. It’s giving freely and open-handedly. It’s enjoyable.

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<sup>48</sup> Collins, Raymond F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. p. 171.

And that's the point. That's the kind of giving God wants. That's the kind of giving that honors the,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

This is not the small, grudging gift of the greedy. It's not the big, painful gift of the ascetic.<sup>49</sup> It's the big, enjoyable gift of the generous Christian.

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<sup>49</sup> Other examples are sometimes used to support the notion of painful giving, but such an understanding doesn't match the text. In 2 Samuel 24, David is instructed to erect an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David offers to buy the threshing floor, Araunah instead offers to give him the land, the animals for sacrifice, and the wood for the fire for free. In 2 Samuel 24:24, King David responds, “However, the king said to Araunah, ‘No, but I will certainly buy it from you for a price; for I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing.’” This wasn't a matter of the gift needing to be painful – David was the king, so the cost of a threshing floor was financially inconsequential. It was that David wanted to be the one who made the gift. David wanted the gift to be his gift. If Araunah had provided everything for the sacrifice for free, then David would no longer be the real donor.

Another example is the story of the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-29; Luke 18:18-30). In it, Jesus says, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (Mark 10:21 NKJV). This is an extreme ask! This extreme ask comes with an extreme opportunity. Jesus's offer to follow Him at that time was the biggest opportunity anyone could receive. He refused it to others who wanted to do so. (Luke 8:38-39). However, this big opportunity came at a cost. The cross was an instrument of execution. Joining this group at that time to become a disciple ended in execution. This consequence makes the benefit from giving even more obvious. It's not just trading wealth for treasure in heaven. It's also maximizing the enjoyment of wealth in this life. If a person is joining a group that will lead to their execution, what is the most enjoyment they can get out of their wealth? It's to take pleasure in bringing joy to those in need. It's to “make it rain” on the poor. It makes sense to enjoy giving it all right now because otherwise, it would simply stay unused at the person's upcoming death. But because of his wealth, the rich young ruler didn't take this opportunity. His wealth gave him less freedom, not more. (Of course, the text doesn't say he refused to make the gift. It says, “he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.” We presume he did not follow Jesus's instructions to “go and sell all you possess and give to the poor.” But even if he did so, this would not have been an acceptable gift as it would have been accompanied by “grieving” rather than joy.) Jesus concludes by again emphasizing both the immediate and future benefits of giving. Mark 10:29-30 reads, “Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”

## ***Charitable asceticism and the fundraiser***

When asceticism invades fundraising, the results are bad. Focusing on the rich becomes uncomfortable. It feels somehow “un-Christian” despite the explicit Biblical instruction.

When asceticism invades fundraising, donors are praised but not for their impact. They’re praised but not for doing good or becoming rich in good works. Instead, they’re praised for “sacrifice.” They’re praised for painful giving.

This has two effects. First, the fundraising becomes unproductive. Fundraisers focus on the wrong people. They deliver the wrong message. The fundraising message becomes,

“This is going to hurt!”

That’s a tough sell. It’s a painful message to accept. It’s also a painful message to deliver.

This has a second effect. Fundraising becomes painful for the fundraiser. If the fundraiser thinks he offers nothing but pain, loss, and “sacrifice,” this affects him. It affects the reactions he gets from others. It’s hard to get excited about delivering that message. It’s hard to be energized about offering that deal.

It’s a tough message to deliver. The only motivation is the money. The organization will do good things with the money. So, the money-getting, the “fund”-“raising,” must be done.

The money-getting becomes the important thing. This is not a ministry to the donor. It’s just extracting money from the donor. It’s a money-getting job that delivers a painful message. For most people, that career just isn’t emotionally sustainable.

## ***Charitable asceticism and the ministry leader***

When asceticism invades fundraising, the results are bad. They're bad for the donor. They're bad for the fundraiser. They're also bad for the charity or ministry leader.

Suppose a leader embraces charitable asceticism. Ideal donors are those who give until it hurts and then give some more. Their suffering – through extreme giving – demonstrates their internal commitment to the cause.

Now consider this question:

In this worldview, what donor experience is the organization trying to deliver?

The answer is, at best, nothing. Good donors don't need donor experiences. The charity can respond to their giving with silence. It can completely ignore their giving. In fact, it's perfectly acceptable for their giving to be painful. (That makes it even "more sacrificial.")

Now, suppose we replace charitable asceticism with Paul's instructions. Giving is supposed to be "party-time" enjoyable. Major gift fundraising is showing donors how to enjoy their wealth. This enjoyment comes from the donor doing good. The donor becomes rich in good works. The donor becomes generous. He shares with a mutual fellowship community.

In this approach, the goal isn't just to get money. The goal is to get cheerful, "hilariously" joyful [*hilaron*] giving. (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving is supposed to be fun. It's supposed to be so much fun that it's even happier [*makarion*] than receiving a gift. (Acts 20:35).

Now consider the same question:

In this worldview, what donor experience is the organization trying to deliver?

This time, the answer is different. Is it OK to respond to giving with silence? No. Will that make the donors feel that they have done good? No. Will the donors feel that they have become rich in good works? Of course not. They won't have any idea what good works, if any, they accomplished with their giving.

Is it OK if the donors feel no sense of fellowship community with other charity donors, employees, or beneficiaries? Not really. If so, they won't be sharing [*koinōnikous*] with a fellowship community [*koinōnia*].

Is it OK if no one confirms to the donors that they're being generous? That they're doing good? That they're becoming rich in good works? No. That's not OK. That's not delivering the donor experience described in scripture.

Charitable asceticism can be attractive to ministry leaders. It's attractive because it's easy. It lets them off the hook. It means they have no responsibility to deliver any kind of donor experience.

Biblical fundraising is the opposite. It describes a specific donor experience. A charity can choose to offer – and deliver – that donor experience. Or it can choose to ignore the donor.

The charitable asceticism path feels easy for the charity leader. The Biblical fundraising path feels like hard work. And it is. It's so much work that it's actually a ministry of its own!

The Biblical path takes effort. But it works. Its fruits are enormous. It results in an overflowing abundance of every



kind, in every way, and at all times.<sup>50</sup> It results in an abundance for the donor, the fundraiser, and the organization.

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<sup>50</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:8

## Chapter 8

### Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!

- *Biblical fundraising focuses on the donor’s wealth plans.*
- *Ordinary fundraising focuses only on the charity’s plans.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, “Instruct those who are **rich in this present world** not to be conceited or to set their hope **on the uncertainty of riches**, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### WEALTH: THE TIME TO DECIDE IS NOW!

#### *In the now time*

Now is the time! This passage immediately emphasizes time. This may not be as obvious in English translations. These often begin with “instruct” or “command.” The Greek does not. Instead, it begins with “To the rich in the now time.” The phrase rendered “in this present world” is “*en to nyn aiōni*.” Literally, this is “in the now time.” It is in [*en*] the [*to*] now [*nyn*] time [*aiōni*].

Emphasizing “in the now time” is natural for a practicing fundraiser. The goal is to get the donor to act. There’s no more

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

universal fundraising message than

“Now is the time!”

Paul was a practicing fundraiser. Biblical scholars almost never are.<sup>2</sup> When they read “in the now time,” they don’t think of a fundraising appeal. They think of eschatology.

In eschatology, “in the now time” would reference “in this present world.” The “now” age contrasts with the age to come.

This is a valid translation. But it’s not the only one. Interesting evidence supports another. This is the fundraiser’s usage. It implies, “Right now is the opportune time to act.”

### ***In the now time: aiōn***

The simple meaning is “time.” For example, the Common English Bible begins the sentence with

“Tell people who are rich at this time” (1 Timothy 6:17a).

So, how do we get to a translation of “world”? The Greek word is *aiōn*. It means a space of time or an age. For a Christian, the current age contrasts with the age to come. In this way, the “now time” can also reference “this present world.”

*Aiōn* stands somewhere between two other Greek words: *kosmos* and *kairōs*. *Kosmos* is a physical reference to “the

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<sup>2</sup> Professor Stephan Joubert makes a parallel point regarding Paul’s major fundraising project, the collection for the poor in the Jerusalem church, explaining, “To a large extent, Paul and other parties involved in the collection project are portrayed as a group of intellectuals who developed complex cognitive interpretations in service of some higher theological ideals. The fact that they were people of flesh and blood, who formulated solutions to specific problems they faced within the confines and constraints of their own life-world(s), has largely been ignored.” [Joubert, S. (2000). *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy, and theological reflection in Paul’s collection*. Wipf & Stock. p. 4.]

world.” It’s a place. *Aiōn* is different. Professor Ronald Ward explains,

“When we speak of the world (*aiōn*) our emphasis is on time;”<sup>3</sup>

*Aiōn* is different than *kosmos*. *Aiōn* is a space of time, not a place. But how long is this space of time? When fundraising references time, it’s usually short. The idea is often

- Now is the time!
- Now is the time to act!
- Now is the opportune moment!

In Greek, this “fundraising” meaning is *kairōs*. It means the “opportune time.” It means “the suitable time.” It means “the right moment.” The word’s origin references things “coming to a head.” (*Kara* means “head.”)

Tell a fundraiser to use the phrase “in the now time,” and he’ll use it more in the sense of *kairōs*. Tell a theologian to use it, and he’ll use it more in the sense of *kosmos*. So, who’s right?

In this epistle, Paul gives practical instructions for how to manage the church. This passage gives practical instructions for fundraising. It describes the ministry of major gift fundraising. Using the phrase “in the now time” the way a fundraiser would use it fits the context. Using *aiōn* more as *kairōs* than *kosmos* fits.

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<sup>3</sup> He continues, “When we speak of the world (*aiōn*) our emphasis is on time; ‘the world’ in the Fourth Gospel (*kosmos*) implies hostility to God. The time element prepares the way for the later reference to the uncertainty of riches.” [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 121.]

But there's another reason. And it's much more important. The word in scripture may actually be *kairōs* and not *aiōn*.

### ***In the now time: It's kairōs not aiōn***

The oldest New Testament manuscripts are called the papyri. Many date from as early as the 200's A.D. These come from scrolls. They contain segments from the New Testament.

However, these papyri do not include the entire New Testament. For example, only one fragment survives from 1 Timothy. It contains only 1 Timothy 3:13-4:8. Thus, the earliest evidence of our passage is not in the papyri. Instead, it's found in the oldest complete copy of the New Testament. This is the Codex Sinaiticus. It dates to the A.D. 300's.

In the Codex Sinaiticus, there's a surprise. 1 Timothy 6:17 doesn't read "*en to nyn aiōni*." It reads "*en to nyn kairō*." The word is not *aiōni* – a space of time. The word is *kairō* – the opportune moment.

So, how did our modern version come to read *aiōni* instead of *kairō*? We can track this change. The Codex Sinaiticus Project labels *kairō* as the original text.<sup>4</sup> *Aiōni* comes from a revision by "Ca." This was reviser "a" in the "C" group. The "C" group references,

"correctors who revised the manuscript rather extensively between the fifth and seventh centuries."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This is denoted by "\*" in The Codex Sinaiticus Project's transcription display option.  
<https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=47&chapter=6&lid=en&side=r&verse=17&zoomSlider=0>

<sup>5</sup> The Codex Sinaiticus Project. (nd). *The transcription*.  
[https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/project/transcription\\_detailed.aspx](https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/project/transcription_detailed.aspx)

More to the point, scholars,

“give a more specific judgement concerning the Ca corrector in particular, dating him to the sixth century.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, this *aiōni* substitution was made about two centuries after the original text.

Below is an image of our passage in the Codex Sinaiticus. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is the indented section beginning with “TOI”. (The text is all capital letters with no spaces between words.)

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<sup>6</sup> “Indeed, Milne and Skeat were themselves hesitant to ascribe a definitive date to the C-class corrections, allowing for some leeway anywhere between the fifth- and seventh-century dates. fn10. Later on, Skeat would give a more specific judgement concerning the Ca corrector in particular, dating him to the sixth century. fn11. More recently still, Amy C. Myshrall’s palaeographical analysis led her to similar conclusions. fn12.”

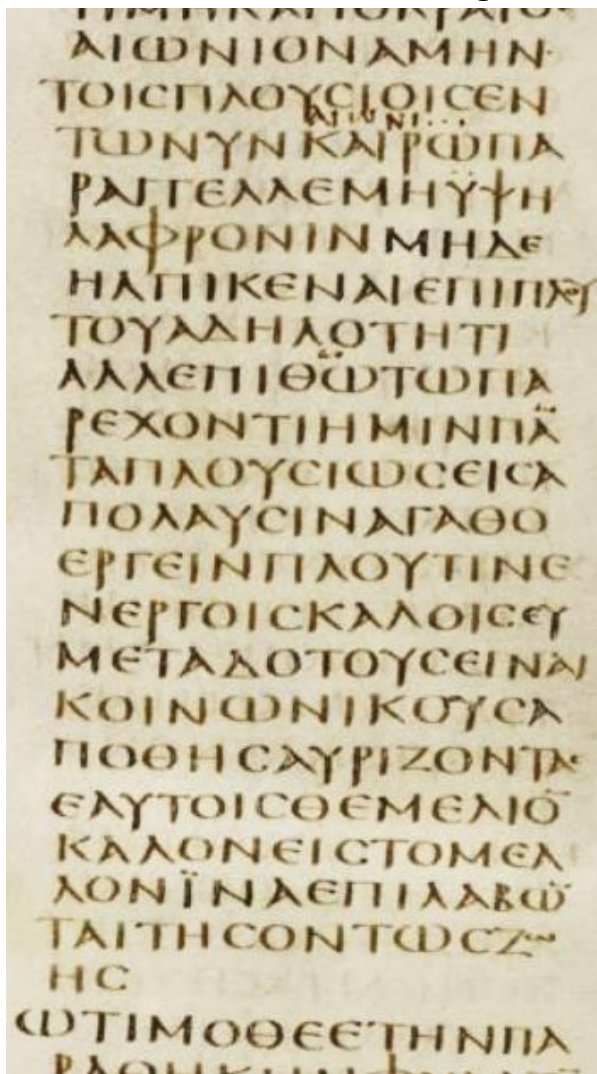
fn10. Milne and Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors*, 65.

fn11. T.C. Skeat, “The Codex Sinaiticus, The Codex Vaticanus and Constantine,” in *Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat* (Introduced and edited by J. K. Elliott; NovTSup 113; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 200.

fn12. Cf. A.C. Myshrall, “Codex Sinaiticus, its Correctors, and the Caesarean Text of the Gospels” (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2005), 91: “The date suggested by Milne and Skeat as between the 5th and 7th centuries can thus be seen as reasonable, although I would tend to place Ca towards the first half of this period.”

[Malik, P. (2015). The corrections of Codex Sinaiticus and the textual transmission of revelation: Josef Schmid revisited. *New Testament Studies*, 61(4), 595-614. p. 4.]

Notice the insertion of “αιωνι” above the original “ΚΑΙΡΩ.”



Describing someone as “rich at this opportune moment [*kairō*]” is a great fundraising phrase. It’s practical. It’s positive. It’s motivational. It spurs action.

<sup>7</sup> The Codex Sinaiticus Project. (nd). *1 Timothy, 6:9 - 6:21 / 2 Timothy, 1:1 - 1:15* library: BL folio: 295b scribe: A. <https://codexsinaiticus.org/en/manuscript.aspx?book=47&chapter=6&lid=en&side=r&verse=17&zoomSlider=0>

However, most theologians don't know fundraising. They know eschatology. Using *aiōni*, “rich in this present world,” matches that background. It makes the passage more about two-world theology. It makes it less about practical fundraising.

This orientation also matches another change. In the original text, the donor gets to take hold of “*ontōs zōēs*.” This is

- “that which is truly life”<sup>8</sup>
- “that which is life indeed”<sup>9</sup>
- “that which is really life”<sup>10</sup>

However, a few later texts also changed this phrase.<sup>11</sup> The term “*ontōs zōēs*” became “*aiōniou zōēs* [eternal life].” Or, in some cases, it became “*aiōniou ontōs zōēs* [eternal life indeed].”<sup>12</sup>

That change reflects a similar bias. It, too, makes the passage more about two-age eschatology.<sup>13</sup> And it makes it less

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<sup>8</sup> New American Standard Bible; English Standard Version; Berean Standard Bible; Literal Standard Version; New Heart English Bible

<sup>9</sup> NASB 1995; NASB 1977; Legacy Standard Bible

<sup>10</sup> Worrell New Testament

<sup>11</sup> For a chart outlining the history of this text variation, see Price, J. D. (2006). *King James onlyism: A new sect*. James D. Price Publisher. Appendix C, Figure C.15, p. 473.

<sup>12</sup> Porter, S. E. (2023). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. Baker Academic. *Additional notes*, 1 Timothy 6:19.

<sup>13</sup> In a potential parallel, Professor John Bullard explains in his dissertation on humor in the Biblical texts, “it [humor] has been subordinated and, in some cases, distorted in the process of textual transmission and redaction in order to serve purposes of utmost seriousness... The processes of editing and expunging the elements of humor have been executed in the service of clarifying and often enhancing the loftier theological messages of biblical authors.” [Bullard, J. M. (1962). *Biblical humor: Its nature and function* (Doctoral dissertation). Yale University. Abstract page.]

The later modifications of these two words from 1 Timothy 6:17-19 match this idea. They move the passage away from practical advice on fundraising among the rich towards a message of two-world eschatology. This certainly fits with the pattern of “enhancing the loftier theological messages.”



about right now. These changes don't make the passage wrong. (Other scriptures confirm these ideas about eschatology.) But it does make the passage different. And it might miss the original point.

### ***In the now time: It's kairōs and aiōn***

So, is *kairōs* the original word from scripture? It certainly might be.<sup>14</sup> But don't worry. You don't have to decide.

Like most textual variants in scripture, it doesn't really matter which option you choose. It doesn't matter because other scriptures independently support both ideas. A word variation doesn't make scripture unreliable. It just creates alternate paths to get to the same place.

That's certainly true in this case. The earliest text reads "*en to nyn kairō*." It was later replaced with "*en to nyn aiōni*." I think "*en to nyn kairō*" is correct.

But suppose I'm wrong. Have I led you into rank heresy? No. In fact, we can still use "*en to nyn kairō*." Why? Because Paul used it, and not just in our passage. He used it in his actual fundraising appeal letter. In 2 Corinthians 8:14, he writes,

"at this present time [*en to nyn kairō*] your abundance will serve as assistance for their need,"

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<sup>14</sup> The work of copying, correcting, and – in modern days – translating this passage has largely excluded those who, like Paul, were practicing fundraisers. A transformation of this passage, then and now, into a lesson on eschatology fits the natural inclinations of those tasked with such textual work. However, when the passage is understood in the more practical sense – instructions to Timothy on how to encourage contributions by the wealthy – then the perspective of experienced major gift fundraisers becomes more relevant. Describing prospective donors as rich "at this opportune moment" is more like practical sales or fundraising language. Describing them as rich "in this present world" tends more towards eschatology.

Paul references the donors' wealth – their “abundance” – using “*en to nyn kairō*.” He might also do this in 1 Timothy 6:17. I think he does. But he definitely does this in 2 Corinthians 8:14. Either way, referencing the donor's wealth with “*en to nyn kairō*” is scriptural. It's a scriptural approach to fundraising.

In each case, the person is rich (or has abundance) “at this opportune moment [*kairō*].” This is an opportune moment to put his wealth to work. He can use it,

- to do good [*agatho-ergein*]
- to be rich in good works [*ergois kalois*]

The wealthy person uses his wealth to do work: *ergon*. He does intrinsically-good [*agathos*] work: *agatho-ergein*. He does visibly-good [*kalos*] works: *ergois kalois*.

Paul repeats this idea in Galatians:

“Let's not become discouraged in doing good [*kalon*], for in due time we will reap, if we do not become weary. So then, while we have opportunity [*kairōn*], let's do good [*ergazōmetha to agathon*] to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” (Galatians 6:9-10).

The ideas and the words match.<sup>15</sup>

- In Galatians 6:10, we have an opportunity [*kairōn*]. This matches 1 Timothy 6:17, where rich Christians are rich at this opportune moment [*en to nyn kairō*].

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<sup>15</sup> Galatians 6:9, “doing good” uses the phrase “*kalon poiountes*.” Collins points out of *agathoergein* that, “It is to be used for doing good (*agatho-ergein*; see Acts 14:17). The term is essentially synonymous with *agatho-poiain*, also ‘to do good,’” Collins, R. F. (2002). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 171.

- In Galatians 6:10, we use it to “work good” [*ergazōmetha to agathon*]. This matches 1 Timothy 6:18, where we use it “to do good work” [*agatho-ergein*].
- In Galatians 6:9, we also use it in doing beautiful “good” [*kalon*]. This, too, matches 1 Timothy 6:18, where we use it to become rich in beautiful “good works” [*ergois kalois*].

We can look at 1 Timothy 6:17-18 [*Codex Sinaiticus*], 2 Corinthians 8:14, or Galatians 6:9-10. The message is the same. Each motivates good works by pointing to *kairō*. Each points to “this opportune moment.” This idea is scriptural. Now that we know it’s scriptural, let’s consider why it’s important.

### ***Right now at this opportune time!***

Using “*en to nyn kairō*” says something about the donor’s wealth. That wealth is temporary. Yes, the donors are rich. But they’re rich only “right now.”<sup>16</sup>

It also says something about the giving opportunity. The donors aren’t just wealthy “right now.” They’re wealthy right now “at this opportune moment.” This isn’t just routine giving. It’s a special opportunity to make an impact.<sup>17</sup>

This same notion arises in Paul’s fundraising appeal letter. Paul references the donor’s “opportune moment” of

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<sup>16</sup> The Common English Bible translates this as “people who are rich at this time”.

<sup>17</sup> The major gift of an asset to do good at an opportune moment is different from standard almsgiving. Notice the contrast in these gift types in Mark 14:5-7 where Mary made a major gift of an asset at an opportune moment. “‘For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed [*kalon ergon ērgasato*] for Me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good to them; but you do not always have Me.’”

abundance in 2 Corinthians 8:14. Just before this, he writes,

“I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage [*sympherei*]” (2 Corinthians 8:10a).

This benefit or profit [*sympherei*] results from a bringing together of various circumstances. Professor Marvin Vincent describes this word as

“From *syn* together, and *phērō* to bear or bring. The underlying idea of the word is concurrence of circumstances.”<sup>18</sup>

One lexicon defines the word as

“properly, combine in a way that brings a profit (gain), especially by a ‘concurrence of circumstances’ that results in benefit or advancement.”<sup>19</sup>

Paul’s message is consistent. The donors have the chance to profit, right now, because of a “concurrence of circumstances.” (2 Corinthians 8:10). They are, at this instant, in an “opportune moment” of abundance. (2 Corinthians 8:14). This opportunity is urgent: the time is now! Our passage delivers this same message.

Those with wealth have been given a window to make a choice. That window can close soon. Their wealth is unreliable. It might disappear. Their life is unreliable. They might disappear.

They have an opportunity right now “to do good, to be rich in good works.” That chance is here today. But that chance

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<sup>18</sup> Vincent, M. R. (1887/2001). *Vincent’s word studies in the New Testament. Vol II. The Writings of John*. Logos Research Systems.

<sup>19</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).

may quickly pass. They've been placed in a special position at an opportune moment. As Mordecai explains to Esther,

“And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

They're not just wealthy. They're wealthy right now, at this opportune moment! They're wealthy “*en to nyn kairō*.”

That's the good news. The bad news? This opportune moment can suddenly disappear.

PART II  
WEALTH COMES WITH A TIMER

(Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!)

***“No” is not the enemy***

Large gifts are gifts of wealth, not disposable income. Generating these gifts starts with a question:

“What are you going to do with your wealth?”

Often, people think that the enemy in fundraising is a “no.” It’s not. A “no” can be a great starting point. It can lead to conversations about what’s missing. Was it the project? The organization? The amount? Is there a financial barrier? Is it just the wrong time?

These conversations start with a “no.” But they can lead to a gift. They can help identify – and perhaps overcome – the barrier to generosity.

The fundraiser’s first goal is not to get a yes. It’s to force a decision. Getting the donor to decide is powerful. It’s powerful, even if the answer is “no.”

A compelling challenge can make a lasting impact. A “no” today can become a “yes” tomorrow. The donor’s circumstances can change. He sells a business. He receives an inheritance. His children become financially independent. He is reminded of his own mortality. Then, the compelling challenge can come to mind again.

The biggest barrier to generosity is not “no.” It’s avoidance. Avoiding the giving decision can be attractive. It doesn’t have the negative feelings of saying “no.” And it’s free. It doesn’t cost anything. It’s easy. It’s just doing nothing. It’s not “yes” or “no.” It doesn’t require thought or judgment.

The fundraiser must intervene to force a choice. Otherwise, the donor decides poorly by not deciding at all.

### ***Why now?***

“What are you going to do with your wealth?” This is the key question of our passage. Often, wealthy people never decide. They accumulate wealth without an end point in mind. Accumulation is simply a habit. Being a frugal saver can be more of a personality than a plan. They just continue to accumulate. At some point, they accumulate more than they will likely consume during life. They become rich.

Paul’s message interrupts this habitual accumulation. It attacks this inertia. It forces an intentional decision. It asks,

“Now what? What are you going to do with your wealth?”

The easiest response is not to decide. It’s simply to avoid or postpone the decision. It’s the response of,

“Why now?”

“Why must I make wealth plans today?”

“Why must I decide what to do with my wealth right now?”

### ***Now is the time because wealth holding is temporary***

Why now? Why must the rich person decide what to do with his wealth? Paul gives three reasons. Each explains why

the time to decide is now. Each says why a delay is risky. He argues,

1. You can't take it with you when you die.
2. You're rich, but only right now at this critical moment.
3. Your wealth is uncertain (disappearing).

Paul's message interrupts habitual wealth accumulation. It forces a decision. It asks,

“What are you going to do with your disappearing wealth?”

It begins this interruption with ... estate planning. A few sentences before, Paul mentions,

“For we have brought nothing into the world [*kosmon*], so we cannot take anything out of it, either.”<sup>1</sup> (1 Timothy 6:7).

The message is this:

You're holding wealth right now. But just for the moment. You can't keep holding it. That's not an option. You can't take it with you.

Facing this reality forces a decision. It forces a decision about wealth. It forces an answer to the question,

“So, now what? What are you going to do with your disappearing wealth?”

Wealth holding is temporary. (1 Timothy 6:7). Paul emphasizes this again in verse 17. The donor is rich. But they are rich only “in the now time.” (1 Timothy 6:17b). This status of being rich is temporary.

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<sup>1</sup> The Codex Sinaiticus has a textual addition of “visible” world, *kosmon dhlon*, also attributed to “ca,” which has not been retained in modern Greek texts. The Codex Sinaiticus Project. (nd). *1 Timothy, 4:16 - 6:9 library: BL folio: 295 scribe: A*



Wealth holding is temporary. Paul then emphasizes this a third time. The rich Christians have not set their hope on “the uncertainty of wealth.” (1 Timothy 6:17c).

In 387 A.D., John Chrysostom (archbishop of Constantinople) explained it this way,

“For this reason he calls them rich ‘in the present world,’ to teach you that along with the present life, worldly wealth is annihilated. It goes no further, neither does it change its place with its migrating possessors, but it often leaves them before their end; which he shows by saying, ‘Neither trust in uncertain riches;’”<sup>2</sup>

One commentator summarizes Paul’s argument,

“First, the duration of life itself, even for a day is uncertain, and wealth cannot be possessed after death. Second, the shifting circumstances of life, such as commercial depressions and war make wealth uncertain.”<sup>3</sup>

Wealth holding comes with a hidden timer. It’s like a kitchen timer. That timer will go off. We just don’t know when. The window of opportunity is right now. That chance may disappear at any moment. What are you going to do with your wealth? The time to decide is now!

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<sup>2</sup> He continues, “for nothing is so faithless as wealth; of which I have often said, and will not cease to say, that it is a runaway, thankless servant, having no fidelity; and should you throw over him ten thousand chains, he will make off dragging his chains after him.” [Chrysostom, J. (1889). Concerning the statutes, Homily 2.13. In P. Schaff (Ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 9* (W.R.W. Stephens, Trans.). Christian Literature Publishing Co. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/190102.htm> ]

<sup>3</sup> Kent, H. A. (1958). *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus*. Moody Press. p. 207

## ***God blesses with disappearing manna***

2 Corinthians 8 & 9 is Paul's fundraising appeal letter.<sup>4</sup> In the middle of this letter, he talks about manna. He writes,

“as it is written, ‘The one who had gathered much did not have too much, and the one who had gathered little did not have too little.’” (2 Corinthians 8:15).

Paul is reminding his audience of manna. He's quoting Exodus 16:18. They would have known the next words. Exodus continues,

“everyone gathered as much as he would eat. Moses said to them, ‘No one is to leave any of it until morning.’ But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank; and Moses was angry with them. They gathered it morning by morning, everyone as much as he would eat; but when the sun became hot, it would melt.” (Exodus 16:18b-21).

God blessed them with food to enjoy. But He blessed them with disappearing food. It melted. Wealth holding behaves the same way. It disappears. It will disappear at the end of life and often before.

Hoarding manna was possible. But it violated God's intentions. And it was a bad idea. Hoarded manna “bred

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<sup>4</sup> “The two letters of Paul to the Christians in Corinth (2 Corinthians 8 and 9) seem to be the first fund-raising letters in western history.” [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul's style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame]. Mellen Research University Press. p. 369.]

worms and stank.”<sup>5</sup> These Hebrew words also describe death.<sup>6</sup> Going to sleep with hoarded manna turned out poorly. Dying with hoarded wealth often does, too. It can cause family division. It can fuel heirs’ self-destructive bingeing. It can be used to oppose the owner’s values.

God can bless with wealth. But it’s the same blessing as manna. It’s disappearing. And hoarding it does not end well.

### ***A message for the fundraiser’s ministry***

Wealth holding is temporary. This reminder is an important part of the fundraising message. It’s important for the donor. But it also has another implication. This second meaning is not for the donor. It’s for the fundraiser.

It’s natural to be hesitant about approaching the rich. We can have feelings of trepidation. The rich aren’t like me! They’re different!

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<sup>5</sup> There is a similarity with Jesus’s statement, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth [*sēs*] and rust [*brōsis*] destroy, and where thieves break in a steal.” (Matthew 6:19). *Brōsis* is eating, also corrosion. Thus, also rendered as “moths eat them” (NLT) or moths “consume” (ASV, ERV, NRSV). Strong’s notes the Greek word for moth [*sēs*] is of Hebrew origin from the word *sas* [5580], which is used only in Isaiah 51:8 and variously translated as moth, worm, or grub. It is most commonly translated as worm to differentiate it from the second reference to moth in the same verse using the more common *ash* [6211]. Note also that this word for rust as eating is not the same word used in James 5:3, “Your gold and silver have rusted [*katiōtai*] and their rust [*ios*] will be a witness against you” *Katiōtai*: cankered, corroded, rusted; *ios*: poison, rust.

<sup>6</sup> “Worms [*tō-w-lā-’īm*]” in Exodus 16:20 matches Isaiah 14:11, “Your pride and the music of your harps Have been brought down to Sheol; Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you And worms [*tō-w-lē-’āh.*] are your covering,” and Isaiah 66:24, “And they shall go forth and look Upon the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm [*tō-w-la-’tām*] does not die, And their fire is not quenched.”; “Stank [*way-yīb-’aš;*]” in Exodus 16:20 matches Ecclesiastes 10:1, “Dead flies putrefy [*yab-’iš*] the perfumer’s ointment, And cause it to give off a foul odor [*yab-bī-a’*]; So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.” (NKJV).

These feelings of separation calm down when we realize how temporary these differences are. Yes, we're talking to people who are rich. But we're talking to those who are rich only "right now" (in the now time). They may not have been rich yesterday. They may not be rich tomorrow. These differences are only momentary.

This reminder helps the fundraiser to be comfortable approaching the rich. It opens the door for a "close-beside" ministry relationship. These people are like us. Any differences are transitory.

We don't need to stand far off. We don't need to look way up. We can come alongside. (This is the *para* part of the direction to *para-angelle*.) We can come alongside with an authorized message. (This is the *angelle* part of the direction to *para-angelle*.) That message begins with,

"Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth."



PART III  
WEALTH IS NOT FOR HIDING

(Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!)

***Message overview***

Paul gives Timothy a message. It's a fundraising message for wealthy Christians. That message begins with these ideas:

1. Now is the time to decide what to do with your wealth.  
Why? Because
  - a. You can't take it with you when you die.
  - b. You're rich, but only right now at this critical moment.
  - c. Your wealth is uncertain (disappearing).
2. When you decide, you have two options:
  - a. Wrong choice: Bury your wealth to be lost by misfortune or death
  - b. Right choice: Enjoy your wealth by putting it to work (doing good, being rich in good works, being a generous sharer with your fellowship community)

The message affirms that the donor is the kind of person who will make the right choice. They will be a generous sharer [*koinōnikous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. Why? Because they're not conceited or high-minded. They don't separate themselves from the fellowship community.

Also, they have not set their hope on wealth. More specifically, they have not set their hope on "the uncertainty of

wealth.” The word translated as “uncertainty” has a double meaning. Its two meanings make two arguments:

1. Your wealth is unreliable. (You haven’t placed your hope in the uncertainty of wealth.)
2. Your wealth is not for hiding. (You haven’t placed your hope in the hiddenness of wealth.)

### ***Adēlotēs: Uncertain-disappearing-hidden***

The rich Christian is the kind of person who shares generously. One reason is that they have not placed their hope in the “uncertainty” [*adēlotēti*] of wealth. This word has a specific set of meanings. These range from “uncertainty” to “disappearing” to “hiddenness.” Definitions include:

- “the quality of being unseen (of disappearing), indefiniteness, uncertainty”
- “uncertainty (indefinite, unperceived)”<sup>1</sup>
- “uncertainty, obscurity”<sup>2</sup>

These meanings are connected. If something is subject to disappearing, it’s not certain. Hiding something will also cause it to disappear. Hiding makes its existence become uncertain. As one commentator notes, *adēlos*

“is equivalent to ‘not manifest, hidden,’ is properly ‘hiddenness,’ then ‘uncertainty.’”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).

<sup>2</sup> Luschign, C. A. E., & Mitchell, D. (2007). *An introduction to Ancient Greek: A literary approach*, (2nd Edition). Hackett Publishing. p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> Huther, J. E. (1885). *Critical and exegetical hand-book to the epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Vol. 9). (D. Hunter, Trans.). Funk & Wagnalls. p. 195.

## **Adēlotēs: New Testament examples**

The meaning of *adēlotēs* ranges across uncertain, disappearing, and hidden. We can see these multiple meanings in the New Testament. The noun form of *adēlotēs* isn't used elsewhere. However, both the adjective and adverb forms are.<sup>4</sup>

Strong's dictionary defines the adjective form [*adēlos*] as hidden, indistinct, or uncertain.<sup>5</sup> Luke uses this adjective form:

“Woe to you! For you are like unseen [*adēla*] tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.” (Luke 11:44). (The 1995 NASB renders this as “concealed [*adēla*] tombs”.)

1 Corinthians 14:8 uses the same word in a different sense:

“For if the trumpet produces an indistinct [*adēlon*] sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”

Thus, in the New Testament, we see the multiple senses of this word. It can mean concealed, unseen, indistinct, or uncertain.

## **So, which is it?**

We have a word with more than one English translation. The immediate question becomes, “So which is it?” In other words, “Which one is the right one?” Is Paul referencing the uncertainty of wealth? Or is he referencing the hiddenness of wealth?

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:26 uses the adverb form. The New American Standard Bible renders it, “Therefore I run in such a way as not to run aimlessly [*adēlōs*];” Strong's defines this as “uncertainly.” [Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 8.]

<sup>5</sup> Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 8



The answer is both. The word choice is intentional. Paul could have used a word that referenced “uncertainty” but not “hiddenness.” He didn’t. He could have used one that referenced “hiddenness” but not “uncertainty.” He didn’t. Instead, he used a word that can mean both things.

I think Paul intentionally references both notions. But I have good news. You don’t have to agree with me. Once again, the Bible gives multiple ways to get to the same place.

Suppose you feel this references only the hiddenness of wealth. That’s fine. I can still talk about not relying on the uncertainty of wealth. Paul makes this point immediately before the *adēlotēs* phrase. He reminds us that those who are rich are rich only “in the now time.” (1 Timothy 6:17). He reminds us that we cannot take it with us when we die. (1 Timothy 6:7). And of course, this notion of wealth being uncertain arises in many other Bible passages.<sup>6</sup>

Or suppose you feel this references only the uncertainty of wealth. That’s fine, too. I can still talk about not relying on the hiddenness of wealth. Jesus’s Parable of the Talents does this. It tells us what happens when we rely on hiding wealth. It shows the outcome when, out of fear, we bury wealth in the ground. His Parable of the Minas shows what happens when we hide it away in a napkin.

### ***Why both?***

Regardless of your preferred translation, both messages are true. Even without this passage, we get both ideas elsewhere. We shouldn’t put our hope in the uncertainty of

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<sup>6</sup> E.g., Psalm 52:7; Psalm 62:10; Proverbs 23:4-5; Ecclesiastes 5:8-20; Jer 9:23; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 12:13-21.

wealth. Also, we shouldn't put our hope in the hiddenness of wealth.

This passage says both things. I think it's intentional. It intentionally references both meanings. The word itself has both meanings. But there's another reason. This passage likely references a well-known stage scene by Menander.<sup>7</sup> (Paul quotes Menander elsewhere, too.<sup>8</sup>) In this famous scene, a son convinces his rich father to act generously. His plea opens with

“You talk of wealth, a thing on which you can't rely  
[*avēvaiou* - uncertain].”

And closes with

“Far better, father, is a friend you see  
Than hidden [*aphanēs* - hidden] treasure [*ploutos*]  
buried underground.”<sup>9</sup>

Paul doesn't use *avēvaiou*, as in the opening line. This would mean “uncertain” but not “hidden.” He doesn't use *aphanēs*, as in the closing line. This would mean “hidden” but not “uncertain.” Instead, he uses a word that can mean both things. For Paul's original readers, the allusion to this famous scene would likely have brought both ideas to mind.

### ***The “hidden” meaning of wealth***

Usually, the English word here is “uncertainty.” This is the typical approach in translations and commentaries. This is a safe and reasonable translation. The Bible is clear that wealth

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<sup>7</sup> For references and an extended discussion of this argument, see Chapter 13-III, “A literary allusion: How Menander's *Dyskolos* adds meaning.”

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:33 is a quote from Menander's play *Thais*.

<sup>9</sup> Blame, M. (2001). *Menander: The plays and fragments*. Oxford University Press. p. 35.

is indeed uncertain. As Bill Mounce explains,

“The futility of setting one’s hope on riches is a common theme throughout the Bible (Pss 52:7; 62:10; Prov 23:4-5, Eccl 5:8-20; Jer 9:23; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 12:13-21).”<sup>10</sup>

This meaning works. It creates a contrast. Wealth is uncertain, but God is not. Becoming “rich in good works” is permanent. Even a financial disaster won’t change it. The generous person stores up “the treasure of a good foundation for the future.” He trades an uncertain future for a certain one. Thus, translating *adēlotēti* as the “uncertainty” of wealth fits.

However, the additional meaning of the “hiddenness” of wealth is also useful. One translation renders the phrase as

“vest hope not in the hiddenness of riches”.<sup>11</sup>

Professor David Bentley Hart notes of this translation,

“(adēlotēti): the common translation of (adēlotēs) is ‘uncertainty,’ but principally in the sense of ‘obscurity,’ ‘unclarity’; literally, it means ‘what is not manifest’ or ‘not evident.’ Here I suspect it means simply the hiddenness of riches stored away in private possession.”<sup>12</sup>

Professor Richard Lenski explains,

“On etymological grounds it has been understood in the sense of ... not to put their hope on the hiddenness of

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<sup>10</sup> Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary volume 46: Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 366; See also “One who trusts in his riches will fall, But the righteous will flourish like the green leaf.” (Proverbs 11:28)

<sup>11</sup> Hart, D. B. (2017). *The New Testament: A translation*. Yale University Press. p. 422.

<sup>12</sup> Hart, D. B. (2017). *The New Testament: A translation*. Yale University Press. p. 422.

their riches, on having their riches well hidden;”<sup>13</sup>

A commentary from 1874 argues for translating this exclusively as the “hiddenness” of wealth. It explains that using “uncertainty” doesn’t make sense. Why not? Because uncertainty cannot be a reason for placing one’s hope in something. Using “uncertainty” would mean that

“the insecurity of wealth would appear as a reason for which one would like to put his hope in it, rather than being a reason not to.”<sup>14</sup>

No one needs to be warned not to trust in insecurity. However, having secret reserves is naturally attractive. In other words,

“what a rich man should not trust in must be that he has his wealth well-hidden and that it remains unnoticed.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the instruction here is about looking on one’s wealth

“not in such a way that he thinks himself safe because he does not let it be noticed.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “On etymological grounds it has been understood in the sense of: *Unbemertheit* [Unnoticedness], *Verborgenheit* [Concealment]: not to put their hope on the hiddenness of their riches, on having their riches well hidden;” [Lenski, R. C. H. (1946). *Interpretation of St Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Augsburg Fortress. p. 727.]

<sup>14</sup> von Hofmann, J. C. K. (1874). *Die Briefe Pauli an Titus und Timotheus*, vol. 6 of *Die Heilige Schrift Neuen Testaments*, Nördlingen: Beck. p. 202. Translation by Joe Jordan from the German, “Wie dort die Neuheit das Leben, in dem wir wandeln sollen, zu dem macht, in welchem gewandelt sein will, so würde hier die Unsicherheit des Reichtums als ein Grund erscheinen, um dessentwillen Einer etwa seine Hoffnung auf ihn setzen möchte, statt dass sie vielmehr ein Grund wäre, sie nicht auf ihn zu setzen.”

<sup>15</sup> von Hofmann, J. C. K. (1874). *Die Briefe Pauli an Titus und Timotheus*, vol. 6 of *Die Heilige Schrift Neuen Testaments*, Nördlingen: Beck. p. 202. Translation by Joe Jordan from the German, “und worauf ein Reicher sich nicht verlassen soll, muss diess sein, dass er seinen Reichtum gut geborgen hat und ihn nicht merken lässt.”

<sup>16</sup> von Hofmann, J. C. K. (1874). *Die Briefe Pauli an Titus und Timotheus*, vol. 6 of *Die Heilige Schrift Neuen Testaments*, Nördlingen: Beck. p. 202. Translation from the German “Auf die Abmahnung, wie der Reiche seines Reichtums nicht froh sein soll, nicht so, dass er stolz darauf ist und über die Anderen hinwegsieht, und nicht

Everyone likes the idea of having secret reserves. Hidden wealth is attractive. The more “hidden” the better. Hidden wealth is protected wealth. It’s protected from thieves, lawsuits, divorce, and taxes. Such hidden wealth is attractive. It’s easy to place our hope in it. The generous Christian has rejected this lure.

### ***Hidden wealth in scripture***

Paul’s message is for rich Christians. It’s for those inside the church. For this audience, hidden wealth has a special meaning. They know Jesus’s parables. They know someone who put his hope in the hiddenness of wealth. They know the Parable of the Talents.

For the reader in Paul’s time, this allusion may have been even more blunt. As mentioned, our passage matches Menander’s well-known plea for generosity. That appeal ends with

“Far better, father, is a friend you see  
Than hidden treasure buried underground.”

In the Parable of the Talents, a servant was entrusted with a huge sum of money. He was given 75 to 100 pounds (a talent) of gold, silver, or money. What did he do with it? Jesus says,

“But he who received the one talent went away and dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.”  
(Matthew 25:18).

Why did he do this? Because he was afraid. When the

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so, dass er sich deshalb sicher dünkt, weil er ihn nicht merken lässt, folgt die Ermahnung zu ...”

master returned, the servant said,

“And I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground.” (Matthew 25:25).

What did the servant trust in? He trusted in the hiddenness of his wealth. He concealed it. He protected it. He didn't spend it in wild living. He was sober. He was responsible. And he was afraid. He was afraid of losing the wealth.

But, as Paul's audience would have known, burying wealth didn't end well. The servant trusted in the hiddenness of his wealth. But he lost everything. His temporary wealth was taken from him. Worse, he was thrown

“into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:30).

The servant had wealth. He had a lot of it. But it was wealth with a timer. It had a hidden expiration date.<sup>17</sup> He was rich, but only for a time. His fear caused him to do exactly the wrong thing. He took his wealth, and he hid it.

It's a very real scenario. It can be the exact position of rich Christians. They're sober. They're responsible. They accumulate wealth. But they don't enjoy it. They don't use it. They don't use it to do good work. They don't do this because they're afraid.

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<sup>17</sup> For a similar scenario where the steward is surprised by the hidden and uncertain timing of the stewardship suddenly ending, Jesus explains in Luke 12:42-46, “And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will take a long time to come,’ and he begins to beat the other slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in two, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.”

The fear of the future causes them to bury their wealth. They bury it because “you never know.” They bury it “just in case.” They bury it because of fear about the future. This fear leads to a bad ending.<sup>18</sup>

***Being wealthy the right way: Put your wealth to work!***

In the parable, things went much better for the other servants. They, too, had wealth. They had even more riches. They were two times or five times as wealthy. And the wealthiest servants were the biggest winners!

What did the richest servant do with his wealth? He put it to work. Right away. He

“went at once and put his money to work [*ergasato*]”  
(Matthew 25:16 NIV).

How does this connect to our passage? First, the rich servant acted right away. He didn’t wait. He didn’t dither. He didn’t postpone. He acted right now, at this opportune moment.

And when he acted, what did he do? He “put his money to work [*ergasato*].” This word comes from *ergon* “work.” As a result, the master said,

“Well done, [*Eu*,] good [*agathe*] and faithful servant”  
(Matthew 25:21).

Instead of hiding the wealth, he put it to work, *ergon*. The result was the master’s approval. The master called him *eu*

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<sup>18</sup> Ecclesiastes 6:1-3, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is widespread among mankind: a person to whom God has given riches, wealth, and honor, so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God has not given him the opportunity to enjoy these things, but a foreigner enjoys them. This is futility and a severe affliction.”

and *agathe*. One path was hiding wealth. The other was using it for *ergon*, *eu*, and *agathe*.

These same two paths appear in our passage. One relies on hidden [*adēlotēti*] wealth. The other results in

“to do good [*agatho-ergein*], to be rich in good works [*ergois kalois*], to be generous [*eu-metadotous*]”

This path uses wealth for *ergon*, *eu*, and *agathe*.

The rich Christian puts their wealth to work, *ergon*. They use wealth to do intrinsically good work, *agatho-ergein*. They use wealth to do good work that is inspiring and beautiful, *ergois kalois*. They use it to share, *metadotous*, in a way that is good, *eu-metadotous*.

The semantic parallels are clear. The text reminds listeners of Jesus’s parable. The rich have wealth. But the wealth is temporary. (They are rich only “in the now time.”) They have two options. They can rely on the hiddenness of their wealth. Or they can, right now, put it to work. They can use it to do good. They can become rich in good works. They share in a way that is good.

In the parable, Jesus tells a story. In our passage, that story becomes the rich person’s story. They get to pick which temporarily rich person they want to be. They get to pick which role they’ll play. They get to choose. They can hide their wealth or they can put it to work.

### ***A big gift example: Putting your wealth to work!***

In Jesus’s parable, each servant had temporary wealth. The wise servant immediately “put his money to work [*ergasato*].” This matches the instructions in our passage. It also matches another example of a big gift of wealth.



This identical word form, *ergasato*,<sup>19</sup> appears in only two other scriptures. Both describe the same gift to Jesus. This gift wasn't a share of regular income. It was a gift of an asset. It was a gift of a valuable asset. It was worth over a year's wages!

Mark explains,

“a woman came with an alabaster vial of very expensive perfume of pure nard. She broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head. But there were some indignantly remarking to one another, ‘Why has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed [*kalon ergasato*] for Me.’” (Mark 14:3b-6).

Matthew also writes,

“For she has done a good deed [*kalon ergasato*] for Me.” (Matthew 26:10).

She had an asset. It was worth more than a year's wages. She had wealth. And what did she do with it? Jesus said she put it to work. She used it to do a good deed: *kalon ergasato*. Others saw her gift as a waste. Jesus disagreed. She used her wealth in the right way.

She was in an opportune moment. In that opportune moment, she used an asset from her wealth to accomplish a beautifully good work: *kalon ergasato*. (Mark 14:6; Matthew 26:10). The rich Christian does the same thing. He also has wealth right now, at an opportune moment. He, too, uses it to be rich in beautifully good works: *ergois kalois*. (1 Timothy 6:18).

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<sup>19</sup> aorist indicative middle, third person singular

***Conclusion: The message of ministry***

This passage has a message. It's a message to the wealthy. It's a message about their wealth. Wealth is temporary. It's disappearing. It's not for hiding. Don't bury it. That just guarantees loss and a sad ending.

Now, right now, is your opportune moment. Now, right now, you can do wonderful, beautiful things. The time for decision is now. Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!



Story Elements

# **Climax & Resolution**

(Victory & Altered Identity)



## Chapter 9

### Message 7: You're doing good work!

- *Biblical fundraising is about the donor's actions and impact.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is about the organization's actions and impact.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] **to do good**, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Give! Give! Give! Give!***

In every fundraising story, there is a punchline. There is a call to action. There is an ask, a spur, a suggestion, an idea, or an option ... to give. Give. That's the point of fundraising, right?

We've reached that point in Paul's message. He has challenged the wealthy to enjoy what God has richly supplied to them. Now he provides specificity on how to do so. So, he tells them to give, right?

Not exactly. Certainly, he could have. He could have written, "Give your money!" He could have written, "Give your

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, **agathoergein**, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

wealth!” He could have written, “Donate!” He could have written a simple instruction to give.<sup>2</sup> He could have written it four times: Give! Give! Give! Give!

But that’s not what he did. Instead, he used these four descriptions:

- To do good [*agathoergein*]
- To be rich in good works [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]
- To be generous [*eumetadotous einai*]
- And ready to share [*koinōnikous*]

Each describes giving. But this is not mere repetition. Each phrase is different. Each is specially crafted. They use rare – or even newly created – words to convey special meaning.<sup>3</sup> Each provides real-world guidance for effective fundraising.

### ***Don’t ask for money***

Paul gets to the fundraising punchline. And he doesn’t say, “Give your money!” He doesn’t say, “Donate!” Instead, he says,

“God is the one who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18a).

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<sup>2</sup> For example, *dos* [“give”] appears 16 times in the New Testament. It is used in reference to giving to the poor (Matthew 19:21; Mark 10:21), giving that results from an ask without benefit (Matthew 5:42) or an ask from one who is below (Matthew 6:11). It also references giving mandatory payments to the temple (Matthew 17:27) or giving in response to a legal demand of rights of heirship (Luke 15:12).

<sup>3</sup> “The wealthy are instructed to share God’s provision with a series of infinitives that are rare in antiquity.” [Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus* (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement Vol. 11). Penn State Press. p. 195.]

This approach is powerful. It's effective. But it's easy to miss why it's so different. This is not just asking for money. Why not? What's the difference?

One successful fundraiser explained it best. He wasn't explaining this verse. He was just explaining his job. A person learned he was a fundraiser and said,

“I could never do that job. I couldn't ask people for money.”

He responded,

“I don't ask people for money. I ask people to do things (that happen to cost money).”

This little change makes all the difference. It makes a difference in

- The donor's role
- The fundraiser's role
- The charity's role
- The fundraising story
- The fundraising results

Paul's message doesn't direct the rich person “to give.” Instead, it directs the rich person “to do good.” This message is fundamentally different. For the donor, it's different in terms of

- Agency
- Work
- Impact
- Imagery
- Reciprocity



- Enjoyment

***Agency: Who is your story about?***

The typical fundraising appeal is all about the charity. It's about the charity's great work. It's about all the great things the charity is doing.

Naturally enough, charity insiders like this story. But the story sounds very different from the donor's perspective. Alan Clayton explains that it's like saying,

“Hello. I'm Alan. I'm great! Can I have some money, please?”<sup>4</sup>

That's not a compelling message for donors. Yet, it can feel compelling to charity insiders. The charity's story feels compelling to them because it's a story about them. They are the main characters. They are the heroes. They are in charge. They make things happen. It's a story about them. It's about their actions. It's about their good works.

How does this compare with Paul's approach? Who does good in Paul's fundraising story? It's the donor. Who makes things happen? The donor. Who is the main character? The donor.

In the charity's story, the charity is the actor. The charity does good. The charity's inspirational work compels the donor to give. The charity then uses this money to do more good.

In Paul's story, the donor is the actor. The donor does

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<sup>4</sup> Clayton, A. (2019, February 27). A new ambition [Conference presentation]. *Fundraising Institute of Australia Conference*, Melbourne, Australia.

good.<sup>5</sup> Any charity is just a tool for the donor. It might serve as the donor's hammer. But the donor is the one who swings the hammer. The donor uses the charity to do more good.

In the charity's story, the charity makes the impact. In Paul's story, the donor makes the impact. The technical term for this difference is called "agency." This references,

"a thing or person that acts to produce a particular result."<sup>6</sup>

In the charity's story, the charity has agency. In Paul's story, the donor has agency.

### ***Agency: Best practices***

Which works better in fundraising? Modern experimental research sides with Paul. Giving agency to the donor increases donations.<sup>7</sup> A story about the charity doing good is fine. But a story about the donor doing good is more compelling.

One experiment started with an appeal letter about the charity's work. It then replaced the charity with "you and" the charity. Response rates improved by 40%.<sup>8</sup> Adding the donor – "you" – as an actor in the story worked.

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<sup>5</sup> This also matches with the next phrase in 1 Timothy 6:18. For example, the Common English Bible translates this as, "to be rich in the good things they do".

<sup>6</sup> The Oxford online dictionaries. (2012). *Agency*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Heist, H. D., & Cnaan, R. A. (2018). Price and agency effects on charitable giving behavior. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, 77, 129-138; Xu, Q., Kwan, C. M., & Zhou, X. (2020). Helping yourself before helping others: How sense of control promotes charitable behaviors. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 30(3), 486-505.

<sup>8</sup> For example, an email using the phrase, "The fashion industry has let these women down, but you and [the charity] won't" improved response rates by 40% among women compared to the same phrase omitting "you and". [Shang, J., Reed, A., Sargeant, A., & Carpenter, K. (2020). Marketplace donations: The role of moral identity discrepancy and gender. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 57(2), 375-393. p. 382.]

Do we see this “you” language in Paul’s fundraising letter? Yes. 2 Corinthians 8-9 is Paul’s appeal letter. In it, “you” and “your” appear 41 times.<sup>9</sup> In comparison, “I,” “me,” and “my” appear only 13 times. “We” and “our” appear only 16 times.

A story about the donor and the donor’s impact works. Allowing the donor to have agency works. Research shows this. Research has found something else, too. Giving agency to the donor is even more effective among the wealthy.<sup>10</sup>

### **Work: What am I buying?**

Is shopping fun? Most people think so. But why? At the end of a shopping trip, you have less money. Is it fun to lose money? No. The fun part isn’t losing money. The fun part is what you buy with the money. You get to do things or keep things.

Is donating fun? That depends. At the end of the donation, you have less money. Is it fun to lose money? No. The fun part isn’t losing money. The fun part is what you buy with the money. You get to do things or keep things.

In Paul’s fundraising message, what does the wealthy donor get to do? He gets to do good - *agathoergein*. This is a compound word. It comes from *agathos*, “intrinsically good,” and *ergon*, “work.”

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<sup>9</sup> Referencing the New American Standard Bible translation.

<sup>10</sup> Kessler, J. B., Milkman, K. L., & Zhang, C. Y. (2019). Getting the rich and powerful to give. *Management Science*, 65(9), 4049-4062; Whillans, A. V., Caruso, E. M., & Dunn, E. W. (2017). Both selfishness and selflessness start with the self: How wealth shapes responses to charitable appeals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, 242-250.

Paul's word choice is rare.<sup>11</sup> The typical word would be *agatho-poiēō*. This would also be translated as "to do good."<sup>12</sup> But Paul goes out of his way to instead use a "work" word, *agatho-ergein*. One translation renders this as "to work the good."<sup>13</sup> The donor gets to do good work.<sup>14</sup>

And what does the donor get to keep? He gets "to be rich in good works [*ergois*]." These riches he keeps no matter what. Even if someone took all his possessions, he would remain rich in good works.

The donor gets to do good work. He gets to be rich in good works. Paul's fundraising message is selling work.

Jesus used this same type of language to describe a major asset gift. This was Mary's gift of perfume worth more than a year's wages. While others criticized her for not giving it to the poor, Jesus defended her gift.

Jesus explained, in Mark 14:6 and Matthew 26:10, that she "has done a good deed". In Mark 14:6, this is more literally, "a good work she has worked [*ergon ērgasato*]"

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<sup>11</sup> Professor Malherbe writes, "This is the first time *agathoergein* occurs in Greek literature." [Malherbe, A. J. (2011). *Godliness, Self-Sufficiency, Greed, and the Enjoyment of Wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 92]. In this specific form, it appears nowhere else. However, it does appear in a different form as the present participial active verb *agathourgōn* in Acts 14:17.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9 (twice), 6:33, 6:35; 1 Peter 2:15, 2:20, 3:6, 3:17; 3 John 1:11.

<sup>13</sup> Hart, D. B. (2017). *The New Testament: A translation*. Yale University Press. p. 422.

<sup>14</sup> The emphasis on "work" is explicit in the Aramaic texts. The Aramaic Bible in Plain English and the Lamsa Bible, also from Aramaic, translate this phrase using "do good works". This phrase uses three separate Aramaic words with the interlinear translation of "[&-they-should-do] [works] [good]" in Bauscher, G. D. (2006). *The Peshitta Aramaic-English New Testament: An interlinear translation*. Lulu Publishing.

In Matthew 26:10, it's more literally

“a work for good she has worked” [*ergon gar kalon ērgasato*].

Jesus double-emphasizes the donor as accomplishing work.

Jesus uses the same word in precisely the same form, *ērgasato*, in the Parable of the Talents. He contrasts hiding wealth with putting it to work. Jesus says,

“The one who had received the five talents immediately went and did business [*ērgasato*] with them, and earned five more talents.” (Matthew 25:16).

This contrasts with the one,

“who received the one talent went away and dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money.” (Matthew 25:18).

In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, Paul makes a similar contrast. He contrasts hidden [*adēlotēti*] riches with being rich in good works [*ergois*].<sup>15</sup>

Both Paul and Jesus are making the same point. If you have wealth, don't bury it. Instead, put it to work. Use it to do good work.

The donor's contribution buys work. This is not a new idea. Exodus describes a capital campaign for the tabernacle. It explains,

“They received from Moses every contribution which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary.” (Exodus 36:3a).

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<sup>15</sup> See the discussion below on the chiasmic structure of the passage reflecting a direct contrast of *adēlotēti* and *ergois kalois*.

Notice, the donors didn't just buy a building. They bought work. These contributions had a purpose. They did work.<sup>16</sup>

### **Work: Best practices**

In the Bible, donors are described as doing or buying work. Jesus, Moses, and Paul all did this. So, does this message “work”?

A massive research study illustrated the power of this word choice. It looked at over 100,000 crowdfunding campaigns for victims of disasters and emergencies. It analyzed all communications from every campaign. It used this “big data” to find what words helped these campaigns raise more money.

The answer was ... “work.” The statistical finding was this:

“Each additional work-related word in an update increases donations on average by \$65 per month.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> When Moses reached the fundraising goal, he stopped the giving. Exodus 36:6 explains, “So Moses issued a command, and circulated a proclamation throughout the camp, saying, ‘No man or woman is to perform work any longer for the contributions of the sanctuary.’ So the people were restrained from bringing any more.”

The sequence of the original phrase is, “to perform any more work for the contributions”. The word “for” translates a preposition. It can also mean, “to perform any more work in the contributions.”

One approach is to assume that Moses was stopping work where the proceeds would be used for contributions. However, this would not have prohibited gifts from rents, interest, sales, or accumulated wealth. Yet, the context makes clear that Moses intended to stop all giving. The phrase, “to perform any more work in the contributions,” provides a solution. Understanding contributions as work resolves this conflict. Just as in 1 Timothy 6:18, the donors themselves are doing work. Moses tells them to stop doing this kind of work.

<sup>17</sup> Mejia, J., Urrea, G., & Pedraza-Martinez, A. J. (2019). Operational transparency on crowdfunding platforms: Effect on donations for emergency response. *Production and Operations Management*, 28(7), 1773-1791. p. 1773.

These work-related words included,

“words representing work actions such as ‘build,’ ‘clean,’ ‘equip’ and ‘fix.’”<sup>18</sup>

If the donor feels like they are buying work – they buy more. If they don’t – they buy less.

A 2023 study of such fundraising found the same answer. Donations more than doubled when images showed recipients engaged in physical work actions.<sup>19</sup>

Another study tested this using experiments. The result was the same.<sup>20</sup> Images of work doubled giving. They also made donors feel more “active” and “inspired.” An image of a recipient hammering, moving boxes, or bailing water worked. An image of a recipient standing, thinking, or looking at a blueprint did not. Work worked. Non-work did not.

Paul didn’t use a “big data” approach. He didn’t analyze a hundred million words in a hundred thousand fundraising campaigns. He didn’t code fundraising images or run experimental analyses. Apparently, he didn’t need to. His instructions on fundraising were exactly right!

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<sup>18</sup> Mejia, J., Urrea, G., & Pedraza-Martinez, A. J. (2019). Operational transparency on crowdfunding platforms: Effect on donations for emergency response. *Production and Operations Management*, 28(7), 1773-1791. p. 1778.

<sup>19</sup> Donations were relatively lower when recipients were pictured engaging in non-physical acts such as planning or learning or were standing in the disaster setting without engaging in any work or action. [Perez, D., Munichor, N., & Buskila, G. (2023). Help yourself: Pictures of donation recipients engaged in physical self-help enhance donations on crowdfunding platforms. *Journal of Business Research*, 161, 113826, 1-14. Study 1.]

<sup>20</sup> Perez, D., Munichor, N., & Buskila, G. (2023). Help yourself: Pictures of donation recipients engaged in physical self-help enhance donations on crowdfunding platforms. *Journal of Business Research*, 161, 113826, 1-14. Study 2.

***Agency + buying work: The language of the rich***

Paul is using motivational language. It's motivational for everyone. But it's particularly motivational for those with wealth.

Wealthy people are used to being in control. They're used to having agency. They make things happen. Wealthy people are also used to employing others. They're used to buying work. Buying work is how they get things done. It's how they get things done with money.

If a wealthy person wants a field tilled, he doesn't grab a plow. He hires someone. He buys the work. If he wants a barn built, he doesn't grab a hammer. He hires someone. He buys the work. If he wants to start a business, he does the same. He hires people. He buys the work.

Paul is framing a donation using language that connects with the wealthy person. It offers agency to the donor. The donor is the one who makes it happen. It instructs the donor to buy work. The donor makes it happen by buying the work. He hires someone.

Consider this comparison. Suppose we made this ask of a wealthy donor:

“John, I know you care about the lost in this mission field. Would you consider an annual gift of \$200,000 for the next five years to this mission?”

That's a plausible request. Now, let's change it a bit. Let's make it a request to buy work.

“John, I know you care about the lost in this mission field. In different circumstances, you might have even been that missionary yourself. But I'm not asking you to be that missionary. Instead, I want you to be two of



those missionaries. Would you consider an annual gift of \$200,000 for the next five years to hire and support two full-time missionaries to work in your place?”

One request is about giving away money. The other is about what the donor is buying with the money. It’s about buying work.

One leads to this donor experience:

“I give \$200,000 per year to missions.”

This result is about the money. The other leads to this donor experience:

“I employ two full-time missionaries working in this field.”

This result is about the work.

Making things happen by buying the work is what wealthy people do. Agency + work is the action language of the wealthy. *Agathoergein* is a word of agency and work. It is also something else. It’s a word of meaningful impact.

### ***Impact: Doing good***

Paul’s instruction is not simply to give money. It’s “to do good.” *Agatho-ergein* is from *agathos* (good) and *ergon* (work). One lexicon describes *ergon* as

“(from *ergō*, ‘to work, accomplish’) – a work or worker who accomplishes something ... a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an inner desire (intention, purpose).”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).

Paul's instruction requires the donor to accomplish something. It requires the donor to complete something. It requires making an impact.<sup>22</sup>

Is it possible for the donor to make a gift that does not result in doing good? Yes. Is it possible for the donor to have no idea if the gift did any good or not? Yes. It's not only possible, it's common. Does Paul's message instruct the donor to do this? No. It does not.

Suppose the donor gives. Later, he asks himself the *agatho-ergein* question:

“I made a gift. What good did it accomplish?”

Or simply,

“I made a gift. What changed?”

To follow Paul's instruction, the donor must be able to answer this question. Unfortunately, many charities don't provide an answer.

“What did my gift do?”

Some charities leave the impression that their answer is

- Nothing.
- We don't know.
- That's too hard to tell.
- That's too complicated to explain.
- That's not your concern; we're the experts here.

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<sup>22</sup> Professor Hermann Cremer writes of *agathoergein*, “Since in the above passage (1 Tim. VI 18), in which there is a climax, the word relates to the use made of riches, it would seem best to render it, ‘to do good, so that others shall be benefited’ (emphasis added). [Cremer, H. (1878). *Biblico-Theological lexicon of New Testament Greek*. T & T Clark. p. 8.]

These answers don't work. The donor can't tell what his gift has done. He can't say if his gift has accomplished anything. He can't say if his gift has done any good. He can't say if he's followed Paul's instructions.

Paul's instruction isn't "to give money." His instruction is "to do good." Just giving money doesn't follow the instructions. The donor must go further. He must make sure that his gift is doing something. It must "do good."

Doing good requires giving wisely. It requires investigating the impact. Giving blindly out of duty or habit isn't the instruction. The instruction is "to do good."

### ***Imagery: Can you see it?***

The word for "to do good" references work. It's *agatho* [good] – *ergein* [work]. Work is action. It creates an action image. It's visualizable. Research finds that "words representing work actions such as 'build,' 'clean,' 'equip' and 'fix'" increase giving.<sup>23</sup> We can imagine these things. We can see them in our mind. We can visualize the impact.

The language here describes giving as creating a tangible action. It does good work. We can see it. We can picture it.

Many giving experiences lack this tangibility. At the ask, the donor can't tell what exactly he would be buying. He can't visualize it. Later, he can't tell what, exactly, his gift has done. He can't visualize that, either. This leads to poor fundraising results.

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<sup>23</sup> Mejia, J., Urrea, G., & Pedraza-Martinez, A. J. (2019). Operational transparency on crowdfunding platforms: Effect on donations for emergency response. *Production and Operations Management*, 28(7), 1773-1791. p. 1778.

Visualization is a key component of the charitable giving decision. It drives donations. In experiments, increasing mental imagery increases giving.<sup>24</sup> We can even see this in the brain scanner. Internal visualization predicts willingness to make a gift of wealth (an estate gift).<sup>25</sup> Using tangible, visualizable descriptions of the results – as Paul does here – increases giving.

### ***Reciprocity: The partnership with God***

1 Timothy 6:17 begins with *agathoergein* – “to do good.” We’ve looked at the definition of the word. But its meaning goes beyond just its definition.

An additional meaning comes from references and context. A reference adds meaning. For example, “amber waves of grain” means something different than “yellowish-brown wheat fields.” Both phrases have the same definitions, but the first references a song.<sup>26</sup> It’s obvious. We’ve all heard the phrase before. It’s the only place that phrase appears.

Paul’s message instructs the rich “to do good.” But the word *agathoergein* is special. It appears nowhere else in all of Greek literature.<sup>27</sup> And yet, Paul’s readers would have been familiar with it. Why? Because it appears in the Book of Acts.

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<sup>24</sup> Dickert, S., Kleber, J., Västfjäll, D., & Slovic, P. (2016). Mental imagery, impact, and affect: A mediation model for charitable giving. *PLoS One*, 11(2), e0148274; Fuchs, C., de Jong, M. G., & Schreier, M. (2020). Earmarking donations to charity: Cross-cultural evidence on its appeal to donors across 25 countries. *Management Science*, 66(10), 4820-4842. p. 4837-4838.

<sup>25</sup> James, R. N., III. & O’Boyle, M. W. (2014). Charitable estate planning as visualized autobiography: An fMRI study of its neural correlates. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2), 355-373.

<sup>26</sup> Bates, K. L. (1894). America the beautiful [Song].

<sup>27</sup> “This is the first time *agathoergein* occurs in Greek literature.” [Malherbe, A. J. (2011). Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 92.]

And in that single appearance, what does it describe? It describes God as the one who richly supplies us with all things. It describes God's material generosity. Acts 14:17 reads,

“yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good [*agathourgōn*] and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

In Acts, the word describes God richly providing us with material things.<sup>28</sup> In 1 Timothy 6:18, it describes the donor's response to God's rich provision. The donor responds to God's blessings by blessing others. He acts reciprocally. He pays his blessings forward. He imitates God.<sup>29</sup> The same word describes both God's actions and the donor's actions. It's a newly constructed word. And it's used only in those two places. The connection is obvious.

Others point out this Acts 14:17 link. In 1871, commentators wrote of 1 Timothy 6:18,

“**18. do good**—like God Himself (Ps 119:68; Ac 14:17)”<sup>30</sup>

In 1890, another wrote,

“**18. That they do good**—the purpose God has in giving all things richly to them. It is that they live lives of

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<sup>28</sup> “‘Do good’ is a single word in the Greek, a word used in only one other place in the New Testament, where it speaks of God showering his good gifts on his hearers (Acts 14:17).” [Hughes, R. K. & Chapell, B. (2000). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Crossway Books. p. 162.]

<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Paul points to Jesus's gift in his fundraising appeal letter in 2 Corinthians 8:9. This imitation of God is also known as, “the mimetic gift – one gives in order to follow the example of Jesus.” [Chasteney, P. (2022). *Giving under God's gaze: Figures of the gift in the Bible and in the work of Jacques Ellul* (C. Roy, Trans.). In J. M. Rollison (Ed.), *Jacques Ellul and the Bible: Towards a hermeneutic of freedom* (pp. 168-188). The Lutterworth Press. p. 171.]

<sup>30</sup> Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., Jamieson, R. (1871). *A commentary, critical, experimental, and practical, on the Old and New Testaments* Volume II (New Testament). S. S. Scranton & Company. p. 419.

holy beneficence, as God himself (Ps 119:68; Acts 14:17)”<sup>31</sup>

More recently, Professor Luke Timothy Johnson explained,

“Paul suggests that they enter as wholeheartedly into giving as God does in gifting.”<sup>32</sup>

The unique word choice implies a connection to God’s blessings. It’s a reciprocal response. It’s part of a partnership with God.

This becomes more obvious from the context of the passage’s structure. As with many of Paul’s writings,<sup>33</sup> this one has a chiasmic structure. That structure looks like this:

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<sup>31</sup> Harvey, H. (1890). *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: First and Second Timothy and Titus and the Epistle to Philemon*. American Baptist Publication Society. p. 78.

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, L. T. (2001). *The first and second letters to Timothy: a new translation with introduction and commentary*. The Anchor Bible. p. 311.

<sup>33</sup> Bailey, K. E. (1975). Recovering the poetic structure of I Corinthians i 17-ii 2. *Novum Testamentum*, 17(4), 265-296; Bailey, K. E. (1983). The structure of I Corinthians and Paul’s theological method with special reference to 4:17. *Novum Testamentum*, 25(2), 152-181; Blomberg, C. (1989). The structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7. *Criswell Theological Review*, 4(1), 3-20; Luter, A. B., & Lee, M. V. (1995). Philippians as chiasmus: Key to the structure, unity and theme questions. *New Testament Studies*, 41(1), 89-101.

**A-Riches** [Death]<sup>34</sup>

**B-Riches** [Now/temporary]<sup>35</sup>

**C-Riches** [Leading to community separation]<sup>36</sup>

**D-Riches** [Tightly grasped as one's hope]<sup>37</sup>

**E-Riches** [Hidden/disappearing/uncertain]<sup>38</sup>

**F-Riches** [Godly source/inflow]<sup>39</sup>

**G-Riches** [Purpose: for enjoyment]<sup>40</sup>

**F'-Riches** [Godly use/outflow]<sup>41</sup>

**E'-Riches** [Visible/beautiful good works]<sup>42</sup>

**D'-Riches** [Open-handedly shared]<sup>43</sup>

**C'-Riches** [Leading to community connection]<sup>44</sup>

**B'-Riches** [Future/permanent]<sup>45</sup>

**A'-Riches** [Life]<sup>46</sup>

The chiasmic structure makes each word or phrase part of a connected pair. Here, the source/inflow of wealth connects to its use/outflow. God's rich provision to us connects to our

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<sup>34</sup> 6:7 is a direct death reference. 6:9-10 then uses seven death-related words: *pagida*, *blaberas*, *bythizousin*, *olethron*, *apōleian*, *kakōn*, *periepeiran*, and *odynais*. The unit sequence is death[7]–pause[8]–death[9-10]–pause[11-16]. See Chapter 15-III, “Paul’s death reminders trigger permanence desires.”

<sup>35</sup> 6:17b “rich in the now time” [time as age, *aioni*, or present moment, *kairo* from the Codex Sinaiticus]

<sup>36</sup> 6:17c “not being high-minded”

<sup>37</sup> 6:17d “Nor to-have-hoped in of-riches”

<sup>38</sup> 6:17e “of-riches uncertainty/hiddenness”

<sup>39</sup> 6:17f “but on God the-One providing us all-things richly”

<sup>40</sup> 6:17g “for [the purpose of] enjoyment”

<sup>41</sup> 6:18a “to-do-good [intrinsically good]”. This word appears nowhere else in Greek literature except in Acts 14:17 where it describes God richly providing to all. Here is our matching godly provision to others.

<sup>42</sup> 6:18b “to-be-rich in works good [beautiful, visible, noble]”

<sup>43</sup> 6:18c “generous in distributing” also “open-handed” in some translations

<sup>44</sup> 6:18d “ready-to-share” *koinōnikous*

<sup>45</sup> 6:19a “treasuring-up for-themselves a-foundation good for the future”

<sup>46</sup> 6:19b “so-that they-may-take-hold of that-which-is-indeed life”

doing good to others. These two ideas are connected. They describe a partnership with God.

However, we don't have to rely on this subtle interpretation. In his fundraising appeal letter, Paul is explicit. Giving is part of an ongoing abundance partnership with God. God provides

“an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8b).

The donor

“will be enriched for everything for all liberality” (2 Corinthians 9:11a).

Our passage simply repeats this idea. It does so using references and structure.

This context changes the giving experience. Giving from tightly held, scarce resources is painful. The feeling is this:

“Once it's gone, it's gone! I can never get it back. Any loss is permanent.”

Giving as part of an abundance partnership with God is different. It's fun. The feeling is this:

“It was a gift to me. Now I'm just passing part of it on to another. And don't worry. There will be much more where that came from!”

This reciprocal partnership makes giving free, easy, and enjoyable. This is the reciprocal partnership Paul is referencing. The word choice makes it clear. The structure makes it clear. And Paul's other writings make it explicit.



### ***Reciprocity benefits: Crediting the donor's account***

Paul was a practicing fundraiser. How did he describe his own work as a fundraiser? He writes this to his loyal donors:

“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit [*karpon*] that increases to your credit.” (Philippians 4:17 ESV).

What is Paul seeking? He is seeking the fruit – *karpon*. What is *karpon*? It's not just physical fruit from a plant. One lexicon describes *karpon* as,

“Metaphorically, that which originates or comes from something; an effect, result; ... equivalent to *ergon*, work, act, deed”.<sup>47</sup>

*Karpon* references work. It is work that accomplishes something. Paul is not seeking the money. He is seeking the *ergon* – work, act, or deeds – credited to the donors.<sup>48</sup>

A modern fundraiser might say,

“I don't ask people for money. I ask them to do things – that happen to cost money.”

Paul describes his fundraising work writing,

“Not that I seek the money, but I seek the results-of-the-productive-work [*karpon*] attributed to the donors”

Both ideas are similar. Paul is not seeking the gift. What is given might be money or property. But that's not what Paul is

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<sup>47</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Harper & Brothers. p. 326.

<sup>48</sup> *Karpon* is further described as “Of Christian charity, i.e., benefit, to accomplish much ... used of men's deeds as exponents of their hearts ... to exhibit deeds agreeing with a change of heart.” Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Harper & Brothers. p. 326.

after. He is not seeking the thing given. He's seeking the impact credited to the donors.

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul's instruction is not simply to give money. It's "to do good, to be rich in good works." Donors don't just give. They produce good work.

And whose work is this? Who owns it? In 1 Timothy 6:18, it's the donor's work. The donor does the work. The donor becomes rich in good works. So, too, in Philippians 4:17. This work is attributed to the donor. It is

"fruit that increases to your credit." (Philippians 4:17b ESV).

Or, more literally,

"fruit abounding to your account" (Philippians 4:17b Berean Literal Bible).

The work paid for by the donors is their work.<sup>49</sup> It is in their account. And what is the result of this giving? Enormous donor benefit. One translation puts this as

"I want you to receive a reward for your kindness."  
(Philippians 4:17b NLT).

Giving is a good long-term investment for the donors. The good work is not just attributed to the donor's account. That account is also interest-bearing. It's multiplicative. The good work is "abounding" to their account. It is "profit which increases" to their account.

Likewise in 1 Timothy 6:19, the donors are

"storing up for themselves the treasure of a good

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<sup>49</sup> This also matches with the next words in 1 Timothy 6:18, "to be rich in the good things they do" (Common English Bible).

foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

The reciprocity is ongoing. God does good [*agathourgōn*]. (Acts 14:17). Donors respond. They do good [*agathoergein*]. (1 Timothy 6:18). God responds back. The good they do benefits them, too. It increases or stores up to their credit, their account, or their foundation balance. (Philippians 4:17; 1 Timothy 6:19).

***Enjoyment: Agency + Work + Impact + Imagery + Reciprocity***

*Agathoergein* – “to do good” – has important fundraising implications. It incorporates agency, work, impact, imagery, and reciprocity. These all increase giving.

But that’s not the point. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, the point is always the same. It’s *eis apolausin* – “for enjoyment.” The point is not just to trigger giving. The point is to trigger joyful giving.

What makes giving enjoyable? Doing good is enjoyable. Making an impact is enjoyable. Making a visualizable impact is even more enjoyable. Being the one who makes things happen is enjoyable. Giving as part of an ongoing abundance relationship is enjoyable.

One commentary on the passage describes the result this way,

“And as those with money discover the joy of enabling new things to come into being, so they will become, deep down, ‘generous and eager to share.’ It won’t be a grudging, ‘Oh, all right then.’ It will flow from the heart.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Wright, T. (2004). *Paul for everyone: The Pastoral Letters. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 78.

And that's the point. Enjoyment is the point. The challenge to the wealthy person is this. Don't bury your wealth. Don't pile it up just to die with it. Instead, enjoy it. Enjoy it by doing good!

### ***Big gifts and Paul's messages***

In 1 Timothy 6, Paul explains why wealth sharing makes sense. He presents a long list of arguments. Do these messages still work today? Do they actually motivate large gifts from wealthy donors?

One study looked at big gifts from rich donors. In fact, it looked at the biggest gifts from the richest donors. It investigated billionaires who had taken the "giving pledge." This was a pledge that the donors would give at least half their wealth to charity.<sup>51</sup> For 187 of those billionaires, their pledges came with explanation letters. These described their giving motivations.

A research study analyzed these letters.<sup>52</sup> It categorized all the giving motivations. What motivated the largest of all gifts from the wealthiest of all donors? The explanations parallel our passage.

In order of frequency, the donors' stated motivations for their massive wealth sharing were described by the researchers as <sup>53</sup>

1. "Use of terms such as 'impact,' 'Benefit to others,' 'making a difference'; references to solving societal

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<sup>51</sup> <https://givingpledge.org/about>

<sup>52</sup> Schmitz, H. P., Mitchell, G. E., & McCollim, E. M. (2021). How billionaires explain their philanthropy: A mixed-method analysis of the giving pledge letters. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 32(2), 512-523.

<sup>53</sup> *Id* at Table 3 Explanations for giving.

problems, instrumental use of wealth or helping others.”  
[“to do good, to be rich in good works”]

2. “Use of terms such as ‘gratitude,’ ‘giving back,’ ‘being blessed,’ ‘being lucky’ (personal benefits received from society in the past prompt wanting to help others, ‘pay it forward’)”

[“God, who richly supplies us with all things → to be generous and ready to share”]

3. “Use of terms such as ‘enjoyment,’ ‘satisfaction,’ ‘psychological returns,’ or ‘pleasure’ (personal benefits experienced while giving prompt more giving)”

[“God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good”]

4. “Description of how giving was learned at a young age from parents and other family members”

[Here, Paul doesn’t have family information. Although when he does, he leads with it. (2 Timothy 1:5.) Yet, he still starts with their life story. The perfect infinitive, “nor to have set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God” describes their life history. This is the present result of a past action. He describes them with the present infinitive, “not to be conceited.” This is an already in-progress continuing process. He also describes their giving with present infinitives, “to do good, to be rich in good works, to be a generous and ready to share.” These, too, are already in-progress continuing processes.

5. “Statement that wealth is not their own; use of terms ‘stewards’ or ‘trustees’”

[“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.... the uncertainty

of riches ... God who richly supplies us with all things.”  
Both the ending and origin of wealth holding dictate the  
role as “stewards” or “trustees.”]

6. “Statement on how a large inheritance can harm offspring.”  
[“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.... But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction.”]
7. “Reference to having more wealth than personally needed.”  
[“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.”]
8. “Term ‘legacy’ used.”  
[“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future”]
9. “Reference to religious or spiritual texts”  
[This is a valid description of our passage!]

This study was published in 2021. 1 Timothy 6 is nearly 2,000 years older. And yet, the answers are the same. The motivations then are the motivations now. These messages are still relevant. They’re still persuasive. They’re still the latest “best practice” for motivating major gifts of wealth.



## Chapter 10

### Message 8: You're making beautiful things happen!

- *Biblical fundraising is about creating beautiful, visible, noble works.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is only about redistributing money.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [*Instruct them*] to do good, **to be rich in good works**, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Escalation*

The punchline in most fundraising stories is "Give!" Paul's fundraising punchline is different. It's, "Enjoy!" We are to enjoy whatever God has richly supplied us with. If you are rich, then you're supposed to enjoy your wealth.

Paul then gives examples of how we can enjoy what God has richly supplied. We enjoy it by using it

"to do good [*agathoergein*]"

Next, we enjoy it by using it

"to be rich in good works [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]"

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, **ploutein en ergois kalois**, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)



At first glance, the second example might seem repetitive. “To be rich in good works,” reiterates, “to do good.” But that’s not what’s happening. The second example is different. It’s different in three ways.

First, it adds an amount. The amount is big. Doing good is one thing. Being rich in good works is another level. It’s a lot.<sup>2</sup> These good works [*ergois kalois*] are plural. They are many.<sup>3</sup>

Second, it adds identity. The first statement is about what a person does. The second is about who a person is. It describes a person’s status. This is not just what they are doing; it’s who they are being.

Third, this “good” is a different “good.” *Kalois* [good] is different from *agatho-* [good]. These are different words. They describe different things.

### ***Good ≠ good***

In this translation, both the first example,

“to do good,”

And the second example,

“to be rich in good works”

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<sup>2</sup> “The rich (who by definition have much) are *to be rich in good deeds*. They are to have a large quantity of them, just as they have a large quantity of money or property. In other words, they are to keep on doing good. This has been implied already in the present infinitive but it is here brought out into the open. They are to keep on doing good – many times.” [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 123.]

<sup>3</sup> “They must seek to be rich, not just in material possessions, but in the multiplicity of attractive and worth-while works (plural of *ergois kalois*) which their wealth enables them to perform.” [Kent, H. A. (1958). *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I and II Timothy and Titus*. Moody Press. p. 208.]

use the same English word. The word is “good.” But these words are different in Greek.

The first “good” is from *agathos* [good] and *ergon* [work]. The second “good” is from *kalos* [good] and *ergon* [work]. Good [*agathos*] is different from good [*kalos*].

So, what’s the difference? One lexicon describes *agathos* as,

“intrinsically good, good in nature, good whether it be seen to be so or not.”<sup>4</sup>

Conversely, *kalos* is,

“beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”<sup>5</sup>

*Agathos* is intrinsic. It could even be invisible. *Kalos* is extrinsic.<sup>6</sup> It is visible. *Kalos* is,

“beauty on display.”<sup>7</sup>

*Kalos* is

“aesthetically good, beautiful, good to men’s eyes.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 2. (parentheses removed)

<sup>5</sup> [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.] See, e.g., Luke 21:5, “And while some were talking about the temple, that it was decorated with beautiful [*kalois*] stones and vowed gifts,”

<sup>6</sup> One commentator argues for the superiority of *kalos* over *agathos*, commenting, “Do good, be rich in good works. The second ‘good’ is higher than the first, as noble deeds are above merely beneficent ones.” [Plumptre, E. H. (1882). Timothy. In P. Schaff (Ed.), *A popular commentary on the New Testament*. Vol. 3. Pt. 2. T & T Clark. p. 582.]

<sup>7</sup> Fine, J. (2018). *Beauty on display: Plato and the concept of the Kalon* (Doctoral dissertation). Columbia University. p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> “The distinction between *agathos*, practically good, morally good ..., and *kalos*, aesthetically good, beautiful, good to men’s eyes ... is still present in Hellenistic Greek, though the contrast had been blurred.” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and*

A dissertation on *kalos* explains,

“In summary, *kalos* has a clear connection to external appearances or visible impressions in Jewish literature prior to and contemporaneous with Paul.”<sup>9</sup>

Some translations render the phrase *ergois kalois* in verse 18 as

“to exhibit a wealth of good actions” (1 Timothy 6:18b)<sup>10</sup>

Professor Linda Belleville explains,

“verse 18: The Greek word *kalos* denotes what is outwardly attractive; our ‘deeds’ are to be eye-catching.”<sup>11</sup>

Augustine explains of *ergois kalois* here,

“This is not something you do behind closed doors. Either it is done, and is visible to all, or is not done.”<sup>12</sup>

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*exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 22.];

Professor Frederick William Danker describes *kalos* as “meeting high standards or expectations of appearance, kind, or quality.” [Danker, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. The University of Chicago Press. p. 504. ]

<sup>9</sup> Post, T. L. (2019). *Doing “the good” in the Apostle Paul’s ethical vision* (Doctoral dissertation). Asbury Theological Seminary]. p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> Open English Bible; New New Testament [Taussig, H. (2013). *A New New Testament: A Bible for the twenty-first century combining traditional and newly discovered texts*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. p. 359.]

<sup>11</sup> [Belleville, L. (2017). Investments for abundant life. In J. S. Duvall & V. Verbrugge (Eds.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to inspire and instruct*. Zondervan Academic. p. 110];

In 1873, Professor Thomas Osmond Summers noted of “rich in good works” that “The word ‘good’ here means fair, honorable, praiseworthy – nothing is more beautiful than charity.” [Summers, T. O. (1873). *Commentary on the ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*. A. H. Redford. p. 17.]

<sup>12</sup> Augustine. (n.d./1997). Dolbeau Sermons 5.12-13. In E. Hill (Trans.), *Sermons (newly discovered) III/11. The works of Saint Augustine: A translation for the 21st Century*. New City Press. p. 111; Also quoted in Brown, P. (2012). *Through the eye of a needle: Wealth, the fall of Rome, and the making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 A.D.* Princeton University Press. p. 352.

Paul himself points this out in the previous chapter. He writes,

“Likewise also, deeds [*erga*] that are good [*kala*] are quite evident” (1 Timothy 5:25a).

These good deeds [*erga kala*] are the same as those [*ergois kalois*] in our passage. Depending on the translation, such good deeds are

- “quite evident”<sup>13</sup>
- “obvious”<sup>14</sup>
- “conspicuous”<sup>15</sup>
- “plainly seen”<sup>16</sup>
- “public”<sup>17</sup>
- “evident to the world”<sup>18</sup>

### ***Show them!***

Being “rich in good works” describes giving that is seen. Paul is explicit about this in his own fundraising. When urging the Corinthians to give, he states,

“Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.” (2 Corinthians 8:24).

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<sup>13</sup> New American Standard Bible; New King James Version; Legacy Standard Bible; Amplified Bible.

<sup>14</sup> New International Version; New Living Translation; Berean Standard Bible; Christian Standard Bible; Majority Standard Bible; New English Translation (NET) Bible; New Heart English Bible; World English Bible.

<sup>15</sup> English Standard Version; New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>16</sup> Good News Translation

<sup>17</sup> New American Bible

<sup>18</sup> Weymouth New Testament

Paul urges not just giving but public giving. The donors are not just to give; they are to do it openly. They are to show it as proof of their love.

Paul's direction to give publicly is blunt. It's extreme. It's publicity that is, literally, "in your face." He directs the donors to

"show to them ... in the face of the churches" (2 Corinthians 8:24b Berean Literal Bible).

The English Revised Version and American Standard Version use,

"Show ye therefore unto them in the face of the churches." (2 Corinthians 8:24b).

This verse actually references gift publicity four times. The Literal Standard Version more precisely brings this out. It reads,

"the showing therefore of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf, show to them, even in the face of the assemblies." (2 Corinthians 8:24).

In one verse, Paul's giving instruction uses

1. Showing
2. Boasting
3. Show to them
4. Even in the face of the churches.

Paul's direction for gift publicity is hard to miss. It isn't subtle. It's in your face!<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Septuagint uses this same phrase in Job 2:5. "However, reach out with Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face [*eis prosōpon*]!"

***That they may see***

Paul was blunt with his directions on publicity. So was Jesus. He explained,

“Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good [*kala*] works [*erga*], and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16).

We are not just to do beautiful, good works [*kala erga*]. We are to do them in a specific way. We are to do them “before people.” We are to do them in a way that they may see them.<sup>20</sup>

Must the audience know that these are

“your good works?”

Yes. Why? Because otherwise, they would not respond by glorifying

“your Father who is in heaven.”

They glorify “your Father” because they see works that they know to be “your good works.”

In the same way, Paul explains to the donors in Corinth,

“Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Corinthians 9:13-14).

This is not hidden giving. It’s open. It’s public. The donors are known. The giving leads to gratitude, but not just

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<sup>20</sup> “But given that *kalos* often deals with external impressions, and given that Jesus is emphasizing in this text the effect that ‘good works’ will have on observers, it is more likely that Matthew chooses *kalos* to convey the ‘beautiful’ nature of the works Jesus is commanding.” [Post, T. L. (2019). *Doing “the good” in the Apostle Paul’s ethical vision* (Doctoral dissertation). Asbury Theological Seminary]. p. 48.]

for the gift. It leads to gratitude for the one making the gift. It's gratitude for the giver. If you're a donor, it's gratitude that is all about you!

### ***Hidden vs. seen***

Both Paul and Jesus are explicit. Good works are to be seen. The chiasmic structure of 1 Timothy 6:17-18 also emphasizes this. The central axis is "for enjoyment." Surrounding this are pairs of contrasting parallels. In this structure,

"rich in beautiful-visible-good [*kalois*] works"

contrasts with

"hidden-disappearing-uncertain [*adēlotētī*] riches."

The visible nature of these good works is not merely incidental. It is the primary contrast of these parallel forms of riches.

The message is consistent. It's about doing good [*kalos*] works. These works are

"beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so."<sup>21</sup>

It's about doing these works

"before people in such a way that they may see your good [*kala*] works" (Matthew 5:16b).

It's about giving

"openly before the churches" (2 Corinthians 8:24b).

Donors don't just make gifts, they

"show to them, even in the face of the assemblies." (2

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<sup>21</sup> [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.]

Corinthians 8:24b).<sup>22</sup>

Jesus and Paul both teach the same thing. Donors do good [*kalos*] works. Good works are supposed to be seen.

They both go even further. They don't just tell donors what to do. They take matters into their own hands. They both employ massive gift publicity. Let's start with Paul.

### ***Paul's extreme gift publicity***

Paul gets extreme about gift publicity. He tells the donors to give publicly. But he doesn't wait for them to go public with their gifts. In fact, he doesn't even wait for them to give. He tells the whole world about their gift intention even before they've given.

Paul explains that he has already told the neighboring churches about their intended giving. He explains how others have already been inspired by their example. He writes,

“I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.” (2 Corinthians 9:2b).

In technical terms, Paul uses “leadership giving” to inspire others. He publicizes the Corinthians' gift intention to rally the Macedonians. He then publicizes the Macedonians' completed gift to rally the Corinthians.

Paul's fundraising directs public giving. It publicizes donor gifts and even donor gift intentions. It uses extreme donor publicity.

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<sup>22</sup> Literal Standard Version



## ***Giving ≠ giving***

So, how do all this visibility and public giving fit with Matthew 6:2-4? Jesus explains,

“So when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynēn*], do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, so that they will be praised by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynēn*], do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charitable giving [*eleēmosynē*] will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” (Matthew 6:2-4).

How can these two approaches blend? The answer is simple. They don't. This looks like a contradiction in English. But it's not. That's because “giving” is not the same thing as “giving.”

Almsgiving or giving to the poor is *eleēmosynē*. It refers to mercy, pity, or alms. This is giving down. Giving across is different. This is sharing with the mutual fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. This giving is *koinōnikos* or *koinōnias*.<sup>23</sup>

Giving down (almsgiving) – *eleēmosynē* – should be private and hidden. Sharing across – *koinōnikos* – should be open and public.

Jesus uses *eleēmosynē* three times in Matthew 6:2-4. Paul's fundraising appeal is different. It isn't about *eleēmosynē*. Instead, he writes about *koinōnian*. (2 Corinthians 8:4). He writes about *koinōnias*. (2 Corinthians

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<sup>23</sup> E.g., *koinōnikous* (1 Timothy 6:18), *koinōnian* (2 Corinthians 8:4; Romans 15:26), *koinōnias* (2 Corinthians 9:13; Hebrews 13:16), *koinōneitō* (Galatians 6:6), *koinōnountes* (Romans 12:13), *ekoinōnēsen* (Philippians 4:15).

9:13). Similarly, Paul’s donation acknowledgement isn’t about *eleēmosynē*. Instead, he writes about *ekoinōnēsen*. (Philippians 4:15). Finally, Paul’s fundraising instructions aren’t about *eleēmosynē*. Instead, he writes about *koinōnikous*. (1 Timothy 6:18).

It’s a simple distinction. In Greek, *eleēmosynē* and *koinōnikous* look nothing alike. But they can look alike in English. Thus, in Matthew 6:2-4, instead of “almsgiving” or “gifts to the poor,” some translations render *eleēmosynē* as

- Gifts <sup>24</sup>
- Giving <sup>25</sup>
- Charitable giving <sup>26</sup>
- Contributions <sup>27</sup>

At the same time, *koinōnian* in 2 Corinthians 8:4 can appear as

- Gift <sup>28</sup>
- Giving their money <sup>29</sup>
- Sharing <sup>30</sup>

*Koinōnias* in 2 Corinthians 9:13 can read

- Contribution <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>25</sup> New International Version; English Standard Version

<sup>26</sup> New American Standard Bible

<sup>27</sup> GOD’S WORD® Translation

<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:4 King James Version; New King James Version

<sup>29</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:4 Contemporary English Version

<sup>30</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:4 New International Version; New Living Translation

<sup>31</sup> New American Standard Bible; English Standard Version

- Sharing <sup>32</sup>

Hence, the confusion. The simple truth is this: *eleēmosynē* (mercy, pity, alms) is not *koinōnia*-sharing. It's not *koinōnias*, *ekoinōnēsen*, or *koinōnikous*. In Greek, it's obvious. These words look nothing alike. But in English, they can look the same.

### ***Publicity: Different rules for different gifts***

So, should donor gifts be publicized? The answer is simple. The answer is, "It depends." Different gifts have different rules. This was true in the Old Testament. It's also true in the New Testament.

Good works [*kala erga*] are to be public. Sharing with the fellowship community [*koinōnikous*] is to be public. Almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*] is to be private.

Why? One answer is, "It doesn't matter. Just do what it says." But let's speculate.

Almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*] is giving down. It's not an exchange. The recipient offers nothing in return. It is giving from high to low. Almsgiving is an unequal relationship. When almsgiving becomes public, it takes status from the recipient. In this way, public almsgiving could even harm the recipient.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> New International Version; New King James Version

<sup>33</sup> This potential harm to the recipient could explain the necessity of keeping such giving private. The example of Zaccheus is instructive. Jesus says in Matthew 6:3, "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your charitable giving will be in secret." However, in Luke 19, Zaccheus was extraordinarily public in his announcement before "the people" who were complaining about Jesus's decision to stay at his house. Luke 19:8-9 records, "But Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I am giving [*didōmi*] to the poor [*tois ptōchois*], and if I have extorted anything from anyone, I am giving back four times as much.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house because he, too, is a son of Abraham.'"

Thus, almsgiving is to be private. Its only audience is God.<sup>34</sup> It's like private prayer or fasting.<sup>35</sup> Almsgiving expresses a relationship, not with the recipient or other donors but with God.

Sharing [*koinōnikous*] is different. It's part of a relationship with the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. It's giving across. It's part of an ongoing partnership. It's part of a mutual relationship of equality.

Paul strongly emphasizes this equality in his fundraising. He distinguishes it from almsgiving or giving down. He explains,

“For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship, but by way of equality — at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so

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The scene appears to have been quite public. Zaccheus' statement responds to the crowd's complaints about him. Jesus's high praise refers to Zaccheus as “he” (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular). This fits with a proclamation made in front of the crowd, not one made in private only to Zaccheus.

Thus, Jesus responds to this announcement of giving to the poor with openly public praise. Does this contradict Matthew 6:3? No. Notice that Matthew 6:3 describes a different point in time: “When you give to the poor.” This is the moment when “your right hand” gives the money. It describes the moment of transfer. Thus, Zaccheus could still fulfill the Matthew 6:3 instruction at whatever point he actually gave to the poor. He could hand the money in secret. His highly public announcement need not risk taking any status from the ultimate recipient if the actual transfer is made in secret.

<sup>34</sup> There are two possible explanations for Jesus's praise of Zaccheus' public announcement of a gift to the poor in Luke 19:8-10. First, Zaccheus might not have announced it publicly. Verse 8 reads, “But Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I am giving to the poor’”. Second, if the reason for making such gifts secret is that public almsgiving risks lowering the receiver's status, then Jesus's admonitions for secrecy would apply to the act of giving but not to the public pledge to give. A general pledge could be open and public without lowering the status of the ultimate recipients. Such a public pledge could even inspire other potential donors. And it still allows the actual almsgiving transfer to be done in secret as Jesus directed.

<sup>35</sup> In Matthew 6, Jesus gives three examples of acts of righteousness [*dikaïosynēn*]: almsgiving [2-4], prayer [5-15], and fasting [16-18]. He explains that these acts of righteousness [*dikaïosynēn*] should not be done “in the sight of people, to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:1b).

that their abundance also may serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality;" (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

Sharing requires community. It's part of a mutual relationship among equals. Sharing openly and publicly does not take status from the recipient. Instead, it demonstrates a shared social norm. Everyone within the mutual community follows this shared social norm.

Sharing openly reinforces this norm. It inspires others to act the same way. Thus, Paul uses the Corinthians' pledge to inspire the Macedonians' giving. He uses the Macedonians' giving to inspire the Corinthians' pledge fulfillment.

Our passage has the same message. Sharing wealth is part of a mutual relationship among equals. It's just another example of what each one of us does. God has richly supplied each of us. Although He has richly supplied us with different things, we all use them in the same way. We all use them

"to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share" (1 Timothy 6:18).

### ***Mary's major gift of wealth***

Almsgiving – giving down to the poor – is to be done in private. Giving to create good [*kalos*] works is to be done in public. These are different kinds of gifts. They have different purposes. They do different things. This difference – and the potential conflict between them – arises in the story of Mary's major gift of an asset.

Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12 all report this major asset gift. In the ancient world, perfume was a common form of

stored wealth.<sup>36</sup> In modern terms, this was a gift of a noncash asset. This was not a gift from regular income. It was a gift of wealth. This gift was also large. It was worth more than a year's wages.

This was not giving down, as in almsgiving. Mary was not placing herself above Jesus. She poured the extravagantly expensive perfume on Jesus's head and feet. This gift was public. Its fragrance filled the room. It had a big audience.

### ***Attacking and defending Mary's major gift of wealth***

Some of the disciples objected when seeing Mary's major gift of wealth.<sup>37</sup> They were indignant.<sup>38</sup> They argued that her gift was a waste. They argued that it

“could have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.” (Matthew 26:9).

In other words, it could have been used for almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*].

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<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., “Only the wealthy Egyptians, emanating from the elite, upper classes of society, namely royalty and the nobility, could afford these precious perfumes, many being produced from expensive, imported ingredients.” [Hawass, Z. (2006). *The great book of ancient Egypt: In the realm of the pharaohs*. The American University in Cairo. p. 152-153]; [Byl, S. A. (2012). *The essence and use of perfume in ancient Egypt* (Doctoral dissertation). University of South Africa.]

<sup>37</sup> This is “Some of those present” in Mark 14:4 and “the disciples” in Matthew 26:8. John 12:4 identifies Judas Iscariot as a speaker.

<sup>38</sup> In the New Testament, *aganakteō* appears only in the gospels. It arises in circumstances where a person causes offense by violating the appropriate rules. See Matthew 20:24 and Mark 10:41 when the ten became offended at the two seeking a position of greater honor in Jesus's kingdom; Matthew 21:15 when the chief priests and the scribes saw Jesus's healing and children shouting in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,”; Matthew 10:14 when Jesus saw the disciples rebuking the children seeking to come to Him; Luke 13:14 when the synagogue official reacted to Jesus healing on the Sabbath.

Jesus defends both the gift and the giver. Mark writes, “But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone; why are you bothering her? She has done [*ērgasato*] a beautiful deed [*kalon ergon*] to Me.’” (Mark 14:6).<sup>39</sup>

Matthew writes,

“But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, ‘Why are you bothering the woman? For she has done [*ergon*] a good deed [*kalon ērgasato*] for Me.’” (Matthew 26:10).

Jesus’s response provides insight. It elucidates these different, sometimes conflicting, types of giving.<sup>40</sup>

Mary’s gift of wealth was in response to an opportune moment. This was a special opportunity to make an impact with her wealth. (So, too, in 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul encourages wealth sharing by those who are rich “at this opportune moment.”<sup>41</sup>)

In contrast, almsgiving – like private prayer and fasting – is always available. Jesus explains,

“The poor you will always have with you, and you can

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<sup>39</sup> Berean Standard Bible

<sup>40</sup> In modern times, those who make major gifts of wealth often do so to create admirable-beautiful-good works. They give to bring beauty or discovery into the world. They create noble, admirable, inspiring good works. Sometimes, the response from commenters is to attack the donor. The attack is always the same: The money could have been given to the poor. For example, Malcolm Gladwell attacked a gift to advance engineering research at a leading university, calling such gifts “a moral crime” and a “waste.” [<https://www.businessinsider.com/malcolm-gladwell-talks-about-new-podcast-policing-and-education-2016-7> ; <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/3/8725331/malcolm-gladwell-harvard> ]

Similarly, Peter Singer attacked gifts to the arts, writing, “we will achieve more if we help those in extreme poverty” [Singer, P. (August 11, 2013). Good charity, bad charity. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/11/opinion/sunday/good-charity-bad-charity.html> ; See also <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/3/8723189/john-paulson-harvard-donation> ]

<sup>41</sup> “*en to nyn kairo*” in the Codex Sinaiticus.

help them whenever you want. But you will not always have Me.” (Mark 14:7).

Mary’s gift couldn’t wait. She had to make it right then. This was the opportune moment. Her gift was different in its urgency. It was also different in its publicity.

### ***Jesus’s extreme gift publicity***

Mary’s gift of wealth was not almsgiving. It was a good [*kalon*] work [*ergon*].<sup>42</sup> In Mark 14:6, Jesus describes her gift as “*kalon ergon ērgasato*.” In Matthew 26:10, it’s “*ergon gar kalon ērgasato*.”<sup>43</sup>

Such good works are to be public. Jesus commanded “*kala erga*” to be done

“before people in such a way that they may see”  
(Matthew 5:16b).

Peter also describes the importance of such public visibility. He writes,

“so that ... they may because of your good deeds [*kalōn ergon*], as they observe them, glorify God on the day of visitation.” (1 Peter 2:12b).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Writing of *kalois* in 1 Timothy 6:18, Alfred Rowland explains, “The latter word used by Paul signifies what is honourable and lovely in itself. It fell from the lips of our Lord when He described Mary’s act of devotion.” [Rowland, A. (1887). The perils and possibilities of the rich. In J. S. Exell (Ed.), *The Biblical illustrator*. Fleming H. Revell Co.]

<sup>43</sup> The only other time Scripture uses the word *ērgasato* in precisely this same form is when Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:16, “The one who had received the five talents immediately went and did business [*ērgasato*] with them, and earned five more talents.” This is in contrast to the one in Matthew 25:18, “who received the one talent went away and dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.” This parallels the contrast in 1 Timothy 6:17-18 between relying upon hidden/disappearing/uncertain [*adēlotēti*] riches and becoming rich in visible/beautiful good works [*ergois kalois*].

<sup>44</sup> Similarly, James says of the wise person, “Let him show by his good [*kalēs*] behavior his deeds [*erga*] in the gentleness of wisdom” (James 3:13b).



Paul too requires public visibility of these good works. He directs donors to give publicly. And he widely publicizes both their gifts and pledges. His gift publicity was extreme.

Jesus's gift publicity was even more extreme. He responded to Mary's major gift of wealth with the most massive donor publicity in recorded history. Jesus said,

“And truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.” (Mark 14:9).

Jesus's donor publicity was more extreme than Paul's was. Paul publicized the gift to a neighboring region. Jesus publicized the gift for all time in the whole world. Paul publicized a group of donors. Jesus publicized a single named donor – Mary. Certainly, Mary isn't the only donor publicly named in the New Testament.<sup>45</sup> But Jesus definitely made her the most famous one!

### ***Different rules for different gifts***

The ministry of major gift fundraising is not about almsgiving. It's different. The rules are different. The gifts are different. The goals are different. Almsgiving is good. But it's different.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 directs giving. This is giving with results. In one of these results, the donors become rich. They

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<sup>45</sup> E.g., Mary, Joanna, and Susanna, “who were contributing to their support out of their private means.” (Luke 8:1-3). Phoebe, “for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.” (Romans 16:2b, New International Version). Barnabas “sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:36-37). Consider also, “Paul tells the Corinthians that there were not many powerful or well-born among them (I Corinthians 1:26), but the statement itself suggests there were some, and we meet them in the figures of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who provided the churches hospitality as well as financial support for ‘the saints’ (I Corinthians 16:15-18).” [Johnson, L. T. (1987). 1 Timothy. 2 Timothy. Titus. John Knox Press. p. 103.]

become rich in beautiful-noble-inspirational-good [*kalois*] works.

Professor Donald Spence Jones explains that they are “to do *beautiful* actions” [emphasis in original].

Alexander Campbell translates this phrase as

“to be rich in lovely works”.<sup>46</sup>

Professor Richard Lenski translates the phrase as

“to be rich in excellent (noble) works”.<sup>47</sup>

Professor Luke Timothy Johnson translates it as

“wealthy in noble deeds”.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, other Bible translations use

“to be rich in noble works”<sup>49</sup>

“Tell them to hoard a wealth of noble actions”.<sup>50</sup>

This is how the rich are to use their wealth. They don’t leave it dormant and buried.<sup>51</sup> They use wealth to bring beauty

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<sup>46</sup> Campbell, A. (1826). *The living oracles New Testament*. 1 Timothy 6:18.

<sup>47</sup> Translation in Lenski, R. C. H. (1946). *Interpretation of St Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Augsburg Fortress. p. 727.

<sup>48</sup> “As they were rich, they had it in their power, above others, to do *beautiful* actions.” (Emphasis in the original) [Spence, H. D. M. & Exell, J. S. (1950). I & II Thess., Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James. In *The pulpit commentary* (Volume 21). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 140.]

<sup>49</sup> Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible

<sup>50</sup> New English Bible (1961 – First Edition). This expression was included in a long list of phrases later attacked as being “deplorable juxtapositions of words, semi-archaisms, and dated slang” and was subsequently changed to the phrase “to grow rich in noble actions” in the 1971 edition. [Phillips, J. B. (1965). *The problems of making a contemporary translation*. The Bible Translator, 16(1), 25-32. p. 31.]

<sup>51</sup> “*wealthy in noble deeds*. The verb *ploutein* (to be wealthy) has something of a transitive quality here: they are to exercise their wealth in the doing of *erga kala* (noble deeds, compare 2:10; 5:10).” [Johnson, L. T. (2001). *The first and second letters to Timothy: a new translation with introduction and commentary*. The Anchor Bible. p. 310.]

and good into the world. This kind of good is good that is

“good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”<sup>52</sup>

Such good works [*kala erga*] are to be seen. They are a light to shine before people. Sharing with the fellowship community [*koinōnikous*] is to be public. Such giving among equals inspires and helps spur one another on to good deeds. Almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*] is different. It is to be private.

Different gifts have different rules. We don't mix and match the rules. We follow the right rule for each type of gift. Different gifts have different purposes. We don't attack one form of giving because it's not the other form. We don't limit giving to one type of gift. We make each type of gift. And when we do, we follow the rules for that gift.

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<sup>52</sup> [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.]

## Chapter 11

### Message 9: You're being an admirable person!

- *Biblical fundraising is about the donor's admirable identity.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is about the organization's admirable identity.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [ *Instruct them*] to do good, **to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share**, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### FROM GOOD ACT TO GOOD IDENTITY

### *The donor's identity*

In Paul's fundraising message, God has richly supplied us. He does so for a purpose. The purpose of his rich supply is for enjoyment. That enjoyment comes about when we use it

- To do good
- To be rich in good works
- To be generous and ready to share

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, **ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous,** apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

These uses are not the same. The first item describes an action. It's a statement about what a person does. The other statements are different. They're about who a person is. They're descriptions of the donor's identity.

The progression is from doing to being. "To do" good becomes "to be" rich in good works. Doing good is an action.<sup>2</sup> Being rich is a status. It's an ongoing characteristic of the person. Being rich in good works is also a status. It's an ongoing characteristic of the donor.

### ***The donor's "I am" statement***

Both "to do good," *agathoergein*, and "to be rich," *ploutein*, are infinitives. The next words are different. *Eumetadotous*, "generous" or literally "good-sharer," is an adjective. It modifies *einai* – "to be". This is a form of *eimi* – I exist, I am.

Thus, *eumetadotous* modifies the donor's "I am" statement. It modifies the donor's identity. So does the next adjective, *koinōnikous* or "ready to share." These both describe who the donor is being. They describe the donor's identity.

Although it's a common word, *eimi* can be powerful. It's the word Jesus uses in His strongest identity claims. He uses it to say,

- "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am [*eimi*]." (John 8:58).
- "I am [*eimi*] the bread of life" (John 6:35).

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<sup>2</sup> However, even this first word may also carry the connotation of describing personal identity. One lexicon points out that in Classical Greek texts, *agathoergeō* included the idea of "act the part of a good man." [Bloomfield, S. T. (1840). *A Greek and English lexicon to the New Testament*. Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longmans. p. 1.]

- “I am [*eimi*] the light of the world” (John 8:12).
- “I am [*eimi*] the door” (John 10:9).
- “I am [*eimi*] the good shepherd” (John 10:11).
- “I am [*eimi*] the resurrection” (John 11:25).
- “I am [*eimi*] the vine” (John 15:5).
- “I am [*eimi*] the way, and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

Our passage uses the same word. It uses the present infinitive active form – *einai*. This same form appears in other identity statements. Regarding Jesus, we see the following:

- “Who do people say that I am [*einai*]?” (Mark 8:27; Luke 9:18b); “Who do people say that the Son of Man is [*einai*]?” (Matthew 16:13).
- “But who do you yourselves say that I am [*einai*]?” (Matthew 16:15); “But who do you say that I am [*einai*]?” (Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20).
- “They knew that He was [*einai*] the Christ.” (Luke 4:41b).
- “How is it that they say the Christ is [*einai*] David’s son?” (Luke 20:41b).
- “We found this man ... saying that He Himself is [*einai*] Christ, a King.” (Luke 23:2b).

Regarding others, we see,

- “For, some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be [*einai*] somebody,” (Acts 5:36a).
- “Now a man named Simon had previously been practicing magic ... claiming to be [*einai*] someone great;” (Acts 8:9).

- “And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, ‘What do you suppose that I am [*einai*]? I am [*eimi*] not He.’” (Acts 13:25).

In 1 Timothy, Paul uses *einai* to describe

- “Some people ... wanting to be [*einai*] teachers of the law” (1 Timothy 1:7a,c).
- “An overseer, then, must be [*einai*] above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2a).

The point is simple. *Einai* is used when defining a person’s identity. In our passage, “to be generous and ready to share” are not simply actions. They’re descriptions of the donor’s identity.<sup>3</sup> This is not just what the donor is doing. This is who the donor is being.

### ***The donor’s continuing identity***

“To do good [*agathoergein*]” is a present infinitive active verb. “To be rich [*ploutein*] in good works” is too. So is “to be [*einai*] generous and ready to share”. Paul’s opening identity statement, “not [*mē*] high-minded [*hypsēlophronein*]” is as well.

The present infinitive references an in-progress, continuing process.<sup>4</sup> One text explains,

“translate present tense infinitives ‘to continue to x,’ Aorist tense ‘to x,’ and perfects ‘to have x+ed.’”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Disciples Literal New Testament captures this in the phrase, “to be generous, sharing ones” (1 Timothy 6:18).

<sup>4</sup> See the extended discussion regarding the present infinitive active verb *hypsēlophronein* in Chapter 3, “Message 1: You’re the kind of person who makes gifts like this!”

<sup>5</sup> Hildebrandt, T. (2003). *Mastering New Testament Greek textbook*. Baker Academic. p. 131

The rich Christians are

- To continue to be not high-minded

They have already set their hope on a richly-providing God, not on the uncertainty of riches. Both of these motivate them

- To continue to do good
- To continue to be rich in good works
- To continue to be generous and ready to share

Paul is describing the rich Christians' in-progress, ongoing identity.<sup>6</sup> This isn't a call to start being something. It's a call to persist in being something.

The donor's giving matches their long-term, ongoing identity. It's who they have been. It's who they are being. It's who they should continue to be. The donor's past, present, and future identity compels them to give. This is what motivates major gifts of wealth.

### ***The donor's lasting identity***

In the chiasmic structure of this passage, Paul contrasts “the uncertainty of riches” with “rich in good works.”<sup>7</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup> Note the personal identity aspects of this use of the present infinitive: “It is well to notice particularly the difference between the aorist and present infinitive. The aorist infinitive denotes that which is eventual or particular, while the present infinitive indicates a condition or process. Thus *pisteusain* is to exercise faith on a given occasion, while *pisteuein* is to be a believer; *douleusai* is to render a service, while *douleuein* is to be a slave; *hamartain* is to commit a sin, while *hamartanein* is to be a sinner.” [Dana, H. E. & Mantey, J. R. (1928). *A manual grammar of the Greek New Testament*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. p. 199.]

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A-Riches [Death] 6:7,9-10 ...

B-Riches [Now/temporary] 6:17b

C-Riches [Leading to community separation] 6:17c

D-Riches [Tightly grasped as one's hope] 6:17d

**E-Riches [Hidden/disappearing/uncertain] 6:17e**

F-Riches [Source/inflow: God's rich provision to us] 6:17f

G-Riches [Purpose: for enjoyment] 6:17g



English, “uncertainty” isn’t a direct contrast with “good.” In Greek it is.

The word for “uncertainty” is *adēlotēti*. It also means hidden or disappearing. The word for “good” here is *kalois*. It references beautiful, visible, noble good works. Being rich in these good works is not hidden, disappearing, or uncertain. *Kalois* contrasts with every sense of *adēlotēti*.

Riches are disappearing. They’ll be lost during life or at death. When ownership will disappear is uncertain. That it will disappear is guaranteed.

Being rich is temporary, uncertain, and disappearing. Being rich in good works is not. It’s lasting. The word for “works” [*ergois*] references

“a work or worker who accomplishes something.”<sup>8</sup>

These good works are completed works. They have accomplished something. They are finished.

The one who becomes “rich in good works” stays that way, even if all his wealth is taken from him. It remains even when other accumulated things disappear. Being “rich in good works” is an identity. It’s a permanent identity. The status is permanent. The impact is permanent. The donors are permanently

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good

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F'-Riches [Use/outflow: Our reciprocal provision to others] 6:18a

**E'-Riches [Visible/beautiful good works] 6:18b**

D'-Riches [Open-handedly shared] 16:8c

C'-Riches [Leading to community connection] 6:18d

B'-Riches [Future/permanent] 6:19a

A'-Riches [Life] 6:19b

<sup>8</sup> *Ergon*: “(from *ergō*, “to work, accomplish”) – a work or worker who accomplishes something ... a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an inner desire (intention, purpose).” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).]

foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

That’s not temporary. That’s not disappearing. That’s not uncertain. In other words, that’s not *adēlotēti*.

### ***The donor’s visible identity***

The contrast here is not only with *adēlotēti* – “disappearing.” It’s also a contrast with *adēlotēti* – “hidden.” Hidden riches are attractive. Burying wealth in the ground is attractive.

Hiddenness keeps wealth protected. It’s hidden from thieves and governments. It’s hidden from relatives and beggars. One who hopes in “the hiddenness [*adēlotēti*] of wealth” is hoping that others won’t see it.

The wealth is hidden. Often, this also means that being wealthy is hidden. The public appearance doesn’t match the real identity. Both their wealth and their status as wealthy are concealed.

Being “rich in good works [*ergois kalois*]” is the opposite. It is open and visible. This phrase is also translated as

“to display their wealth in the performing of good deeds”<sup>9</sup>

Or as

“to exhibit a wealth of good actions”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Marshal, I. H. (1999). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. T & T Clark. p. 669. (emphasis added).

<sup>10</sup> Open English Bible (emphasis added); New New Testament [Taussig, H. (2013). *A New New Testament: A Bible for the twenty-first century combining traditional and newly discovered texts*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. p. 359.]

For the wealthy person, being rich in these good [*kalois*] works conflicts with hidden [*adēlotēti*] financial riches. Making a big, public, visible gift outs the person as being wealthy. This conflicts with keeping wealth hidden and buried.

### ***Public honor, respect, and reputation***

*Kalos* is visible. It is seen. Dr. Luke Post explains,  
“To do what is *kalos* is to do what is visibly or noticeably ‘good.’”<sup>11</sup>

Thayer’s lexicon gives a first definition of

“beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent.”<sup>12</sup>

Other definitions include

- “praiseworthy”
- “noble”
- “honorable, conferring honor”

Paul also uses this word to describe church overseers. He writes,

“And he must have a good [*kalen*] reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into disgrace

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<sup>11</sup> Post, T. L. (2019). *Doing “the good” in the Apostle Paul’s ethical vision* (Doctoral dissertation). Asbury Theological Seminary. p. 48. See also the same title by Lexington Books / Fortress Academic (2023).

<sup>12</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 322.

The notion of physical beauty is demonstrated in the Septuagint’s uses of *kalos* in Genesis 6:2, “the sons of God saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful [*kalai*]; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.”; in Deuteronomy 21:11, “and you see among the captives a beautiful [*kalēn*] woman, and are strongly attracted to her and would take her as a wife for yourself;”; 1 Samuel 25:3a “(now the man’s name was Nabal, and his wife’s name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful [*kalē*] in appearance”; and in Joshua 7:21, “when I saw among the spoils a beautiful [*kalēn*] robe from Shinar,”

and the snare of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:7).<sup>13</sup>

This *kalos* “good” describes a visible, public reputation. Other translations here use

- “well-respected”<sup>14</sup>
- “respected by”<sup>15</sup>
- “well thought of”<sup>16</sup>

In describing deacons, Paul again uses this word. He writes,

“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high [*kalon*] standing” (1 Timothy 3:13b).

Again, this *kalos* “good” describes a visible, public standing. Other translations here use

- “rewarded with respect from others”<sup>17</sup>
- “earn a good reputation”<sup>18</sup>
- “gain an excellent reputation”<sup>19</sup>
- “gain an excellent reputation for themselves”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Referencing the “good work” (*kalou ergou*) of the overseer or church leader in 1 Timothy 3:1, one commentator explains, “One who desires a bishopric sets his heart on ‘a good task’ (1 Timothy 3:1), on an honourable post that sets him before the world’s eye, and that requires constant labor” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 23.]

<sup>14</sup> Contemporary English Version

<sup>15</sup> Good News Translation

<sup>16</sup> English Standard Version

<sup>17</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>18</sup> Contemporary English Version

<sup>19</sup> GOD’S WORD® Translation

<sup>20</sup> International Standard Version; David Verner notes, “the author appears to speak for his church in regarding office in the church as socially prestigious in the same way that citizens of Greek cities and members of associations regarded office holding (1 Timothy 3:1, 13) ... Thus, although the leaders of the church may not have been on the same social level as the members of their municipal aristocracy,

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul uses both forms of good. He uses *agathos* – intrinsically good.<sup>21</sup> He also uses *kalos* – honorable and seen to be so. He pairs these two together in the previous chapter as well. In 1 Timothy 5:10, he uses nearly identical phrases. A widow supported by the church must be

“having a reputation for good works [*ergois kalois*]; ... has devoted herself to every good work [*ergō agathō*].” (1 Timothy 5:10a,c)

The supported widow must have a public reputation for good [*kalos*] works. Doing these hidden away in some corner wouldn't qualify. Her good [*kalos*] works must have been seen. (Indeed, that's part of what *kalos* means.) They must have been seen as her good works. Otherwise, she would have no such reputation. And she would receive no support.

In all three cases, Paul applies *kalos* to a person's public reputation.<sup>22</sup> He does so with overseers, deacons, and widows. It's not enough that they do good. These works must be known

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they shared the same aristocratic social aspirations within a smaller sphere.” [Verner, D. C. (1983). *The household of God: The social world of the Pastoral Epistles*. Scholars Press. pp. 159-160.] As discussed later, a sense of aristocratic virtue may also apply to the appeal for wealth sharing in 1 Timothy 6:18.

<sup>21</sup> Even though *agathos* refers to that which is intrinsically good, it can also be used as a term of public recognition. In a study of Greek inscriptions honoring wealthy donors, Danker explains, “When this term [*anēr agathos* (good man)] appears in the semantic field under discussion it functions as a dynamic equivalent of *eurgetēs* (benefactor).” Further, “A recurring synonym for *anēr agathos* is *kalokagathos*. To describe a person as *kalokagathos* (a perfect gentleman) or *kalēkagathē* (a noble woman) was one of the highest terms of praise in the Greek vocabulary.” [Danker, F. W. (1982). *Benefactor: Epigraphic study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament semantic field*. Clayton Publishing House. p. 318-319.]

Note that *kalokagathos* is also rendered *kalos kagathos*, again with the same meaning as the ideal gentleman, often referencing aristocracy. This phrase parallels Paul's usage of both *agathos* and *kalos* in 1 Timothy 6:18.

<sup>22</sup> Professor Walter Lock explained, “The Pastoral Epistles use ... the phrase *kalon ergon, kala erga*, 7 times: often with reference to a deed as seen by others.” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner's Sons. p. 22.]

as their good works. Their doing good must affect their public reputation. It's mandatory.

This public nature of the word matches its use in antiquity. It describes an admirable, virtuous appearance. A dissertation on Plato's use of the word explains,

“The concept of the *kalon* organizes aspirations to appear and be admired as beautiful for one's virtue.”<sup>23</sup>

The exact phrase *ergois kalois* appears elsewhere in antiquity only once. Pindar (518-438 B.C.) uses it to describe the kinds of impressive deeds that people write songs about. He explains that

“song is a ‘mirror for splendid deeds’ (*ergois kalois esoptron*).”<sup>24</sup>

In Pindar, Plato, or Paul, *kalos* means the same thing. *Kalos* is all about a public, visible, inspirational reputation.

### ***Donor recognition impacts reputation and inspires others***

Donor publicity is found repeatedly in scripture.

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<sup>23</sup> Fine, J. (2018). *Beauty on display: Plato and the concept of the Kalon* (Doctoral dissertation). Columbia University. p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> [Obbink, D. (2010). Early Greek allegory. In R. Copeland & P. T. Struck (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to allegory* (15-25). Cambridge University Press. p. 23.] This references Pindar, Nemean Odes 7.14: *ergois de kalois esoptron*. In a translation by D. A. Svarlien, Pindar here explains of songs, “we know of only one way to hold a mirror up to fine deeds.”

Fine renders this as, “We know of a mirror for kalois deeds [*ergois de kalois esoptron*] in only one way, if by the grace of Mnemosyne with the shining crown [*liparampukos*], one finds a recompense for his labors in songs of praise [*epeōn aoidais*]. (N. 7.14-6)”

And also, “Come, Muse, direct to that house a glorious wind of verses [*ouron epeōn | euklea*], because when men are dead and gone, songs and words preserve for them their kala deeds [*ta kala erga*]. (N. 6.28-30)” [Fine, J. (2018). *Beauty on display: Plato and the concept of the Kalon* (Doctoral dissertation). Columbia University. p. 22.]

Whether it's Barnabas, Phoebe, Joanna, Susanna, Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Bethany, we see it again and again. Why? What are the motivations of such publicity?

One clear goal for donor publicity is to inspire others to give. Paul used this. And he wasn't subtle about it. He publicized the Corinthians' charitable pledge. (The passage suggests this was likely without their advance knowledge.) He did so to motivate the Macedonians to give. Then, he publicized the Macedonians' giving. He did so to motivate the Corinthians to give.

Another clear goal for donor publicity is to impact personal reputation. Donors should become rich in beautiful, visible, noble good works. The opposite is also true. Donors can face public shame for failing to give. Paul used this, too. And he wasn't subtle about it, either. He writes,

“But I have sent the brothers [*to collect the donation*], in order that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you will be prepared; otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to mention you—would be put to shame by this confidence.” (2 Corinthians 9:3-4).

Paul explains how their reputation would suffer if they didn't openly and publicly make this gift. Paul's fundraising both promises – and threatens – to make an impact on public reputation.

PART II  
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF DONOR RECOGNITION  
(Message 9: You're being an admirable person!)

***The evidence is clear***

Almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*] is to be in secret. Other giving is not. Outside of almsgiving, the scriptural evidence for donor publicity is clear.

It's clear in Jesus's instructions.<sup>1</sup> It's clear in Paul's instructions.<sup>2</sup> It's clear in Jesus's actions.<sup>3</sup> It's clear in Paul's actions.<sup>4</sup> It's clear in scripture's publication of specific named donors to Jesus's ministries.<sup>5</sup> It's clear in scripture's publication of specific named donors to the early church.<sup>6</sup> It's clear in scripture's publication of specific named donors to Paul's ministries.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good [*kala*] works [*erga*], and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

<sup>2</sup> "Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you." (2 Corinthians 8:24). The Literal Standard Version uses, "show to them, even in the face of the assemblies".

<sup>3</sup> When speaking of a gift that cost a year's wages, Jesus said, "And truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her." (Mark 14:9)

<sup>4</sup> "I boast about you to the Macedonians." (2 Corinthians 9:2b)

<sup>5</sup> For example, Mary, Joanna, and Susanna, "who were contributing to their support out of their private means." (Luke 8:1-3.)

<sup>6</sup> "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (meaning Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." (Acts 4:36-37)

<sup>7</sup> Paul writes of Phoebe, "for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me." (Romans 16:2b, New International Version).

Professor Luke Timothy Johnson proposes additional named wealthy donors explaining, "Paul tells the Corinthians that there were not many powerful or well-born among them (1 Corinthians 1:26), but the statement itself suggests there were some, and we meet them in the figures of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus,



It's clear. Yet, in the words of the infomercial: But wait, there's more! The historical record matches the scriptural one. It gives ample evidence of widespread donor recognition in both church and synagogue.

### ***Public benefactor recognition in the synagogue***

Recognition of large donations was ubiquitous in Paul's day. Wealthy donors were regularly given public honors for gifts. Such donor recognition would have surrounded Paul's audience.<sup>8</sup> Donor inscriptions were permanently engraved into the architecture. One scholar notes of this use of donor inscriptions,

“Its greatest proliferation, however, was under Roman

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who provided the churches hospitality as well as financial support for ‘the saints’ (I Corinthians 16:15-18).” [Johnson, L. T. (1987). 1 Timothy. 2 Timothy. Titus. John Knox Press. p. 103.] Similarly, Professor Craig Keener references, “the Corinthian delegation of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who brought him a gift (16:17-18).” [Keener, C., (2014). Paul and the Corinthian believers. In S. Westerholm (Ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (pp. 46-62). John Wiley & Sons. p. 52.]

Perhaps the largest estimate of named donors and patrons to Paul's ministry comes from Professor Edwin Judge, who, taking various terms as patronage relationship euphemisms, concludes, “We can thus identify as many as forty persons ... in the class of people who either actually did sponsor Paul's activities or are referred to in a way that implies they probably did, or would have done had occasion arisen ... How important was this circle of sponsors of St. Paul? It must be emphasized that it was upon them privately, rather than upon the church as an organized group, that he depended for the maintenance of his tours. In most cases the churches simply do not come into it. Where they are mentioned it is often in the ambiguous connection of ‘the church in so and so's house.’ Whether this means that the household concerned constituted the church in that place, or merely that it formed a socially distinct group within it, is not clear, and in either case it underlines the importance of the patronal household from St. Paul's point of view.” [Judge, E. A. (1961). The early Christians as a scholastic community: Part II. *Journal of Religious History*, 1(3), 125-137. p. 130.]

<sup>8</sup> Professor Frederick Danker summarizes the importance of this, explaining, “In brief, the language and themes of Graeco-Roman inscriptions that reflect the pervasive interest in the function of a benefactor offer a manageable hermeneutical control base for determining the meaning that an auditor or reader of literary documents is likely to have attached to certain formulations and thematic treatment. This awareness is especially important when dealing with New Testament documents, which were designed to meet the needs of primarily a non-literary public.” Danker, F. W. (1982). *Benefactor: Epigraphic study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament semantic field*. Clayton Publishing House. p. 29

imperial rule during the 1st, 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE, when we have more inscriptions for benefactors in cities in both East and West than ever before.”<sup>9</sup>

Donor inscriptions were at a historical height. However, this public recognition of large donors was not just a Roman practice. It was also a Jewish one. This, too, appears in the archeological record.

Jesus and Paul preached in the synagogues. As they did so, donor recognition would have surrounded them. Donor inscriptions were common in first-century synagogues.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, these are what often identify a building as having been a synagogue.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Euergetism ... from the ancient Greek *euergetes* (benefactor) ... is mostly used to refer to the munificence of local civic elites. Recent scholarship stresses the transactional character of euergetism: benefactors donated or contributed to public buildings (including temples), festivals, and games, or they gave distributions of food or money or organized public banquets in exchange for publicly awarded honours ... Its greatest proliferation, however, was under Roman imperial rule during the 1st, 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE, when we have more inscriptions for benefactors in cities in both East and West than ever before” [Zuiderhoek, A. (2016). *Euergetism*. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics.]

<sup>10</sup> As an example of such donor inscriptions in Paul’s time, see “It is already attested in a list of donors for the renovation of the synagogue building in Berenike (CJZC 72; 55/56 CE: *eis episkeuēn tēs synagōgēs*). The author of Luke-Acts employs the term in the same way in Luke 7:5 (*tēn synagōgēn autos ōkodomēsen hēmin*) and Acts 18:7 (*hē oikia ēn synomoroussa tē synagōgē*).” (referencing Luke 7:5, “it was he who built us our synagogue,” and Acts 18:7, “whose house was adjoining the synagogue.” [Öhler, M. (2020). Synagogues in inscriptions from Asia Minor: The Lulia Severa Inscription reconsidered. In L. Doering & A. A. Cross (Eds.), *Synagogues in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods: Archaeological finds, new methods, new theories*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. p. 354.]

An earlier example of donor inscriptions for a synagogue appears in Delos, from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.

<sup>11</sup> Indeed, such donor inscriptions were often the primary evidence for the identification of a first-century building as a synagogue. Lidia Matassa explains, “what can possibly help to identify what a first-century synagogue might have been, in the absence of specific identifiers and markers? ... If, on the other hand, the building is designed to function solely as a synagogue ... We might also expect to find some sort of external indication of what the building was, such as an identifying inscription, donor inscriptions, or perhaps a door lintel with rosettes carved into it” [Matassa, L. D. (2018). *Invention of the first-century synagogue*. SBL Press. p. 6.]

Major donor recognition was physically constructed into the synagogue buildings themselves. An example of one such first-century inscription in Phrygia reads,

“The building was erected by Julia Severa; P(ublius) Tyrronios Klados, the head-for-life of the synagogue, and Lucius, son of Lucius, head of the synagogue, and Publius Zotikos, archon, restored it with their own funds and with the money which had been deposited, and they donated the murals for the walls and the ceiling, and they reinforced the windows and made all the rest of the ornamentation, and the synagogue honored them with a-gilded shield on account of their virtuous behavior, solicitude and zeal for the synagogue.”<sup>12</sup>

This is massive donor recognition. It is recognition built into the synagogue structure. It is recognition that documents additional recognition – the presentation of a gilded shield. It is recognition for the donors’ admirable personal qualities. It is recognition for what their gift specifically accomplished.

It’s also recognition that makes the donor the actor. It reads,

“they reinforced the windows and made all the rest of the ornamentation.”

Of course, the wealthy donors weren’t laborers. They didn’t physically do these actions. But they’re described as doing the work.

In our passage, Paul directs a separate ministry to the rich. Some evidence suggests that donor recognition in

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<sup>12</sup> Brooten, B. J. (1982). *Inscriptional evidence for women as leaders in the ancient synagogue* (Doctoral dissertation). Harvard University. Appendix. p. 158. (Referencing Lifshitz, Donateurs no. 33; CII 766; MIMA VI, 264.)

synagogues may have been split in the same way. One researcher explains,

“Hezser, for instance, in her study of Jewish donor inscriptions throughout antiquity, picked up on an intriguing pattern of linguistic choice. She notes that while large individual donations were almost entirely recorded in Greek, communal inscriptions and smaller donations were instead recorded in Hebrew: ‘Communal inscriptions in Hebrew [were] as low as half a denarius ... [donors in the Greek inscriptions] have donated entire mosaics, founded and renovated whole parts of synagogue buildings ... it is quite obvious, then, that the wealthy donors were usually commemorated in Greek ... only two collective inscriptions are in Greek, whereas numerous such inscriptions, honouring a set of anonymous donors, are amongst the Aramaic/Hebrew synagogue inscriptions.’ ... the evidence assembled here allows us to suggest that this might be a vestige from two contrasting methods of donation—one essentially euergetic and the other communal.”<sup>13</sup>

As Paul taught in the synagogues, such explicit donor recognition would have physically surrounded him. In many ways, these donor inscriptions parallel Paul’s fundraising instructions to Timothy.

Donor recognition is ancient. It’s in the Old Testament. It’s in the New Testament. It was on Roman buildings. It was on synagogue buildings. And, yes, it was also on the early church buildings.

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<sup>13</sup> MacGillivray, E. D. (2009). Re-evaluating patronage and reciprocity in antiquity and New Testament studies. *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*, 6, 37-81. p. 79. (Quotation from Hezser, C. (2001). *Jewish literacy in Roman Palestine* (Texts and studies in ancient Judaism, Vol 81). Mohr Siebeck. p. 402.)

## ***Public benefactor recognition in the early church***

Did the early church continue this synagogue practice? Did it embed donor recognition into its houses of worship? Yes. The archeological record shows it.

Congregations first met in homes or other multi-function spaces. Purpose-built church structures came only later.<sup>14</sup> The earliest known church building is the Megiddo church. It was constructed around 230 A.D.

This church building has a mosaic tile floor. The floor contains three inscriptions. The largest of these inscriptions recognizes a donor. It reads:

“Gaianus, also called Porphyrius, centurion, our brother, has made the pavement [mosaic] at his own expense as an act of liberality. Brutius has carried out the work.”<sup>15</sup>

This is substantial donor recognition. It is recognition built into the church structure. It is recognition for the donor’s admirable personal qualities. It is recognition for what his gift accomplished.

This is also recognition that makes the donor the actor. The donor has agency. The donor makes it happen. He didn’t

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<sup>14</sup> “*Kata Christianon logoi* of 268 is the earliest text to mention the erection of buildings intended from the start to serve as Christian churches.” [Thomas, J. P. (1987). *Private religious foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (No. 24). Dumbarton Oaks. p. 9.]

<sup>15</sup> [Adams, E. (2008). The ancient church at Megiddo: The discovery and an assessment of its significance. *The Expository Times*, 120(2), 62-69.]; Another translation reads, “Gaianos, also called Porphyrius, centurion, our brother who made this benefaction from his own funds, laid down the mosaic. Bruttius did the work.” [Bowersock, G. W. (2018). Religion in early fourth century Roman Palestine: The Kfar ‘Othnay Mosaics. *Syria Archéologie, Art Et Histoire*, (95), 65-72.] Another reads, “Gaianos, also named Porphyrios, centurion, our brother, having loved to honor Christ, Amen has laid a mosaic out of his own resources. Brutius did the work.” [Taylor, J. E. (2021). Gendered space: Eusebius on the Therapeutae and the “Megiddo Church”. In J. E. Taylor & I. L. E. Ramelli (Eds.), *Patterns of women’s leadership in early Christianity* (pp. 290-302). Oxford University Press. p. 297.]

just give money. He “made” the mosaic floor. This is true even though another person “carried out the work.”

The building also contains two other inscriptions. These appear in the top and bottom of a single frame. The lower inscription recognizes another donor. It reads,

“The God-loving Akeptous has offered the table to God Jesus Christ as a memorial.”<sup>16</sup>

One scholar explains,

“Akeptous was obviously a woman of financial means. The table (trapeza) donated by her was almost certainly a table that served for the celebration of the Eucharist.”<sup>17</sup>

The inscription recognizes what her gift did. Her gift paid for the table. The inscription does something else. It recognizes the donor’s admirable identity. She is “God-loving.”

The language also contains an interesting parallel. It uses Jesus’s words when He publicized Mary of Bethany’s gift worth a year’s wages. Jesus said,

“Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory [*mnēmosynon*] of her” (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9).

This donor inscription ends with the identical word. It ends

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<sup>16</sup> Adams, E. (2008). The ancient church at Megiddo: The discovery and an assessment of its significance. *The Expository Times*, 120(2), 62-69. p. 65; Tepper, Y., & Di Segni, L. (2006). *A Christian prayer hall of the third century CE at Kefar Othnay (Legio): Excavation at the Megiddo Prison 2005*. Israel Antiquities Authority. p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Adams, E. (2008). The ancient church at Megiddo: The discovery and an assessment of its significance. *The Expository Times*, 120(2), 62-69. p. 65.

with *mnēmosynon*.<sup>18</sup>

The final inscription appears in the same frame. It reads simply,

“Remember Primilla and Cyriaca and Dorothea, and moreover also Chreste.”<sup>19</sup>

Its inclusion in the same frame is instructive. These women likely were relatives of the donor Akeptous. (Or they may have been donors themselves.) Scholars note that

“the request to remember is not addressed to God (‘Lord, remember so-and-so’; ‘Let so-and-so be remembered’), but to the community.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, this is not an appeal to God. It’s an appeal for community recognition and remembrance.

Public donor recognition in the church is nothing new. It was embedded into the very earliest church buildings. The archeological record shows the same practice continued in subsequent years.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, this is easy to see in most historical

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<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this, see Tepper, Y., & Di Segni, L. (2006). *A Christian prayer hall of the third century CE at Kefar ‘Othnay (Legio): Excavation at the Megiddo Prison 2005*. Isreal Antiquities Authority. p. 46-47.

The only other appearance of this word in the New Testament, also in the identical form, is in regard to Cornelius’s donations and prayers: “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial [*mnēmosynon*] before God.” (Acts 10:4b.)

<sup>19</sup> Tepper, Y., & Di Segni, L. (2006). *A Christian prayer hall of the third century CE at Kefar ‘Othnay (Legio): Excavation at the Megiddo Prison 2005*. Isreal Antiquities Authority. p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Tepper, Y., & Di Segni, L. (2006). *A Christian prayer hall of the third century CE at Kefar ‘Othnay (Legio): Excavation at the Megiddo Prison 2005*. Isreal Antiquities Authority. p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., Habas, L. (2008). Donations and donors as reflected in the mosaic pavements of Transjordan’s churches in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. In K. Kogman-Appel & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Between Judaism and Christianity* (pp. 73-90). Brill; Erny, G. K. (2012). *Constructing gender: Female architectural patronage in Roman Asia Minor and Syria in the first through sixth centuries CE*. Macalester College. [https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/classics\\_honors/13/](https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/classics_honors/13/) .

church buildings. They often display considerable donor recognition.

### ***Donor nobility and Paul's language***

Our passage is a message to the rich. It's a message to encourage their generosity. It does so, in part, by calling on the rich to behave like true nobility. Professor Reggie Kidd explains,

“The virtues urged upon the ‘rich in this world’ at 1 Timothy 6:18 are a transposition of ‘the aristocratic virtues required of men of property by Aristotle.’”<sup>22</sup>

Paul uses two different words for “good” together. He describes the wealthy donors as both *kalos* and *agathos*. This can have a special meaning. One commentator explains of 1 Timothy 6:18,

“The two adjectives for ‘good’ here have a distinction, ... The two together came to be used at Athens as one phrase to denote ‘a gentleman.’ And so such a use of wealth marks ‘the Christian gentleman.’”<sup>23</sup>

The two words combine in the term *kalos kagathos*. This term

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<sup>22</sup> Kidd, R. M. (1989). *Wealth and beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: An inquiry into a “bourgeois” form of early Christianity* (Doctoral dissertation). Duke University. p. 41. (Quoting from Spicq, C. (1969). *Les épîtres pastorales* (4th ed. *Études Bibliques*, Vol. 39). Gabalda Press. p. 1.577.)

<sup>23</sup> The reference continues, “For the second word is the one used in Matthew 5:16, ‘let your light shine ... that they may see your good works,’ and 1 Peter 2:12, ‘your good works which they behold. Compare Bp. Westcott’s definition, Hebrews 10:24 ‘works which by their generous and attractive character win the natural admiration of men,’” [Humphreys, A. E. (1895). *The Epistles to Timothy & Titus*. In J. Perowne (Ed.), *The Cambridge Bible for schools and colleges*. University Press. p. 149.] Similarly, Danker notes of the phrase *kalos kagathos* in inscriptions, the implied meaning of “an exceptional gentlemen” [Danker, F. W. (1982). *Benefactor: Epigraphic study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament semantic field*. Clayton Publishing House. p. 78.]



had a special meaning. Another commentator references,

“the [Greek] philosophers, who used the expression *kalos kagathos* to denote ‘the sum total of the qualities of an Athenian man of honour’”<sup>24</sup>

Professor Korinna Zamfir explains,

“*Kalos* and *agathos*, used in a moral sense, stand for noble good and are markers of a specific system of values, of a certain human ideal. They characterize the noble, generous deeds of the *kalos kagathos*. Spicq has recognised long ago that the [Pastoral Epistles] presuppose precisely this ideal of the perfectly good, honourable man. It should also be recalled that, in the Greek world, the noble and good man, the *agathos*, was the representative of the elite: aristocracy involved moral excellence.”<sup>25</sup>

Paul scorns the love of money [*philargyria*] in 1 Timothy 6:10. This is not an attack on the elite. It matches traditional Greek aristocratic values.<sup>26</sup> In Greek ethical writing,

“*a-philargyria* [not loving money] is an ideal value of the elites, a common requirement in ethical writings and

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<sup>24</sup> Cremer, H. (1878). *Biblico-theological lexicon of New Testament Greek*. T. & T. Clark.

<sup>25</sup> Zamfir, K. (2014). The love of money is the root of all evils: Wealth and the well-to-do in 1 Timothy. In G. Benyik (Ed.), *The Bible and economics* (pp. 403-413). Jate Press. p. 425.

<sup>26</sup> “The censure of *philargyria* [loving money] does not express hostility towards wealth; conversely, it is part of elite mentality.” [Zamfir, K. (2013). *Men and women in the household of God: A contextual approach to roles and ministries in the Pastoral Epistles* (Vol. 103). Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. p. 142. (Citing Sophocles. (1994). *Antigone* (LCL 21, tr: Hugh Lloyd-Jones). Harvard University Press. 295-299; Hippocrates, Ep. 17.43; Democr. In *Gnomologium Vaticanum* (Vatican Sayings), 265; Diogenes Laertius 6.50; Appolodorus Comicus 4; Diodorus Siculus, 21.1, Plutarch, *Paulus Aemilius*, 8,6); See also Roskam, G. (2005). Plutarch’s Life of Agis, or the honourable course of a beginning politician. In *The statesman in Plutarch’s Works, Volume II: The statesman in Plutarch’s Greek and Roman lives* (pp. 227-241). Brill. p. 228-229.]

in admonitions to officials or candidates for office.”<sup>27</sup>

True nobles would never plunge into ruin and destruction because they “want to get rich.” (1 Timothy 6:10). The nobility already have wealth. Their focus is not on getting rich; it’s on being rich the right way. They are to fulfill their role as generous benefactors, not greedy hoarders. These are traditional aristocratic virtues.

### ***Donor nobility in Old Testament language***

A similar sense also arises in Old Testament Hebrew. We read that Moses encouraged donations from

“whoever is of a willing [*nadib*] heart.” (Exodus 35:5).

The response came from those donors,

“both men and women, as many as had a willing [*nadib*] heart” (Exodus 35:22).

Centuries later, people responded to Hezekiah’s appeal. 2 Chronicles 29:31 explains,

“all whose hearts were willing [*nadib*] brought burnt offerings.”

This idea is nothing new. Giving should come from a willing heart. We know that. But we can miss something else.

The word for willing is *nadib*. But it is translated that way only in these verses. It normally means something different. It means “noble,” “nobility,” “princely,” or “prince.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Zamfir, K. (2013). *Men and women in the household of God: a contextual approach to roles and ministries in the Pastoral Epistles* (Vol. 103). Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. p. 142.

<sup>28</sup> Numbers 21:18, “Which the nobles of the people”; 1 Samuel 2:8, “To make them sit with nobles”; Job 12:21, “He pours contempt on nobles”; Job 21:28, “the house of the nobleman”; Job 34:18, “To nobles, ‘Wicked ones’”; Psalm 47:9, “The princes of the people”; Psalm 83:11, “Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb”; Psalm

These meanings overlap. *Nadib* means generous. And it means noble or nobility. Isaiah 32:5 begins,

“No longer will the wicked fool be called noble [*nadib*].”<sup>29</sup>

But in other translations, “noble” is replaced with “generous”<sup>30</sup> or “liberal.”<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 32:8 reads,

“But the noble person [*wa-nādib*] devises noble plans [*nadib-ōwt*]; And by noble plans [*nadib-ōwt*] he stands.”<sup>32</sup>

But other translations read,

“But a generous man devises generous things, And by generosity he shall stand.”<sup>33</sup>

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107:40, “He pours contempt upon noblemen”; Psalm 113:8, “To make [them] sit with princes, With the princes of His people.”; Psalm 118:9, “Than to trust in princes.”; Psalm 146:3, “Do not trust in princes,”; Proverbs 8:16, “and nobles, All who judge rightly.”; Proverbs 17:7, “are lying lips to a prince.”; Proverbs 25:7, “in the presence of the prince”; Songs 6:12, “the chariots of my noble people”; Songs 7:1, “O prince’s daughter!”; Isaiah 13:2, “the doors of the nobles”.

<sup>29</sup> Legacy Standard Bible; The New American Standard Bible reads, “No longer will the fool be called noble”.

<sup>30</sup> New King James Version

<sup>31</sup> English Revised Version; King James Version; Webster’s Bible Translation; Smith’s Literal Translation; JPS Tanakh 1917.

<sup>32</sup> New American Standard Bible; See similar translations in New International Version; English Standard Version; Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; New Heart English Bible; World English Bible; American Standard Version; See also The Berean Study Bible which includes multiple variations for *nadib* rendering this as, “But a noble man makes honorable plans; he stands up for worthy causes.”

<sup>33</sup> New King James Version; See also New Living Translation, “But generous people plan to do what is generous, and they stand firm in their generosity.”; King James Version, “But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.” English Revised Version, “But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and in liberal things shall he continue.” A fascinating variation perhaps relevant for the practicing fundraiser is found in Smith’s Literal Translation, “And the liberal will counsel liberal things, and upon liberal things shall he stand.”

Similarly, Proverbs 19:6 begins,

“Many seek the favor of a generous person [*nadib*],”<sup>34</sup>

But in other translations, “Many seek the favor of ...”

“the prince [*nadib*],”<sup>35</sup>

“the nobility [*nadib*],”<sup>36</sup> or

“a generous and noble man [*nadib*]”<sup>37</sup>

Paul encourages giving by the rich. He describes the wealthy person of honor. He describes the generous and noble rich. His words reference culturally familiar expectations.<sup>38</sup> They describe the true role of the benefactor.

### **Word problems: The “*eu-ergetēs*” benefactor**

In Paul’s time, a common word for a wealthy philanthropist was *euergetēs*. It’s often translated as “benefactor.” It comes from *eu-* [good] and *ergetēs* [doer or worker]. Paul, however, does not use this word.

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<sup>34</sup> English Standard Version; See also New American Standard Bible, “Many will seek the favor of a generous person”; New Revised Standard Version, “Many seek the favor of the generous”; GOD’S WORD® Translation, “Many try to win the kindness of a generous person”; New English Translation (NET) Bible, “Many people entreat the favor of a generous person”.

<sup>35</sup> Majority Standard Bible; Berean Standard Bible; See also “of the prince” in the King James Version and Webster’s Bible Translation, and “before the prince” in the Aramaic Bible in Plain English.

<sup>36</sup> New King James Version, “Many entreat the favor of the nobility,”.

<sup>37</sup> Amplified Bible

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., “The ethic encouraged here reflects the tenets of Hellenistic and Roman philosophy, which, drawing on Aristotle’s teachings, promoted liberal generosity as the ideal mean between profligate spending and close-fisted miserliness (Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 4; Cicero On Duties 2.15). Like this author, the philosophers claimed the greatest benefit of wealth was the opportunity it afforded to do good or noble deeds (that is, to be a benefactor), and its greatest danger was its ability to corrupt a person’s heart (Seneca On the Happy Life 21.2).” [Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 119.]

Some have argued that this absence means Paul rejected the role of the benefactor. It does not. Paul commends the role of the true benefactor. What he avoids is the tarnished and corrupted title.

The word *euergetēs* had been misused. Many kings and rulers – including harsh tyrants – had taken the term as an official title.<sup>39</sup> Thus, that term had lost its original meaning.

Jesus points out this misuse. He points to those who “liked to be called” *euergetēs*, but actually “lord it over” others.<sup>40</sup> He contrasts these with those who really did serve others.<sup>41</sup>

As Jesus explained, many abused the title *euergetēs*.<sup>42</sup> So, Paul avoids this tainted title. He avoids the word, but he embraces the role. He describes the benefactor role using synonyms.<sup>43</sup> He creatively employs many parallel words.

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<sup>39</sup> E.g., Antiochus VII Euergetes, Seleucid king, reigned 138–129 B.C.; Attalus III Philometor Euergetes, king of Pergamon, reigned 138–133 B.C.; Mithridates V Euergetes, king of Pontus, reigned 150–120 B.C.; Nicomedes III Euergetes, king of Bithynia, reigned 127–94 B.C.; Ptolemy III Euergetes, king of Egypt, reigned 246–222 B.C.; Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, king of Egypt, reigned 169–164, 144–132, 126–116 B.C.; Telephos Euergetes, Indo-Greek ruler, reigned 75–70 B.C.; Tiraios I Euergetes, king of Characene, reigned 95/94–90/89 B.C.; Cleopatra Euergetis, queen of Egypt, reigned 142–131, 127–101 B.C.

<sup>40</sup> Luke 22:25 (New International Version).

<sup>41</sup> Luke 22:25-26, “Jesus said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.’”

<sup>42</sup> “the criticism in Luke 22:25 of petty tyrants who like to pass themselves off as benefactors (*hoi exousiazontes autōn euergetai kalountai*) is no disclaimer of the category as such for Jesus and his followers. The words ‘Now you shall not be like that’ (verse 26) do not refer to the role of benefactor but to the interest in domination that is evidenced by many rulers who try to mask their tyranny with a flourish of public works.” [Danker, F. W. (1982). *Benefactor: Epigraphic study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament semantic field*. Clayton Publishing House. p. 324.]

<sup>43</sup> “However, the cultural context of the paraenesis to the rich suggests that *agathoergein* and the *erga kala*, are not just any good deeds but the acts of euergetism.... The mentality and the language is that of euergetism.” [Zamfir, K.

We see this in Paul’s description of Phoebe. Phoebe was known for her generosity. She was likely “rich in this present world.” One professor notes,

“Phoebe the Deacon of Cenchrae was wealthy enough to be one of Paul’s patrons (Romans 16:1-2).”<sup>44</sup>

Paul describes Phoebe as a benefactor. He writes,

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe ... give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.” (Romans 16:1-2 NIV).

In English, the word is “benefactor.” It’s the same word used to translate *euergetēs*. But Paul doesn’t use *euergetēs*. He uses *prostatis* (patroness/benefactor). He commends the important role. He avoids the corrupted term.

Paul also avoids *euergetēs* in our passage. Again, he substitutes parallel phrases. He uses both *eu* words [good] and *ergetēs* words [doer or worker]. He embraces the role. He avoids the word.

The rich Christian is being a *eu*-sharer: *eu-metadotous*. He uses wealth to do good: *agatho-ergein*.<sup>45</sup> He uses it to do good works: *ergois kalois*. The donor is both *eu* and *ergetēs*. But the tainted word *euergetēs* is avoided.

Similarly, the donor does *agatho-ergein*. In donor inscriptions of the time, *anēr agathos* (good man) was a

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(2014). The love of money is the root of all evils: Wealth and the well-to-do in 1 Timothy. In G. Benyik (Ed.), *The Bible and economics* (pp. 403-413). Jate Press. p. 426, 428.]

<sup>44</sup> Johnson, L. T. (1987). *1 Timothy. 2 Timothy. Titus*. John Knox Press. p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> Paul apparently goes out of his way to use *eu* or *ergetēs* related words. A more common word for doing good is *agatho-poiēn* from *poieō*, to make or do, such as in 1 Peter 2:14. *Poieō* is (a) I make, manufacture, construct, (b) I do, act, cause. The Pulpit Commentary notes of this verse, “Do good (*agathoergein*; here only, for the more common *agathopoiein*)” [Hervey, A. C. (1884). I Timothy. In Spence, H. D. M., & Exell, J. S. (Eds.), *The pulpit commentary*. Funk & Wagnalls. p. 123].

“dynamic equivalent” of *euergetēs*.<sup>46</sup> So, too, combining *kalos* and *agathos* was a synonym for benefactor: *kalos kagathos*. One commentator explains of 1 Timothy 6:18,

“Most scholars interpret the four expectations regarding sharing as calling the wealthy to serve as generous benefactors, in part, because the first two infinitives sound like benefaction language ...”<sup>47</sup>

Another writes,

“They are thus encouraged to be benefactors, a familiar role in Greco-Roman society.”<sup>48</sup>

The benefactor role is the right role. But the benefactor word, *euergetēs*, had been misused. So, Paul instead used other benefactor words. He avoids the tainted word. But he still describes the rich Christian’s important role as an authentic benefactor.

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<sup>46</sup> Danker, F. W. (1982). *Benefactor: Epigraphic study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament semantic field*. Clayton. pp. 318-19.

<sup>47</sup> Hoag, G. G. (2015). Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus (*Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement Vol. 11*). Penn State Press. p. 203. The author cites “Witherington, Letters and Homilies, 298; Blomberg, Neither Poverty nor Riches, 212; and others.”

<sup>48</sup> Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 120.

PART III  
HONEST IMPRESSIONS: GIVING MUST REFLECT ADMIRABLE  
IDENTITY

(Message 9: You're being an admirable person!)

***The right kind of donor recognition***

Donor publicity is ancient. It's found in ancient scripture. It's found in ancient church and synagogue buildings. Donor publicity can be powerful. It affects reputation. It inspires others. But there are two things it must not do.

First, it must not lead to being high-minded [*hypsēlophronein*]. Instead, it must match with the donor's already in-progress, admirable values of being not high-minded [*mē hypsēlophronein*]. (1 Timothy 6:17).

Second, it must not make a false impression. Instead, it must accurately and honestly reflect the donor's heart. The public display must match an admirable inward character.

So, how do we do this? How do we avoid high-mindedness? How do we avoid false impressions? In other words, how can we use donor recognition in the right way? Let's look at each issue.

***Donor recognition without high-mindedness***

We want to recognize the donor. We want their example to motivate others. But how can we do this without promoting high-mindedness? Our passage explains how.



God has richly supplied each of us. This means everyone. God's rich supply is for enjoyment. That enjoyment is achieved not by burying what God has supplied but by using it. We use it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

We openly and publicly use what God has richly supplied to do these things. This applies to all of us, not just the rich. It applies to both the richest and the poorest in the fellowship community.

The rich person is,

“to be rich in good works [*ergois kalois*]” (1 Timothy 6:18b).

The poorest person has the same standard. The elderly widow put on the list for support must have,

“a reputation for good works [*ergois kalois*]” (1 Timothy 5:10b).

It's not enough for the poor widow to have done good works. She must have done them publicly. She must have developed a personal reputation for doing such good works. Such publicity is mandatory. (Otherwise, she cannot be put on the list for support by the church.)

Both the rich person and the poor person display their good works publicly. The rich Christian's giving is not different. It's the same. It's just another version of what we all do. We all take whatever God has richly supplied us with, and we use it. We use it to do good. We use it to become rich in good works.

These good works are supposed to impact personal reputation. But this is not a reputation of being high-minded.

This is a reputation of being like-minded. Everyone behaves the same way with whatever God has richly blessed them with.

This reputation does not place donors above the fellowship community. It does not separate donors from the fellowship community. It does the opposite. It connects donors with the fellowship community.

Sharing displays a commitment to the fellowship community. It shows “the proof of your love.” It does so “openly before the churches.” It sets a standard for others to follow, both rich and poor.

Whatever our material circumstances, they are just that – circumstances. They are temporary – often very temporary. Regardless of these circumstances, we can fully participate in sharing with the fellowship community. We don’t need to hide our status as a poor widow or a rich person. All of us can share whatever God has richly supplied to us.

The rich donor is not being high-minded because he’s not being different. He’s being the same. Paul makes this point explicitly in Romans 12:3-8. Giving is in the same category as teaching, serving, exhorting, leading, or showing mercy. We each share from what we have been given.

Suppose a person has the gift of teaching. When he shares, he does so publicly. Although public, it’s not done to be high-minded. It is not done to have a fancy title.<sup>1</sup> It’s just another way

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 23:7

Each form of sharing is necessary for the body. With each, it's also important for the one sharing,

“not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;” (Romans 12:3).

It is important to continue being “not high-minded.”

But this does not mean the exercise of these gifts is to be hidden.<sup>2</sup> It's supposed to be public. It's supposed to impact reputation. It's supposed to inspire others to do likewise.

### ***Giving should reflect identity: Haplotēs***

Donor publicity must not lead to being high-minded. Also, it must not make a false impression. Giving must honestly reflect the donor's identity. Otherwise, it's not acceptable to God. Scripture directs giving that reflects the heart.<sup>3</sup> It should honestly express the donor's feelings.<sup>4</sup>

Scripture attacks other types of giving. It attacks giving that is a “fake ID.” It attacks giving that makes a false impression.

Consider this related instruction:

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness [*haplotēti*] of heart, fearing God:” (Colossians 3:22 KJV).

This verse rejects those who merely want to appear obedient. It contrasts them with those whose obedience reflects the heart.

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<sup>2</sup> Hiddenness can apply to almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*], prayer, and fasting (see Matthew 6:1-6), but it does not apply to these types of gifts.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 25:2, 35:5; Deuteronomy 15:10; 1 Chronicles 29:9, 17, 18.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7

The word used for “singleness” in this verse is from *haplotēs*. It’s translated as

- Sincerity <sup>5</sup>
- Sincere <sup>6</sup>
- Sincerely <sup>7</sup>
- Singleness <sup>8</sup>
- Integrity <sup>9</sup>
- Simplicity <sup>10</sup>

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, this same word is translated as

- Simplicity <sup>11</sup>
- Simple <sup>12</sup>
- Sincere <sup>13</sup>
- Undivided <sup>14</sup>
- Complete <sup>15</sup>
- Honest <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> New International Version; New King James; New American Standard Bible

<sup>6</sup> Good News Translation; International Standard Version

<sup>7</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>8</sup> King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version

<sup>9</sup> Legacy Standard Bible

<sup>10</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible; Literal Standard Version; New American Bible; Weymouth New Testament

<sup>11</sup> King James Version; New King James Version

<sup>12</sup> Berean Standard Bible

<sup>13</sup> New International Version; English Standard Version; New American Standard Bible

<sup>14</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>15</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible

<sup>16</sup> Contemporary English Version

- Full <sup>17</sup>
- Single-heartedness <sup>18</sup>

In Ephesians 6:5, it's translated as

- Sincerity <sup>19</sup>
- Sincere <sup>20</sup>
- Sincerely <sup>21</sup>
- Singleness <sup>22</sup>
- Integrity <sup>23</sup>
- Simplicity <sup>24</sup>

So, what does all this have to do with charitable giving? The connection is this. When we see “generous” in the New Testament (except for 1 Timothy 6:18), it is this same Greek

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<sup>17</sup> Good News Translation

<sup>18</sup> Weymouth New Testament

<sup>19</sup> New International Version; New King James; New American Standard Bible

<sup>20</sup> English Standard Version

<sup>21</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>22</sup> King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; New Revised Standard Version

<sup>23</sup> Legacy Standard Bible

<sup>24</sup> Aramaic Bible in Plain English; Literal Standard Version

word. It is *haplotēs*.<sup>25</sup> English translations include,

- Romans 12:8 – generosity, liberality, simplicity,<sup>26</sup> sincerity<sup>27</sup>
- 2 Corinthians 8:2 – generosity, liberality, simplicity<sup>28</sup>
- 2 Corinthians 9:11 – generosity, liberality, bountifulness,<sup>29</sup> simplicity<sup>30</sup>
- 2 Corinthians 9:13 – generous, liberal/liberality, simplicity<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> There are two possible exceptions to this statement where some translations may also use the English word “generous” for a different Greek word.

First, some translate *eulogian* in 2 Corinthians 9:5 as “generous gift.” Typically, this word means “blessing” as in Romans 15:29; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Galatians 3:14; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 6:7, 12:17; James 3:10; 1 Peter 3:9; Rev 5:12, 13, and 7:12, or “praise,” as in Romans 16:18. Indeed, several translations do render it in 2 Corinthians 9:5 as “blessing,” others use “willing gift,” “voluntary gift,” “give because you want to,” “bounty,” or “bountiful gift.” If translated as “generous gift” in 2 Corinthians 9:5, it would have a meaning approximating *haplotēs* because it contrasts with “*mē hōs pleonexian*,” i.e., “not begrudgingly,” “not as a grudging obligation,” “not as one grudgingly given due to greediness,” “not as something extorted [or wrung out of you],” “not because you feel forced to.” Accordingly, one theological dictionary explains the use of *eulogian* here as “contribute ungrudgingly [rather than] grudgingly”. [Verbrugge, V. D. (2000). *New international dictionary of New Testament theology: Abridged edition*. Zondervan. p. 218.]

The second possible exception comes from the word *hadrotēs* appearing in 2 Corinthians 8:20 only. It has been translated as “abundance,” “bounty,” “plenteousness,” “large sum,” “so great a sum,” “great undertaking,” “large and liberal contributions,” “liberal gift,” “lavish gift,” and “plenteous distribution,” but also as “generous gift.” This references the administration of the accumulation of all of the gifts from the Corinthian church, which would indeed have been a large sum.

<sup>26</sup> “with simplicity” in King James Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; Webster’s Bible Translation; and “in simplicity” in Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation.

<sup>27</sup> New English Translation (NET) Bible

<sup>28</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>29</sup> King James Version; Webster’s Bible Translation

<sup>30</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>31</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

- James 1:5 – liberally, simply,<sup>32</sup> abundantly,<sup>33</sup> with open hand <sup>34</sup>

Generous is *haplotēs*. *Haplotēs* describes

- The ones who give (2 Corinthians 8:2)<sup>35</sup>
- A type of giving action (James 1:5; Romans 12:8)<sup>36</sup>
- The gift itself (2 Corinthians 9:13)<sup>37</sup>
- The purpose for which God provided the wealth in the first place (2 Corinthians 9:11)<sup>38</sup>

The word describes how we are supposed to give. But it's not the normal word for giving a lot. In fact, it's not a normal word for giving at all. Outside of the Bible, *haplotēs* had never

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<sup>32</sup> Aramaic Bible in Plain English

<sup>33</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>34</sup> Weymouth New Testament

<sup>35</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:2, "that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality." The ending phrase is "the [*tēs*] generosity [*haplotētos*] of them [*autōn*]." "Generosity" is a genitive noun describing the possessive pronoun of "them." This characteristic of generosity belongs to them. It describes a characteristic of the donors.

<sup>36</sup> James 1:5, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." Here, "generously [*haplōs*]" is an adverb modifying the verb "giving [*didontos* from *didōmi*]." It describes a way of giving.

Romans 12:8, "or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." Here, "generosity [*haplotētī*]" is a noun that describes the verb "giving [*metadidous* from *metadidōmi*]." It describes a way of giving.

<sup>37</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:13, "Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,". Here "generosity [*haplotētī*]" is a dative noun that describes the "contribution [*koinōnias*]."

<sup>38</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:11, "you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God." Here, "for [*eis*] all [*pasan*] generosity [*haplotēta*]" describes the purpose of a person's enrichment by God. The purpose is the accusative noun *haplotēta*.

been used in reference to giving.<sup>39</sup> *Haplotēs* giving is unique to the Bible.

We typically think of a generous giver as a big giver. And that might be true. But this word doesn't mean big. *Haplotēs* is, literally, "not folded" [*a*-"not," *plotēs* from *pel* "folded"].<sup>40</sup> It means

"singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty; the virtue of one who is free from pretense and dissimulation."<sup>41</sup>

Scriptural giving is honest. It's "what you see is what you get." It's not a false impression. It's not a fake ID. The donor's giving reflects their real identity.

### ***Giving should reflect identity ... or else!***

A good charitable gift is *haplotēs*. A bad charitable gift is the opposite. The opposite of the root word *haplous* (single, unfolded) is *diplos* (double, twice folded). *Diplos* is where we get the English word duplicity. This means deception or doubleness of thought, speech, or action.

A bad charitable gift is conflicted, begrudging, or duplicitous. The action doesn't honestly reflect the heart. A bad charitable gift is not "what you see is what you get." It's a

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<sup>39</sup> One exception is not, strictly speaking, in the Bible, but it is describing the Bible. Josephus uses this word when describing Araunah's offer to give David his threshing floor, oxen, and wood for David's sacrifice in *Antiquities* 7.13.4. "The king admired his generosity [*haplotētos*] and magnanimity and accepted his kindness, but wanted him to accept the price of them all, for it was not right to offer a sacrifice that cost nothing."

<sup>40</sup> See Brown, C. (1977). *The new international dictionary of New Testament theology* (Vol. 3). Zondervan. p. 572. For a discussion of the hypothesized "pel-" see Reconstruction:Proto-Indo-European/pel- posted at <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Reconstruction:Proto-Indo-European/pel->

<sup>41</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Harper & Brothers. p. 57.



false impression. It's a fake ID. It doesn't reflect the donor's real identity.

That's a bad charitable gift. What was the worst charitable gift in the New Testament? It was the one made by Ananias and Saphira.<sup>42</sup>

What was the problem with their gift? It certainly wasn't small. It was big enough to pass for the proceeds of a land sale. This was no pocket change gift. It was big, big money.

In English words, we might call it "generous." It was big. But it was not *haplotēs*. It was not mentally honest. It gave a false impression. The appearance didn't match the heart. Peter's judgment was this:

"Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." (Acts 5:4b).

To return to Colossians 3:22, they acted

"with eyeservice, as menpleasers;" not "in singleness [*haplotēti*] of heart, fearing God"

The problem wasn't that their gift was too small. In fact, giving nothing would have been fine. Peter specifically states this. (Acts 5:4).

The problem wasn't that their gift was public. Such gifts, like the one from Barnabas, were well known and widely publicized. (Acts 4:37).

The problem was this. The public appearance didn't match their heart. Their gift didn't reflect their identity. Their

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<sup>42</sup> Acts 5:1-10

giving was big, but it was not *haplotēs*. It was not a true reflection of their heart or their identity.

### ***The admirable identity: Getting to kalos and haplotēs gifts***

The instruction is for donors to become rich in good works. At first this might seem simple. They make a gift. It does something good. Mission accomplished. End of story. But it's not that simple.

It's not that simple because this "good" means something specific. This "good" is *kalos*. *Kalos* is,

"beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so."<sup>43</sup>

The core question starts simple:

Did this gift help to make the donor rich in good works?

Now, let's make it complicated. Let's replace "good works" with "*kalos* works." The definition of *kalos* changes everything. Answering this one question means answering these related questions:

- Did the donor's gift create work? Did it accomplish something?
- Was the result "beautiful"? Was it "seen to be so"?
- Was the result "an outward sign of the inward good character"? Was it "seen to be so"?
- Was the result "an outward sign of the inward noble character"? Was it "seen to be so"?

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<sup>43</sup> Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.

- Was the result “an outward sign of the inward honorable character”? Was it “seen to be so”?

Getting to *kalos* works requires beauty. The works must be aesthetically attractive. Getting to *kalos* works requires visibility. The works must be seen. Getting to *kalos* works impacts reputation. The donor becomes personally rich in works that are “good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”

Finally, getting to *kalos* works requires matching the donor’s inward character. They must accurately reflect “the inward good, noble, honorable” features of the donor’s character.

What kind of giving is this? It’s *haplotēs* giving. *Haplotēs* giving openly, honestly, and accurately reflects the heart. It is sincere, single-hearted, and “not folded.”

The previous questions define *kalos* works. They also define *haplotēs* gifts. If the answers are yes, the gift does *kalos* works. If the answers are yes, the gift is also a *haplotēs* gift. These aren’t disconnected goals. They’re different descriptions of the same goal.

### ***No perfect people: A ministry process***

This is not a ministry to perfect people. The first step is not to make the donors perfect before they give. Complaining that our fundraising results would be great if only our donors were better people doesn’t help.

We don’t need to have perfect donors. Nearly everyone has positive aspects of their character. The ministry process identifies those good, honorable, or noble features of a person’s inward character. It then connects those identity

characteristics with a beautiful, visible, outward impact. It uses this connection to motivate the action. This is how we move donors towards *kalos* works. It's how we get them to *haplotēs* gifts. It's how we help them to grow the noble aspects of their characters.

We start with the positive aspects of their characters. We link those positive identity elements to the desired actions. This is precisely how Paul motivated people to action. He did this repeatedly. He did it with Felix.<sup>44</sup> He did it with Agrippa.<sup>45</sup> He did it with the pagan intellectuals in Athens.<sup>46</sup> And he even did it with Timothy.<sup>47</sup>

Paul started with the positive aspects of their identity or character. He then linked those positive identity elements to the desired actions. These were not perfect people. And yet, he worked to move each of them to positive actions. He moved them to actions that reflected the positive aspects of their (often imperfect) characters.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 does this, too. It starts with the donor's positive identity elements. It starts with the positive aspects of their people,<sup>48</sup> values,<sup>49</sup> and life history.<sup>50</sup> It

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<sup>44</sup> Acts 24:10b

<sup>45</sup> Acts 26:2-3

<sup>46</sup> Acts 17:22

<sup>47</sup> 2 Timothy 1:5

<sup>48</sup> The donors are following the same social norm that all of us in the fellowship-community follow. We all receive from God. We all use whatever we have received in this same way. "God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share".

<sup>49</sup> "not to be conceited". The donors are in the already-in-progress, continuing process (Greek present tense) of being not high-minded. They are not above or separated from the fellowship community.

<sup>50</sup> "not to have set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God". The donors have already-in-the-past with continuing effects on the present (Greek perfect tense) not set their hope on the uncertainty of riches. They have already-

connects these positive identity elements with a challenge to act.<sup>51</sup> Accepting that challenge is motivated by the donor's people, values, and life story. Accepting that challenge will support and advance the donor's people,<sup>52</sup> values,<sup>53</sup> and life story.<sup>54</sup>

The message starts with the positive aspects of their original identity. These motivate matching actions. They motivate good, noble, and honorable actions. The matching actions grow these positive aspects of their identity. They result in a lasting positive identity.

This is a ministry process. It's a ministry process that grows the good, noble, honorable features of the donor's character.

As we consider ways to spur one another to good works, we can do the same thing. We can move people to beautiful good works. We can move them to beautiful good works that accurately reflect positive aspects of their inward character. We can help them to identify those inward character traits. We can help them to match those character traits with outward beautiful works. We can help donors to make *haplotēs* gifts.

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in-the-past set their hope on God. These are part of their past and current life story.

<sup>51</sup> "God, who richly supplies us all things for the purpose of enjoyment". The challenge is not just to make a single gift. The challenge is to enjoy one's wealth. Don't bury it in the ground and die with it. Enjoy it! Enjoy it by using it in the following enjoyable ways.

<sup>52</sup> They don't just give money. They *koinōnikous*. They share with their fellowship-community [*koinōnia*].

<sup>53</sup> They actually accomplish the good. They "do good" [*agatho-ergein*]. They become rich in "good works" [*ergois kalois*]. They become good-sharers [*eumetadotous*].

<sup>54</sup> Their future life is going to be great. They are thereby "storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future". That fantastic life story actually starts right now. Their sharing is done "so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

We can help them to do *kalos* works. We can help them to be, and be seen as, rich in *kalos* works.



## Chapter 12

### Message 10: You're ready to joyfully share abundance!

- *Biblical fundraising's goal is ready, happy, abundance sharers.*
- *Ordinary fundraising's goal is just getting money.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, **to be generous and ready** to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Three types of "good"*

In this passage, God richly supplies us with all things. He does so for a purpose. That purpose is enjoyment. We enjoy it by using it to do good.

Simple enough. Except the passage uses three different words for "good." It uses (1) *agatho-*, (2) *kalois*, and (3) *eu-*. These each mean "good." But they mean different types of good:<sup>2</sup>

- The first "good" describes what we are doing. This work is inherently good [*agatho-ergein*]. It makes an impact.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiōis en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

<sup>2</sup> These are three types of good. They also reference three time periods: First is a present impact. We do intrinsically good work right now [*agathoergein*]. Second is



- The second “good” describes how others view what we have done. These works are beautifully, visibly good [*ergois kalois*].
- The third “good” describes who we are being [*einai*]. We are being *eu*-sharers [*eu-metadotous*].

### ***The third “good”: Eumetadotous***

This third type of good (*eu-*) is different from the first two. It includes a lot. In fact, it required the construction of a brand-new word!

Normally, we learn about the meaning of a word by seeing how others had used it before. Here, we can't do that. *Eumetadotous* was a new word. Paul made it up. Before Paul wrote 1 Timothy 6:18, it didn't exist.<sup>3</sup>

So, what would Paul's audience have understood *eumetadotous* to mean? Paul's word was new, but its parts were not. It's a new combination of well-known pieces. It's a three-part word: *eu+meta+dotous*. Each part adds specific meanings.

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a past accumulation. We collect so many beautifully good works that we become rich in them [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]. Third is a lasting identity. We become a specific kind of person [*einai*]. We become a good-sharer [*eu-metadotous*]. Embracing this identity affects future giving decisions. It makes us “ready to” share generously.

<sup>3</sup> Although *eumetadotous* does not appear before Paul's usage, it does appear afterward, even in non-Biblical settings. For example, it appears eight times in Vettius Valens' Anthology (150-175 A.D.) on astrology. He assigns generosity as a personality characteristic of several signs. (It appears at 1.2.3, 1.2.13, 1.2.16, and 1.23.20 as *eumetadotoi*; at 1.23.5 as *eumetadoton*; and at 1.23.19, 1.23.27, 2.20.1 as *eumetadotous* in Vettius Valens, *Anthology*.) See Moulton, J. H. & Milligan, G. (1914). *The vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 263.

It was also used to describe ease of sharing in communication. See the scholia on Aristophanes Plutus, 1014 (or 994), which uses “*epenoēsan mystēria eumetadota*,” referencing ease of communication, suspension of disbelief, or building up belief that makes the mysteries easy to transmit.

### **Generous level 1: Dotous**

The root word is *dotous*. This is from *didōmi*. It is the common verb “to give.” It appears 416 times in the New Testament. It can refer to giving anything to anyone. It might be giving us our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11). It might be giving a certificate of divorce. (Matthew 5:31). It could even be giving John’s head on a platter to Herodias’s daughter. (Matthew 14:11). And it can refer to a charitable gift to the poor. (Luke 19:8).

### **Generous level 2: Meta-dotous**

*Metadotous* is from the verb *metadidōmi*. This expanded word adds the prefix *meta*. *Meta* means “with” or “among.” *Dotous* means “to give.” Thus, *metadotous* means to give with or among. It’s not just giving; it’s sharing. This word is less common than *dotous*. It appears only five times in the New Testament.

This type of giving is not disconnected giving to an outsider. It’s not the hidden, secretive, giving “down” of dropping coins into a box for the poor. *Metadotous* is different. It implies a more up-close and personal relationship with the recipient. It is giving “with” or “among.” Professor Richard Lenski explains,

“This is not throwing a coin to a beggar; it is more than just handing out alms. It is giving so that others may have ‘together’ (*meta*) with us.... In *meta*, ‘together or in company with,’ there lies the idea of fellowship and fraternal communion;”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [Lenski, R. C. H. (1946). *Interpretation of St Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Augsburg Fortress. p. 730.] See also “This giving is to be done so that others may share together with (meta) the giver.” [Lewis Jr, F. W. (1983). *Future reward in Pauline literature*. (Doctoral dissertation). New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 176.]

For example, *metadotous* can be the up-close and personal sharing of your food. It can even be giving the shirt off your back. John the Baptist says,

“The one who has two tunics is to share [*metadotō*] with the one who has none; and the one who has food is to do likewise.” (Luke 3:11b).

*Metadotous* includes charitable giving. Paul writes,

“or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives [*metadidou*], with generosity;” (Romans 12:8a).

“The one who steals must no longer steal; but rather he must labor, producing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share [*metadidonai*] with the one who has need.” (Ephesians 4:28).

*Metadotous* also includes other types of up-close and personal sharing. It can include sharing a spiritual gift, the gospel, or even our lives. Paul writes,

“I want to see you and share [*metadō*] with you the same blessings that God’s Spirit has given me.” (Romans 1:11a ESV).

“in the same way we had a fond affection for you and were delighted to share [*metadounai*] with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

*Dotous* is the generic “give.” *Meta-dotous* is more specific. It’s not just giving. It’s sharing. It’s up-close and personal sharing “with” or “among” others.

### ***Generous level 3: Eu-meta-dotous***

The final piece of *eumetadotous* is the prefix *eu-*. This part makes it unique. This is what Paul added to create a new

word. In the broadest sense, the *eu-* prefix means good. In English, the adverb form of “good” is “well.” So, some translations use “to share well” or “to be sharing well” for *eumetadotous*.<sup>5</sup>

When *eu* appears as a separate word, it acts as an adverb. For example, in the Parable of the Talents, *eu* describes the two servants who did not bury their master’s money. They were both told,

“Well done, [*Eu*,] good [*agathe*] and faithful servant”  
(Matthew 25:21 & 25:23).

Jesus uses *eu* when defending Mary’s expensive gift. He explains,

“For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good [*eu*] to them; but you do not always have Me.” (Mark 14:7).

However, *eu* is much more commonly used as a prefix. For example, Hebrews 13:16 uses it with *poieō* (do or make):

“And do not neglect doing good [*eupoiias*] and sharing [*koinōnias*], for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

As with both “good” [*agatho-*] and “good” [*kalois*], “good” [*eu-*] has special meaning. It includes the ideas of ready/willing, joyful/abounding, and abundant/rich.

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<sup>5</sup>The Exegesis Companion Bible translates *eumetadotous* here as “to share well”. Similarly, Professor Richard Lenski translates it as “to be sharing well.” [Lenski, R. C. H. (1946). *Interpretation of St Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Augsburg Fortress. p. 727.]

Visually, it means:

Good

Ready/Willing -- Joyful/Abounding -- Abundant/Rich

**“Eu-” as ready/willing**

We can’t look at previous uses of *eumetadotous* to understand its meaning. It’s a new word. But we can look at previous uses of the *eu-* prefix. Its most general usage was “good,” often in the sense of joyful/abounding. However, it was also used to communicate the related ideas of ready/willing and abundant/rich.

We can see these uses in a variety of *eu-* words.<sup>6</sup>  
 Examples of “ready” include

- *Eu-krās*: mixing readily with
- *Eu-matheia*: readiness in learning, docility
- *Eu-mathēs*: ready
- *Eu-peithēs*: ready to obey
- *Eu-trepēs*: readily turned
- *Eu-trepizō*: to make ready, get ready
- *Eu-tychēs*: ready, fortunate, lucky
- *Eu-cheir*: quick or ready of hand, handy
- *Eu-cherēs*: ready with the hands, expert
- *Eu-chrēstia*: ready use

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<sup>6</sup> Examples from Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1901). *A Greek English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. p. 593-622. See also Lampe, G. W. H. (1964). *A Patristic Greek lexicon*. Clarendon Press. Part 1. p. 571.

Examples of free and easy willingness include

- *Eu-allaktos*: easily changed
- *Eu-epēreastos*: easily swayed
- *Eu-agōgos*: easily influenced
- *Eu-kolastos*: easily swayed, changeable, fickle
- *Eu-komistos*: easily carried; easily moved
- *Eu-meletos*: easy to study, easily practiced
- *Eu-peithēs*: easily persuaded
- *Eu-takinētos*: easily changed; easily removed
- *Eu-trepēs*: easily turned, changeable

These usages of *eu-* match with translations of *eumetadotous* such as

- “ready to give”<sup>7</sup>
- “ready to distribute”<sup>8</sup>
- “to give easily”<sup>9</sup>
- “give freely”<sup>10</sup>
- “open handed”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> New King James Version

<sup>8</sup> King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; New Heart English Bible; Webster’s Bible Translation

<sup>9</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>10</sup> New International Reader’s Version; *See also* “free to impart” in the Worrell New Testament.

<sup>11</sup> Centenary Translation of the New Testament; Goodspeed New Testament; Moffatt New Testament; Montgomery New Testament; Twentieth Century New Testament; Weymouth New Testament; Williams New Testament. *See also* Kelly, J. N. D. (1963). *A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Adam & Charles Black. p. 147; “*eumetádotos* describes someone who ‘open-handedly’ (willingly) shares” [Hill, G., & Archer, G.(2020). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).].

- “lightly to give”<sup>12</sup>
- “ready to impart”<sup>13</sup>

In later years, *eumetadotous* was even used to describe something else that’s easy to share: a contagious disease!<sup>14</sup>

Taking *eu-* in the sense of ready/willing also matches Menander’s *Dyskolos*. Our passage parallels a scene from this play. In it, a son persuades his rich father to a generous act of extreme wealth sharing. The scene concludes with the father’s agreement. It reads,

Father: Give [*didou*], share [*metadidou*]! I’m totally convinced by you.

Son: And willingly [*hekōn*]?

Father: Yes, willingly [*hekōn*]; that need not worry you.

The scene ends with a three-part, escalating conclusion. Give [*didou*] escalates to share [*metadidou*]. Share [*metadidou*] escalates to share readily/willingly [*hekōn*].<sup>15</sup> In using the three-part word *eu-meta-dotous*, Paul matches the scene’s three-part conclusion. The *eu-* prefix includes the ready/willing notion of *hekōn*. But this prefix also incorporates additional meanings.

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<sup>12</sup> Wycliffe Bible

<sup>13</sup> Literal Standard Version

<sup>14</sup> See this in the 7th-century use by Paul of Aegina (4.1). However, most later references relate to Christian theology. See, e.g., Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on Malachi 2.24 “*eumetadotous gar einai xhrē kai koinōnikous kai protithentas tois allois eis methexin ta para Theo dōrēmata*”; “We must, you see, be generous and ready to share, making others participants in what is given by God.” [Hill, R. C. (2008). *Saint Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on the twelve prophets, Volume 2*. Catholic University of America Press. p. 331.]

<sup>15</sup> Paul uses *hekōn* in both Romans 8:20 [*hekousa*] and 1 Corinthians 9:17 [*akōn*], where it is typically translated as “willingly.” Liddell Scott lists “readily” as the primary definition. [Liddell, G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek–English lexicon*. Clarendon Press.]

**“Eu-” as joyful/abounding**

The more common usage of the *eu-* prefix is not as ready/willing. Instead, it can mean joyful/abounding.<sup>16</sup> Examples for joyful or happy include

- *Eu-aiōn*: living well, happy in life
- *Eu-daimoneō*: to be prosperous, well off, happy
- *Eu-daimonia*: prosperity, wealth, happiness
- *Eu-daimonikos*: conducive to happiness
- *Eu-elpis*: hopeful, cheerful
- *Eu-ēmereō*: to spend the day cheerfully, live happily from day to day
- *Eu-gamos*: happily married
- *Eu-gēthēs*: joyous, cheerful
- *Eu-thymeō*: to be of good cheer
- *Eu-thymia*: cheerfulness, tranquility
- *Eu-thymōs*: in good cheer
- *Eu-klēros*: fortunate, happy
- *Eu-moiria*: happy possession
- *Eu-patheia*: the enjoyment of good things
- *Eu-patheō*: to be well off, enjoy oneself
- *Eu-pathēs*: enjoying good things, easy
- *Eu-pompos*: conducting to a happy issue

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<sup>16</sup> *Eu-metadotous* is a new word. However, Paul uses a related construction in 1 Thessalonians. He combines *eu-dokeō*, “to think, seem,” and *metadidōmi*, “to share.” This too implies joy or happiness. He writes, “in the same way we had a fond affection for you and were delighted to share [*eudokoumen metadounai*] with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8).



- *Eu-potmos*: happy, prosperous
- *Eu-phainō*: to cheer, delight, gladden
- *Eu-phthoggos*: well-sounding, cheerful
- *Eu-phrōn*: cheerful, gladsome, merry
- *Eu-soia*: happiness, prosperity
- *Eu-sōstos*: safe and well, happy
- *Eu-tokia*: happy child-birth
- *Eu-tuchēma*: a piece of good luck, a happy issue, a success
- *Eu-ōchia*: good cheer, feasting

Some commentators note this emphasis on joy in *eumetadotous*. Professor Raymond Collins explains,

“The basic meaning of ‘generous’ (*eu-metadotous*) is giving what one has to someone else. The prefix (*eu*) implies liberality and/or **joy** in doing so.”<sup>17</sup> (Emphasis added.)

One lexicon explains,

“The prefix (*eu*) ‘emphasizes the nuance either of liberality, or the ease, promptitude, and **joy** with which one makes one’s wealth useful to others.’”<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis added.)

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<sup>17</sup> Collins, R. F. (2002). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 171.

<sup>18</sup> Spicq, C. (1994). *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (Volume 2). (J. D. Ernest, Trans.). Hendrickson. p. 121.

This meaning of *eu-* matches with translations of *eumetadotous* such as:

- “They ... should give happily”<sup>19</sup>
- “they should be happy to give”<sup>20</sup>
- “Tell them to be happy to give”<sup>21</sup>
- “Tell them ... to be glad to give and share”<sup>22</sup>

Another commentator references both joy and willingness, explaining,

“The command to be generous and ready to share employs two adjectives that are found nowhere else in the New Testament. The first indicates that the rich should **delight** in giving and do so **freely**,”<sup>23</sup> (emphasis added).

### “Eu-” *as abundant/rich*

The *eu-* prefix also references abundance and riches. Examples of abundance and abounding include

- *Eu-andria*: abundance of men
- *Eu-andros*: abounding in good men
- *Eu-anthēs*: blooming, budding
- *Eu-botrys*: abounding in grapes
- *Eu-gala*: abounding in milk
- *Eu-dendros*: abounding in fair trees (well-wooded)

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<sup>19</sup> The Living Bible

<sup>20</sup> Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

<sup>21</sup> International Children’s Bible

<sup>22</sup> Beck’s American Translation

<sup>23</sup> Cook, J. W. (2009). *Let’s study 1 Timothy*. The Banner of Truth Trust. p. 115.

- *Eu-drosos*: abounding in water
- *Eu-dōros*: bountiful, generous gift
- *Eu-thalēs*: blooming, flourishing
- *Eu-thēneō*: to thrive, prosper
- *Eu-marathos*: abounding in fennel
- *Eu-ornis*: abounding in birds
- *Eu-pidax*: abounding in fountains
- *Eu-pōlos*: abounding in foals
- *Eu-chlōs*: verdant

Commenting on this connection, one researcher explains,

“*eumetadotous* expresses the attitude that is willing to share abundantly ...”<sup>24</sup>

This sense of abundance can also explicitly reference wealth and riches such as

- *Eu-botrys*: rich in grapes
- *Eu-bous*: rich in cattle
- *Eu-karpos*: rich in fruit, fruitful
- *Eu-krithos*: rich in barley
- *Eu-kteanos*: wealthy
- *Eu-ktēmōn*: wealthy
- *Eu-mēlos*: rich in sheep
- *Eu-olbos*: wealthy, prosperous
- *Eu-patheō*: to be well off, enjoy oneself

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<sup>24</sup> Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul's theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 154.

- *Eu-piōn*: very fat, very rich
- *Eu-pokos*: rich in wool
- *Eu-prageō*: to do well, be well off, flourish
- *Eu-soia*: happiness, prosperity
- *Eu-stachus*: rich in corn
- *Eu-chimaros*: rich in goats
- *Eu-chrysos*: rich in gold

A reference to wealth sharing also matches the passage. It fits with the six other wealth references in this sentence.

Wealth sharing is not giving small. One translation of *eumetadotous* puts it simply as,

“They should give much” (1 Timothy 6:18b).<sup>25</sup>

### ***Which one is right?***

The broadest meaning of the “*eu-*” prefix is simply “good.” However, it has more specific uses. It can be good as ready/willing, joyful/abounding, and abundant/rich. So, which fits here?

The answer is: all of them.<sup>26</sup> Paul took the extreme action of constructing an entirely new word. He did so by adding a multiple-meaning prefix. These multiple meanings were intentional.

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<sup>25</sup> New Life Version

<sup>26</sup> Professor Ceslas Spicq notes each of these concepts in his description of the *eu-* prefix in *eumetadotous*, explaining that “it is more probable that it accentuates either the nuance of liberality, or the ease, promptness, and joy in making one’s riches useful to others ... in which case it would transform simple ‘sharing’ into a virtue strictly speaking.” [Spicq, C. (1991). *Lexique théologique du Nouveau Testament*. Saint-Paul. p. 632. *Eumetadotous*.]

*Eumetadotous* is *eu*-sharing. The “*eu*-” prefix simultaneously incorporates ideas of

- Being ready to share
- Being willing to share
- Being a joyful sharer
- Sharing abundance
- Sharing riches

Fortunately, we don’t have to rely on this one inference. Scripture makes each of these points separately elsewhere.

### ***Ready and willing are right***

Should our giving be ready and willing? Yes. In both the Old and New Testaments, giving is supposed to be

- Not under compulsion <sup>27</sup>
- Not reluctant <sup>28</sup>
- Not grudging <sup>29</sup>
- Willingly <sup>30</sup>

In other words, it should be ready and willing.

### ***Joyful and abundant are also right***

Should our giving be joyful? Yes. 1 Timothy 6:17-18 explains that giving is how we experience “party-time” enjoyment – *apolausin*. 2 Corinthians 9:7 explains that God loves a hilariously cheerful – *hilaron* – giver. Acts 20:35

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<sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7

<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:7

<sup>30</sup> 1 Chronicles 29:9, 17, 18; 2 Corinthians 8:3

explains that giving is supposed to be fun. It's supposed to be more blessed or happy – *makarion* – than receiving a gift. Our giving is supposed to be joyful.

Should our giving also be abundant? Yes. Should it come from abundance? Yes. Should it result in abundant good works? Yes. God's abundance leads to the donor's abundance, which leads to abundant sharing. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, God's rich provision leads to *eu*-sharing. 2 Corinthians 9:8 explains,

“And God is able to bless you abundantly [*perisseusai*], so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound [*perisseuēte*] in every good work.” (NIV).

The donor's abundance (provided by God) is the source of sharing.<sup>31</sup> For example,

“at this present time your abundance [*perisseuma*] will serve as assistance for their need” (2 Corinthians 8:14).

The sharing itself is done abundantly. Paul explains,

“you will abound [*perisseuēte*] in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8b NIV).

“see that you abound [*perisseuēte*] in this gracious work also.” (2 Corinthians 8:7b NASB95).

In 2 Corinthians 8:20, Paul calls the combined collection from the church “this abundance.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the source of the gift, the

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<sup>31</sup> In Paul's example of the Macedonians, they didn't have abundant riches, but they still gave as a result of their abundance, “the abundance [*perisseia*] of their joy and their deep poverty abounded [*eperisseusen*] unto the riches of their liberality.” (2 Corinthians 8:2).

<sup>32</sup> This word, *hadrotēs*, appears only here in the New Testament. The word typically means abundance, abundant harvest, lavish, or thick as in a thick harvest. It comes from *hadros*, which means thick, stout, full-grown, strong, and rich. In 2 Corinthians 8:20, it is often translated as “this abundance” (King James Version, Anderson New Testament, Berean Literal Bible, Aramaic Bible in Plain English, Catholic Public Domain Version, Darby Bible Translation, Douay-Rheims Bible, Geneva Bible of 1587, Haweis New Testament, Literal Emphasis Translation, Literal Standard Version, New Heart English Bible, Smith's Literal Translation, Webster's

impact of the gift, and the gift itself are all referred to as abundance.

This abundance [*eu-*] sharing [*metadotous*] can also refer to the recipients' experience. The donor does not just share from abundance. The donor actually shares abundance. The sharing results in the recipient having an abundance.

Paul describes his own experience this way. In thanking the Philippians' for their donation, he writes,

“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance [*perisseuō*]; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent” (Philippians 4:18a).

We see a similar idea in Paul's fundraising appeal letter in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. Their giving will result in abundance for the gift recipients. The result is,

“not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing [*perisseuoussa*] through many thanksgivings to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:12b).

In the late 300's A.D., John Chrysostom explained of this verse,

“What he says is this; ‘in the first place ye not only supply the wants of the saints, but you are abundant

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Bible Translation, World English Bible, and Young's Literal Translation). Others use the terms “bounty” (American Standard Version, English Revised Version, Worrell New Testament), “plenteousness” (Coverdale Bible of 1535), “large sum” (Holman Christian Standard Bible, Worsley New Testament), “so great a sum” (Mace New Testament), “great undertaking” (International Standard Version), “large and liberal contributions” (Weymouth New Testament), “liberal gift” (New International Version), “lavish gift” (New King James Version), or “plenteous distribution” (Bishops' Bible of 1568, Tyndale Bible of 1526). Some translations instead use the word “generous” for *hadrotēs* in 2 Corinthians 8:20, which is also often used for *eumetadotous* in 1 Timothy 6:18.

even;’ that is, ‘ye furnish them with even more than they need’”.<sup>33</sup>

Professor Margaret Thrall reiterates,

“Hence, whilst it will supply the wants of the Jerusalem Christians, it will do more than that. There will be an abundance of good effects. What does this ‘abundance’ consist of? Chrysostom suggests that the contributors to the collection will furnish its recipients with even more than they need.”<sup>34</sup>

This abundant giving then leads to many thanksgivings.

“it is also rich in its results and awakens a chorus of thanksgiving to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:12b WNT)

“It is something that will make many others thank God. (2 Corinthians 9:12b CEV)

This matches the next verse. The liberality of the gift is the reason for the recipient’s response.

“they will glorify God ... for the liberality of your contribution” (2 Corinthians 9:13b,d).

This kind of giving is different. The goal is different. It’s not simply to meet a need. It’s to leave the recipients in abundance. Giving this way is more fun. The extravagancy

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<sup>33</sup> [Schaff, P. (1889). Homily 20 on Second Corinthians. In T. W. Chambers (Trans.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 12*. Christian Literature Publishing Co. Revised and edited by Kevin Knight. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220220.htm>]; This translation is from, “*Prōton tá husterēmata tōn agiōn ou monon plēroutē, alla kai perisseuete, toutesti, kai pleon tēs chreias autois pārechete eita di autōn euphēmian anapempete tō Theō*” [Patrologia Graeca 61 Colossians 537. *Homily 20 on Second Corinthians*; <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220220.htm>].

<sup>34</sup> “Hence, whilst it will supply the wants of the Jerusalem Christians, it will do more than that. There will be an abundance of good effects. What does this ‘abundance’ consist of? Chrysostom suggests that the contributors to the collection will furnish its recipients with even more than they need” [Thrall, M. E. (2000). *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. T & T Clark. p. 587.]



matches the idea of the hilariously joyful [*hilaron*] giver.<sup>35</sup>

Consider this. What Christmas gift would be the least enjoyable to give? A carton of milk? A bag of flour? White socks? Yes, these gifts would meet a need. They would be used. But they're boring.

Just barely meeting minimum needs might be technically efficient. But sharing abundantly is more fun. It's a better way to experience "party-time" wealth enjoyment [*apolausin*].

### ***Rich is also right***

*Eu-metadotous* simultaneously references multiple meanings. Ready and willing are both right. Joyful and abundant are right, too. The final meaning for *eu-* is rich. Rich is also right.

Should we share riches? Yes. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is all about riches. It's about wealth and wealth sharing. Wealth (or riches) describes the givers, the gifts, and the gift results. This is a ministry to those who are rich [*plousiois*]. It is about sharing what God richly [*plousiōs*] supplies. It's about sharing in such a way that makes the donors rich [*ploutein*] in beautiful good works.

Are donors to be ready/willing sharers? Yes. Are they to be joyful/abounding sharers? Yes. Are they to be sharers of abundance? Yes. Are they to be sharers of riches? Yes.

The goal is for rich Christians to be [*einai*] *eu*-sharers [*eumetadotous*]. Paul's new *eu*-sharing word combines many ideas. Each appears separately in other scriptures.

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<sup>35</sup> "for God loves a cheerful [*hilaron*] giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7b).

*Eumetadotous* just puts them all together. With this single word, Paul simultaneously references each outcome.

### ***Inter-related outcomes***

*Eumetadotous* incorporates multiple ideas. This is not just semantics. It's also meaningful in a practical way. These outcomes are interrelated.

When donors recognizes that they are sharing from abundance, this leads to

- Being fully prepared and ready to share
- Sharing willingly
- Sharing joyfully
- Sharing richly

When donors are fully prepared and ready to share, this leads to

- Sharing willingly
- Sharing joyfully
- Sharing richly

When sharing is a joyful experience, this leads to

- Being fully prepared and ready to share in the future
- Sharing willingly in the future
- Sharing richly in the future

Each meaning of *eu*-sharing connects with the other meanings of *eu*-sharing:

- Sharing from abundance → willing sharing
- Sharing from abundance → joyful sharing

- Sharing from abundance → sharing richly/abundantly
- Sharing from abundance → being prepared/ready to share
- Being prepared/ready to share → willing sharing
- Being prepared/ready to share → joyful sharing
- Being prepared/ready to share → sharing richly/abundantly
- A joyful sharing experience → sharing willingly in the future
- A joyful sharing experience → being ready to share in the future
- A joyful sharing experience → sharing richly/abundantly in the future

Conversely, a missing piece leads to other missing pieces. Relying on the uncertainty of riches, rather than a richly providing God, leads to anxious hoarding. Donors who perceive scarcity and need in their life – rather than abundance – are unlikely to share willingly, joyfully, or richly. They will not be prepared or ready to share. Donors who are not prepared or ready to share are unlikely to share willingly, joyfully, or richly. Donors who have a joyless giving experience will not be ready to share again in the future.

*Eumetadotous* describes multiple simultaneous outcomes. It describes a person who is being a good sharer. It describes a person who is ready to joyfully share abundance.

## Chapter 13

### Message 11: You're one of us!

- *Biblical fundraising connects the donor to a fellowship community [koinōnia] through sharing [koinōnikous].*
- *Ordinary fundraising asks to give away to outsiders.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready **to share**, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### UNDERSTANDING PARTNERSHIP SHARING

### *Escalating enjoyment*

God richly supplies us with all things. For what? For enjoyment. How do we enjoy them? We use them:

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

These each describe giving. But this is not just repetition. Each item is an escalation of the previous one. The list starts simple.

1. “To do good”

This is *agathoergein*. It is doing work [*ergein*] that is intrinsically good [*agatho-*]. It is doing work that makes a

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, **koinōnikous**, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

substantive impact. Notice, this is not an appeal for money. (That's not compelling.) Instead, it's an appeal to do good things.

Yes, these good things may happen to cost money. But when the donor gives, the donor is not just the money-giver. The donor is the doer. The donor is the actor. This is an enjoyable role.

2. "To be rich in good works"

The first item is an action. The second is much more. It's a status. It's a status that results from a large accumulation of actions. It's a status that is visible and public.

In English, the first two items both use "good." In Greek, these are different. The first "good," *agatho*, is not the second "good," *kalois*. *Agatho*- is "good whether it be seen to be so or not."<sup>2</sup> *Kalois* is "good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, "rich in good works" is an escalation. The first item was simply doing an intrinsically good work. The second is the status of having accumulated many visibly good works. The first is enjoyable. The second is an escalation of that enjoyment.

3. "To be generous"

The third phrase is *eumetadotous einai*. *Einai* is an identity statement. This is the donor's "I am." It's the donor's identity definition. It's who the donor is being. This is another escalation. We've moved from an action, to an accumulation of

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<sup>2</sup> Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 2. *agathos*

<sup>3</sup> Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123. *kalos*

actions, to a personal identity. First, the impact is enjoyable. Second, the status from accumulated impact is enjoyable. Third, the personal identity is enjoyable.

*Eumetadotous* is a three-part word. *Dotous* is a giver. *Meta-dotous* is a sharer – giving “with” or “among.” *Eumetadotous* is a good sharer. It implies sharing that is joyful/abounding, ready/willing, and abundant/rich. Being one who shares well is an enjoyable identity.

#### 4. “And ready to share”

The fourth item is *koinōnikous*. This, too, describes *einai*. It’s also an identity statement. It’s being ready to share. But this is an escalation from *eumetadotous*. This is not just giving “with” or “among.” It’s sharing within an intense relationship. It’s sharing within a doubly-bonded family partnership.<sup>4</sup> It’s sharing within a fellowship community – *koinōnia*. Professor Marvin Vincent notes that *koinōnikous* here is

“Stronger than the preceding word, as implying a personal share in the pleasure imparted by the gift.”<sup>5</sup>

This sharing is highly enjoyable. Sharing is more fun when we’re sharing together with friends. We share along with fellow donors. We share to help fellow recipients who also share back with us. We get deep joy from their experiences because of our shared connection.

This is not giving away to the outsider. This is not disconnected giving. This is not *eleēmosynē*, where the left

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<sup>4</sup> See the allusion descriptions in Menander’s *Dyskolos* discussed in Chapter 13-III, “A literary allusion: How Menander’s *Dyskolos* adds meaning.”

<sup>5</sup> Vincent, M. R. (1905). *Word studies in the New Testament*. Vol. 4. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 282.

hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. This is the opposite. This giving is intensely connected.

Being this kind of giver is highly enjoyable. It's yet another escalation. This is emotionally connected, mutual sharing. It's part of a deep, meaningful partnership.

### ***The partnership word***

*Koinōnikous* comes from related words like *koinōnos* and *koinōnia*. *Koinōnos* is a partner, sharer, or companion. For example, Luke 5:10 describes James and John as partners [*koinōnoi*] in a fishing business with Simon.<sup>6</sup> *Koinōnia* is slightly different. It describes the partnership relationship itself. It means a fellowship, association, community, or joint participation.

The word in our passage, *koinōnikous*, is the adjective form of *koinōnikos*. What is *koinōnikos*? It is, above all, partnership language. It can reference anything related to partnerships.<sup>7</sup> But it especially emphasizes the sharing aspects of partnership. It can refer to

- Property held by a partnership or corporation <sup>8</sup>
- A shared common fund,<sup>9</sup> shared community funds,<sup>10</sup> a

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<sup>6</sup> "and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners [*koinōnoi*] with Simon." (Luke 5:10a)

<sup>7</sup> "b. relating to partnerships" [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*]

<sup>8</sup> "property held by corporations". This could also include a "tax on corporations" [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*]

<sup>9</sup> "Related to *koinōnikos*, the root word *koinos*, 'common,' appears frequently in Ephesus related to a common temple or common fund (IvE, Teil VIII, 1.42)." [Hoag, G. G. (2015). Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus. *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. Supplement Vol. 11. Penn State Press. p. 205-206.]

<sup>10</sup> Josephus uses this word to describe the Essenes who held all goods in common, "These men are despisers of riches, and so very communicative [*koinōnikon*] as

treasury,<sup>11</sup> or anything held in common <sup>12</sup>

- Readily being in partnership or in communion with another <sup>13</sup>
- Being social, sociable, and ready to connect socially with others <sup>14</sup>
- Sharing with a partner (through either giving or receiving) or being inclined to do so,<sup>15</sup> also reciprocity <sup>16</sup>

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raises our admiration... every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions; and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren." [Flavius Josephus. (1853). *The wars of the Jews*, (W. Whiston, Trans.). Milner & Sowerby. 2.122.]

<sup>11</sup> "Aelius Aristides portrays the Artemesium as 'the general treasury (*koinon*) of Asia' (Oration 23.24)." [Hoag, G. G. (2015). Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus. *Bulletin for Biblical Research*. Supplement Vol. 11. Penn State Press. p. 205-206.]

<sup>12</sup> "held in common" [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*]

<sup>13</sup> "In communion with" [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*];

"ready and apt to form and maintain communion and fellowship." [Thayer, J. H. (1886/1975). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Zondervan. p. 352];

T. J. Saxby uses, "To 'be communioners'" for 1 Timothy 6:18. [Saxby, T. J. (1987). *Pilgrims of a common life: Christian community of goods through the centuries*. Multiply Publications. p. 63.]

<sup>14</sup> "social ... sociable ... sociability," [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*];

"Social, sociable, ready and apt to form and maintain communion and fellowship." [Thayer, J. H. (1886/1975). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Zondervan. p. 352.];

"Sociable" [Abbott-Smith, G. (1960). *A manual Greek lexicon of the New Testament*. T. & T. Clark. p. 250.]

<sup>15</sup> "Giving a share of," "receptive, sharing in" [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*];

"Inclined to make others sharers in one's possessions," [Thayer, J. H. (1886/1975). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Zondervan. p. 352.];

"an associate, partaker." [Zodhiates, S. (1992). *The complete word study dictionary. New Testament*. AMG Publishers. p. 873.]

<sup>16</sup> See "reciprocity" as a definition in Lampe, G. W. H. (1964). *A patristic Greek lexicon*. Clarendon Press. Part 3. 764.



- Splitting good luck<sup>17</sup> or a windfall with a partner <sup>18</sup>

This cluster of meanings doesn't have a precise English match. This leads to different English translations of *koinōnikous* in our passage. Most commonly, this is some version of "to share."<sup>19</sup> This can include "share possessions,"<sup>20</sup> "to be sharers of possessions,"<sup>21</sup> "sharing what is one's own,"<sup>22</sup> or "those willing to share."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "to suffer others to partake in one's good fortune" [Liddell, H. G. & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. *koinōn-ikos, ē, on*]

<sup>18</sup> Consider the following situation. You're walking with a friend and he notices a bag of money left in the ditch. A common response might be something like, "Splitsies!" "Halves!" or "Share the good luck!" In Aristotle's time, the phrase with this meaning was "*koinos Hermēs*." Literally, this was "Share Hermes!" Hermes was the God of luck. Similarly, an unexpected windfall or gift was *hermaion*. Receiving something from luck created a greater expectation of being willing to share it with friends. Aristotle explained the wordplay: Hermes could be called the most shared or sociable [*koinōnikon*] of the gods because people so often said, "Share Hermes!" [*koinos Hermēs*]. Thus, even at this time, sharing [*koinōnikos*] was already an expression of both liberality and sociability.

Freese explains, "*koinos Hermēs* is an expression meaning 'halves!' When anyone had a stroke of luck, such as finding a purse full of money in the street, anyone with him expected to go halves. Hermes was the god of luck, and such a find was called *hermaion*. *Koinōnikos* is taken to mean (1) liberal to others, or (2) sociable." [Aristotle (1926). *Rhetoric*. 2, 24, 2. From (Trans: J. H. Freese) Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 22. Harvard University Press; William Heinemann Ltd. Note 5.]

<sup>19</sup> New International Version; New Living Translation; English Standard Version; New American Standard Bible; Amplified Bible; Good News Translation; Catholic Public Domain Version.

<sup>20</sup> "they are to "do good, be rich in good deeds, be liberal in giving, share possessions!" (6:18, author's translation)" Johnson, L. T. (1987). *1 Timothy*. 2 *Timothy*. Titus. John Knox Press. p.104.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul's delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Trinity Press International. p. 202.

<sup>22</sup> *Koinōnikous* here "means 'sharing what is one's own' or 'gladly giving others a share.'" [Knight, G. W. III. (1992). *The Pastoral epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. p. 274.]

<sup>23</sup> "For 'share,' Paul used a word related to 'fellowship' (*koinōnikous*, 'those willing to share'). We can experience a deep fellowship when believers make their resources available to one another." [Barton, B. B., Veerman, D. R., & Wilson, N. (1993). *Life application Bible commentary: 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 138.]

Other translations use “to distribute,”<sup>24</sup> “participation,”<sup>25</sup> “to partner with/fellowship in,”<sup>26</sup> “to the common fund,”<sup>27</sup> or even “to communicate.”<sup>28</sup> One translation uses “communalists.” It notes,

“*Koinōnikous*: this is often translated as ‘generous,’ ‘liberal,’ or ‘sharing’; but, more properly, *koinōnikos* refers to something held in common trust or communally owned; applied to a person, it might better be translated either as ‘belonging to the community’ or ‘sharing his property in common.’”<sup>29</sup>

Professor Ronald Ward explains,

“They will be ‘sociable’ in property as well as in personality, for this is the meaning of the Greek word *koinōnikos* behind *generous*. Fellowship will be seen.”<sup>30</sup>

Other commentators note,

“The English conceals the fact that the Greek word is *koinōnikos* ‘willing to share.’ They are to share their fellowship by their financial generosity”<sup>31</sup>

*Koinōnikos* connects partnership, friendship, sharing, partnership sharing, and that which is shared by the

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<sup>24</sup> Bishops’ Bible of 1568; Coverdale Bible of 1534; Tyndale Bible of 1526.

<sup>25</sup> “qualified for participation” in Smith’s Literal Translation.

<sup>26</sup> Literal Emphasis Translation

<sup>27</sup> Mace New Testament

<sup>28</sup> King James Version; New Heart English Bible; World English Bible; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; Webster’s Bible Translation; Geneva Bible of 1587; Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation; Douay-Rheims Bible.

<sup>29</sup> Hart, D. B. (2017). *The New Testament: A translation*. Yale University Press. p. 422-423.

<sup>30</sup> Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Stott, J. R., & Wright, C. (2022). *The grace of giving: Money and the gospel*. Hendrickson Publishers.

partnership. (Clement of Alexandria later called married life “*bios koinōnikos*.”<sup>32</sup>) A *koinōnikous* person is a partnership-connected and partnership-sharing person.

### ***The partnership word in Old Testament sharing***

Most New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are from the Septuagint.<sup>33</sup> This is the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was popular at the time. The Septuagint does not use *koinōnikos*. However, it commonly uses both *koinōnos* and *koinōnia*. It uses *koinōnia* to reference fellowship.<sup>34</sup> It uses *koinōnos* to reference partners<sup>35</sup> – even marriage partners.<sup>36</sup> It also uses these words for allying with another,<sup>37</sup> sharing,<sup>38</sup> or partaking<sup>39</sup> together.

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<sup>32</sup> Lampe, G. W. H. (1964). *A patristic Greek lexicon* (part 3). Clarendon Press. p. 764. (Citing Clement of Alexandria. *The Paedagogus*. 1.4 (p.96.9; M.8.260c)).

<sup>33</sup> Archer, G. L., & Chirichigno, G. (2005). *Old Testament quotations in the New Testament: A complete survey*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.

<sup>34</sup> Ecclesiastes 9:4a, “for who is he that has fellowship [*koinōnei*] with all the living?” (Brenton Septuagint Translation); Job 34:8, “saying, I have not sinned, nor committed ungodliness, nor had fellowship [*koinōnēsai*] with workers of iniquity, to go with the ungodly.” (Brenton Septuagint Translation); Leviticus 6:2, “The soul which shall have sinned, and willfully overlooked the commandments of the Lord, and shall have dealt falsely in the affairs of his neighbour in the matter of a deposit, or concerning fellowship [*koinōnias*], or concerning plunder, or has in anything wronged his neighbour,” (Brenton Septuagint Translation).

<sup>35</sup> Proverbs 29:24a, “He who is a partner [*koinōnos*] with a thief hates his own life;”

<sup>36</sup> Malachi 2:14, “Yet ye said, Wherefore? Because the Lord has borne witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, whom thou has forsaken, and yet she was thy partner [*koinōnos*], and the wife of thy covenant.” (Brenton Septuagint Translation).

<sup>37</sup> 2 Chronicles 20:35-36, “After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied [*ekoinōnēsen*] himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. So he allied [*ekoinōnēse*] himself with him.”

<sup>38</sup> Proverbs 29:24a, “He that shares [*koinōnos*] with a thief, hates his own soul” (Brenton Septuagint Translation).

<sup>39</sup> Proverbs 1:11, “If they should exhort thee, saying, Come with us, partake [*koinōnēson*] in blood, and let us unjustly hide the just man in the earth” (Brenton Septuagint Translation).

Philo was a popular Jewish theologian in Paul's time. Philo uses *koinōnos* and *koina* to describe mutual wealth-sharing with God.<sup>40</sup> He uses *koina* by quoting this proverb of Menander:

“what belongs to friends is common [*koina*].”<sup>41</sup>

He again quotes this proverb when explaining Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek.<sup>42</sup>

Philo uses these friendship-partnership words to describe Godly wealth sharing.<sup>43</sup> In the New Testament, these words take on special meaning.

### ***The partnership word in New Testament sharing***

*Koinōnia* was not a new word. It had meant partner,

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<sup>40</sup> He explained that Moses, “discarded all desire of gain and riches... God gave him instead the greatest ... wealth, the wealth of all the earth and sea... For having judged him deserving of being made a partaker [*koinōnos*] in the portion which He had reserved for Himself, He gave him the whole world as a possession suitable for his heir:” [*On Moses* 1.155. Philo. (1935). *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses.* (F. H. Colson, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library 289. Harvard University Press.]

“For if, as the proverb says, ‘what belongs to friends is common [*koina*],’ and the prophet is called the friend of God, it would follow that he shares also God's possessions, so far as it is serviceable.” [*On Moses* 1.156. Philo. (1935). *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses.* (F. H. Colson, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library 289. Harvard University Press.]

<sup>41</sup> The origin of this saying pre-dates Menander, being found in Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1159b31; *Politics* 1263a31.

<sup>42</sup> “When the high priest of the most high God saw him approaching with his trophies, leader and army alike unhurt, for he had lost none of his own company, he was astonished ... rejoicing and sharing their gladness as though the success were his own; and so indeed it was, for ‘the belongings of friends are held in common [*koina*],’ as the proverb says, and this is far more true of the belongings of the good whose one end is to be well-pleasing to God.” [*On Abraham*. 40.235. Philo. (1935). *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses.* (F. H. Colson, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library 289. Harvard University Press.] Here, the original phrase, “*koina ta philōn*,” is separated as “*koina gar kata tēn paroimian to philōn*,”

<sup>43</sup> Explaining *koinōnikous* in 1 Timothy 6:18, Professor Robert Yarbrough writes, “In a number of passages where Philo uses the word, ‘community-minded’ or ‘sociable’ or having ‘social affection’ describes the thrust.” [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 337. (Citing Philo, *Special laws*, 2.104, 4.120; *Flight 11*; *Preliminary studies* 71.)]

partnership, or fellowship for a long time. But it came to have special meaning in the church.

In the New Testament, *koinōnia* includes the sharing of deep, spiritual things. It's used for sharing or fellowship with God,<sup>44</sup> the Holy Spirit,<sup>45</sup> Jesus,<sup>46</sup> His sufferings,<sup>47</sup> His blood and body,<sup>48</sup> and His future glory.<sup>49</sup> Most commonly, it references the fellowship community of Christians.<sup>50</sup> It describes a connection with their sufferings and victories.<sup>51</sup>

This same word is used to describe giving within the church. This giving is a form of joining with fellow donors and recipients.<sup>52</sup> The donors join together in the recipients' work,<sup>53</sup> sufferings,<sup>54</sup> and privileges.<sup>55</sup> This kind of deep sharing is a participation in community. It's a form of fellowship.

### ***Partnership sharing in a literary context***

*Koinōnikous* reflects a deep, intense connection. This escalates even further in our passage because of its literary reference. Our passage parallels and references a famous scene

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<sup>44</sup> 1 John 1:6.

<sup>45</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:1.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:9.

<sup>47</sup> Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:13.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16.

<sup>49</sup> 1 Peter 5:1.

<sup>50</sup> Acts 2:42; Galatians 2:9; 1 John 1:3, 1:7; Hebrews 10:33; Rev 1:9; Philem 1:6, 1:17.

<sup>51</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 4:14.

<sup>52</sup> Romans 12:13, 15:26-27; 2 Corinthians 8:4, 9:13; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:15; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16.

<sup>53</sup> Philippians 1:5.

<sup>54</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 4:14.

<sup>55</sup> Romans 15:27; Philippians 1:7.

from Menander's play, *Dyskolos*.<sup>56</sup> In this scene, a son persuades his father to engage in an extreme act of wealth sharing. This is also an extreme act of family bonding.

The wealthy father has only two children – a son and a daughter. His only son asks permission to marry the only daughter of a poor family. His son also asks permission for his only sister to marry the only son of this same poor family. The rich family and the poor family will become an exclusively-bonded, unified family. They will share all wealth and all family for all generations. It's not just a new family, it's extreme family.

As discussed in more detail later, this literary reference intensifies *koinōnikous*. The donors share as part of a multiple-bonded, permanent new family.

### ***Contrasting partnership sharing with high-mindedness***

In the chiasmic structure of this passage, *koinōnikous* links to *mē hypsēlophronein* (“not high-minded”).<sup>57</sup> (Several commentators note this connection.)<sup>58</sup>

The rich Christians' identity, *einai*, is *koinōnikous*. They are closely-connected, fellowship-community sharers. This matches their values. They are already in the ongoing process

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<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 13-III, “A literary allusion: How Menander's *Dyskolos* adds meaning.”

<sup>57</sup> The chiasmic structure of the passage is A, B, C, D, E, F, G, F', E', D', C', B', A' where C is *hypsēlophronein* and C' is *koinōnikous*. See the previous section “Poetry with a point: Chiasmus” from Chapter 7-II “Enjoying wealth: Don't miss the point”.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., “*koinōnikous*, of demeanour and temper, ‘gracious,’ with true sense of human fellowship, the antithesis of *hypsēlophronein*.” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner's Sons. p. 74-75.]

of being not “high-minded.”<sup>59</sup> (They are not *hypsēlo* – high or above – *phronein* – minded.) This also means they are not above or separated from the fellowship community.

Paul uses this same donor language elsewhere. He writes of the Philippians’ donation,

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern [*phronein*] for me;”  
(Philippians 4:10a).

Paul confirms that their donation expressed *phronein* – concern. They were not above caring. They were not *hypsēlo-phronein*.

Paul also confirms that their donation demonstrated *koinōnikous*. It was *koinōnia* sharing. He describes their donation as

“partnering with me [*syn-koinōnēsantes*] in my hardship” (Philippians 4:14b).<sup>60</sup>

He explains that through their giving, the donors

“entered into partnership with me [*ekoinōnēsen*]”  
(Philippians 4:15b).<sup>61</sup>

Our passage connects “*mē hypsēlophronein*” and “*einai koinōnikous*.” It instructs donors to continue being both things. Paul’s gift acknowledgment confirms both characteristics. It confirms that the donors accomplished these goals.

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<sup>59</sup> “The present infinitive ... pictures the action expressed by the verb as being in progress.” HellenisticGreek.com. (2015). *Lesson 14: Infinitives in English and Hellenistic Greek*. <https://hellenisticgreek.com/14.html>

<sup>60</sup> Christian Standard Bible; The donors *syn*, “identified with” and *koinōneō*, “shared in” Paul’s difficulties.

<sup>61</sup> English Standard Version

Paul also connects these words in Romans. He urges “contributing [*koinōnountes*] to the needs of the saints” (Romans 12:13).

He then explains,

“Be of the same mind [*phronountes*] toward one another; do not [*mē*] be haughty [*hypsēla*] in mind [*phronountes*], but associate with the lowly.” (Romans 12:16a).

Again, Paul urges *koinōnia* sharing. “Contributing” is *koinōnountes*. Again, the donors are not [*mē*] high [*hypsēla*] in mind [*phronountes*]. The messages are the same. Donors are not high-minded or above caring. Instead, they are closely-connected, fellowship-community sharers.

How do donors do this? In Romans 12:16, they “associate with” [*synapagomenoi*] the lowly. Literally, this is *syn* “identified with” plus *apago* “carried away with.” Donors emotionally identify with the recipients. They are “carried away together with”<sup>62</sup> or “willingly conformed to”<sup>63</sup> the lowly.

This is sharing within an emotionally bonded community. Paul explains it this way. It’s a relationship where we

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15).

In the same way, the Philippian donors “shared in” [*synkoinōnēsantes*] Paul’s difficulties. They *syn*, “identified

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<sup>62</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1886/1889). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 601.

<sup>63</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).



with,” and *koinōneō*, “shared in” his hardship. They also shared Paul’s joy. He writes,

“I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.” (Philippians 17b-18).

This donor-recipient relationship is not transactional. It’s the opposite. It’s a deeply connected, social, emotional relationship.<sup>64</sup>

### ***Contrasting partnership sharing with almsgiving***

*Koinōnikous* is about connecting with the *koinōnia*. It’s about shared community. It’s about the sharing of one’s personal self.<sup>65</sup> It’s about oneness with the body.

The literary reference makes the sharing even more extreme. It alludes to an exclusive, double marriage of all children. This forever binds together all wealth and family. It’s the deepest possible connection with others.

Understanding this deep connection highlights an important distinction. *Koinōnikous* is not *eleēmosynē*. Sharing

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<sup>64</sup> The opposite of this deep emotional connection is disconnection. The opposite of being of the same mind is being of high mind, *hypsēlophronein*. Professor Lorenz Oberlinner explains of *hypsēlophronein*, “The sin is thus one of condemning other people who have less wealth and creating social divisions.” [Marshall, I. H. (1999). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. T & T Clark. p. 671. (Citing Oberlinner, L. (1994). *Die Pastoralbriefe. Erste Folge. Kommentar zum Ersten Timotheusbrief*. In Herders theologischer Kommentar zum NT Band X1/2. Herder. p. 305.)]

Of course, such social divisions are not limited to wealth differences. Paul uses the same language in fighting divisions between Jews and Gentiles. He explains, “Do not be conceited [*mē hypsēla phronei*], but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.” (Romans 11:19-21).

<sup>65</sup> One commentator notes of *koinōnikous*, “The idea is for the rich to actually share what they have, which entails their personal involvement and sharing of themselves.” [Knight, G. W. III. (1992). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. p. 274.]

with a fellowship community [*koinōnikous*] is not almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. These are very different. Consider this:

Q: Is it possible to be high-minded, *hypsēlophronein*, and still give alms to the poor, *eleēmosynē*?

A: Yes. (This is especially true if everyone sees us doing it.)

Q: Is it possible to be high-minded, *hypsēlophronein*, and still join in a closely bonded, fellowship community with the poor?

A: No. (This is also especially true if everyone sees us doing it.)

A high-minded person can give alms. A high-minded person cannot closely associate with the lowly. They can give *eleēmosynē*. They can't be *koinōnikous*.

These words are different. So is their pattern of use in the New Testament. Charitable giving as *eleēmosynē* appears 13 times in Matthew, Luke, and Acts. It appears nowhere after that.<sup>66</sup> Charitable giving as *koinōnikous* has the opposite trajectory. We first see this kind of giving in Acts 2.

“And all the believers were together and had all things in common [*koina*]; and they would sell their property and

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<sup>66</sup> This may also be reflected in subsequent church teachings. Writing of Clement of Alexandria (150-215), Professor Daniel Caner explains, “His treatise *On the Rich Man's Salvation* is the most extensive Christian treatment of wealth to survive from the pre-Constantinian era ... Because theirs was the largest Christian community of the day outside Rome, we might expect to find in this treatise, if anywhere, indications that such beneficiaries included outsiders. But while Clement agreed with earlier authorities that donors should give whenever possible to whoever asked ... he clearly assumed all potential recipients would be members of the church ... When he does allude to outside beggars ‘scattered along the roads,’ he does not depict them as either proper or potential recipients of Christian mercy or aid; instead he characterizes them as ‘counterfeit *ptōchoi*,’ who had adopted begging as a profession.” Caner, D. (2021). *The rich and the pure: Philanthropy and the making of Christian society in Early Byzantium*. University of California Press. p. 44.

possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need.” (Acts 2:44-45).

This is a new kind of giving. It’s giving as an expression of *koinōnia*. It’s not just income sharing. It’s sharing accumulated “property and possessions.” This *koinōnia*-sharing is later called

- *Koinōnikous* (1 Timothy 6:18)
- *Koinōnian* (2 Corinthians 8:4; Romans 15:26)<sup>67</sup>
- *Koinōnias* (2 Corinthians 9:13; Hebrews 13:16)<sup>68</sup>
- *Koinōneitō* (Galatians 6:6)<sup>69</sup>
- *Koinōnountes* (Romans 12:13)<sup>70</sup>
- *Ekoinōnēsen* (Philippians 4:15)<sup>71</sup>

This giving was new. And it was very different. *Eleēmosynē*, or almsgiving, is giving down. It’s giving from high to low. Ideal *eleēmosynē* maximizes disconnection. It’s to be done in absolute secrecy.<sup>72</sup> There is no publicly visible connection between the giver and the recipient. (Publicly giving down can take status and dignity from the recipient.)

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<sup>67</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:4, “begging us with much urging for the favor of participation [*koinōnian*] in the support of the saints”; Romans 15:26, “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution [*koinōnian*] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.”

<sup>68</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:13, “Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution [*koinōnias*] to them and to all,”; Hebrews 13:16, “And do not neglect doing good and sharing [*koinōnias*], for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

<sup>69</sup> Galatians 6:6, “The one who is taught the word is to share [*koinōneitō*] all good things with the one who teaches him.”

<sup>70</sup> Romans 12:13, “contributing [*koinōnountes*] to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.”

<sup>71</sup> Philippians 4:15, “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared [*ekoinōnēsen*] with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.”

<sup>72</sup> Matthew 6:2

In fact, the disconnection goes further. The giver is to be disconnected even from his own gift. His left hand shouldn't realize what his right hand does.<sup>73</sup> Like fasting, this is not an open, public, communal act.<sup>74</sup> It's done exclusively before God.

*Koinōnikous* is the opposite. It is not giving in secret. It's openly sharing. It's not giving down. It's giving across. It is not disconnected giving. It's intensely connected giving. It's appropriate to give alms [*eleēmosynē*] with no connection to the recipient. It's impossible to share [*koinōnikous*] with no connection to the recipient. There is no *koinōnikous* without *koinōnia*.

### ***Partnership sharing builds community***

The result of the donor's giving is not just impact, *agathoergein*. It's not just a public reputation from making many visible, beautiful impacts, *ploutein en ergois kalois*. It's not just the enjoyment from the giving itself, *eumetadotous*. The ultimate result of this giving is *koinōnikous*. It's a deep connection to a reciprocal, emotionally bonded community, *koinōnia*.

Paul's fundraising message is a message of wealth enjoyment. It's a message of great personal impact. It's a message of great personal reputation. It's a message of enjoyable, joyful *eu*-sharing. It's a message of deep, emotional belonging and community.

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<sup>73</sup> Matthew 6:3

<sup>74</sup> Matthew 6:1-18



PART II  
PARTNERSHIP RECIPROCITY: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND BUYING  
FRIENDS

(Message 11: You're one of us!)

***Partnership reciprocity: The source of partnership equality***

Our passage provides an escalating list of donor benefits. *Koinōnikous* reveals one more.

*Eleēmosynē* is secretly giving down to an outsider. Any reciprocity is only between the giver and God. *Koinōnikos* is different. It's part of an open, public, mutually reciprocal partnership. The word *koinōnia* was,

“widely used for friends who were committed to the reciprocity of giving and receiving.”<sup>1</sup>

In the early church age, the word *koinōnikos* actually meant “reciprocity.”<sup>2</sup> This reciprocity is not just with God. It's also with those in the fellowship community [*koinōnia*].

Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. He calls the donation *koinōnian* (8:4) and *koinōnias* (9:13). Paul explains,

“For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship, but by way of equality — at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as assistance for

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, J. W., & Longenecker, B. (2016). *Philippians and Philemon* (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament). Baker Academic. p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> See “reciprocity” as a definition in Lampe, G. W. H. (1964). *A patristic Greek lexicon* (Part 3). Clarendon Press. p. 764.

your need, so that there may be equality;" (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).

This is not giving down. This is sharing among equals.<sup>3</sup> Why? Because the gift comes with reciprocity expectations. This reciprocity makes it sharing, not just giving away to an outsider.

This is a gift "of equality."<sup>4</sup> It's part of a mutual sharing relationship.<sup>5</sup> It's not a one-way transfer, even if given to those who are poor.<sup>6</sup>

This relationship includes the donors' sympathy for the recipient.<sup>7</sup> But it also includes the recipients' sympathy for the donors.<sup>8</sup> It includes the donors' sharing with the recipient. But

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<sup>3</sup> Explaining "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality," (2 Corinthians 8:13-14a, KJV), John Gill writes, "But by an equality, ... All that he meant was, that there might be an equality both in givers and receivers, proportioned to their several circumstances and stations of life:" [Gill, J. (1748). *An exposition of the New Testament*. <https://sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/gill/co2008.htm> ]

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:13, "For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship, but by way of equality"

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:14, "at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality;"

<sup>6</sup> Paul's fundraising project in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 was for the poor in the church in Jerusalem. Romans 15:26, "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution [*koinōnian*] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem."

<sup>7</sup> One commentator explains, "(4) and 'willing to communicate,' to share our means with others, showing the sympathy that doubles the value of the gift – for the word is connected with that notable word *koinōnia*, "fellowship" or "communion" implying not merely liberal giving, but sympathy in all that is done." [Stock, E. (1983). *Practical truths from the Pastoral Epistles*. Kregel Publications. p. 301]; another writes, "Of these two last words the former describes merely the act of liberal giving; the other lays stress on the human sympathy which ought to accompany the gift." [Scott, E. F (1936/1957). *The Pastoral Epistles*. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 81.]

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:13-14, "Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you."

these recipients are also expected to share in return. It's a gift. But it's a gift made as part of a mutual sharing community.

This reciprocity obligation has an effect. It has a result. The recipients' reciprocity obligation makes it,

“so that [*hopōs*] there may be equality.” (2 Corinthians 8:14b).

Or,

“in order that [*hopōs*] there may be equality.” (2 Corinthians 8:14b).<sup>9</sup>

This “so that” or “in order that” word is *hopōs*. It describes a cause-effect relationship. This word

“is stronger than simple ‘that,’ because it emphasizes the method (qualities, prerequisites) involved to accomplish the objective (purpose) at hand.”<sup>10</sup>

In other words, *hopōs* is

“focusing on the necessary measures (factors, desires) that are required for the intended goal to be reached.”<sup>11</sup>

Paul is describing a cause-effect relationship. The reciprocity obligation causes the equality. Removing the reciprocity removes the equality.<sup>12</sup> It removes the mutual partnership. It then becomes just giving away to an outsider.

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<sup>9</sup> Christian Standard Bible; Godbey New Testament; Catholic Public Domain Version.

<sup>10</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).

<sup>11</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).

<sup>12</sup> Commenting on 1 Timothy 6:17, Professor Frances Margaret Young explains, “Even the mutual reciprocity of giving and receiving has an important moral and spiritual dimension: for dignity and respect are accorded to those from whom we receive, not to those we patronise.” [Young, F. (1994). *The theology of the Pastoral Letters*. Cambridge University Press. p. 159.]



This same reciprocity principle applies even when the church financially supports the poorest elderly widows. The transfer comes not simply because they are in need. It comes because these recipients have intensely shared with the fellowship community.<sup>13</sup>

This reciprocity from the recipients makes it a relationship of equality. It transforms giving into sharing. It transforms a gift into a gift of equality.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Partnership reciprocity: Real benefits***

Without reciprocity, giving is a one-way street. It becomes just a charitable burden for the donors. Donors may still accept this burden. They'll do so in order to relieve the recipients. Yet, it remains a burden.

This is not what Paul is asking for. He's explicit about this. He writes,

“It is not our intention that others may be relieved while you are burdened,” (2 Corinthians 8:13).<sup>15</sup>

Or,

“This is not intended to relieve other men and add a

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 5:9-10, “A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.”

<sup>14</sup> We may also see this in Paul's relationship with donors to his own ministry. Paul publicly lauds one of his donors, writing, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe ... for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.” (Romans 16:1-2). Whelan demonstrates that the relationship between Paul and Phoebe is best understand as one of “mutual patronage.” [Whelan, C. F. (1993). *Amica Pauli: The role of Phoebe in the early church. Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 15(49), 67-85.]

<sup>15</sup> Berean Study Bible

burden to you;” (2 Corinthians 8:13).<sup>16</sup>

Paul describes something different. He describes a real partnership with real benefits.<sup>17</sup> The recipients also have sharing obligations. These even include financial reciprocity should circumstances change.<sup>18</sup> Paul explains,

“share with them when you have so much, and they have so little. Later, when they have more than enough, and you are in need, they can share with you.” (2 Corinthians 8:14a CEV)<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lamsa Bible

<sup>17</sup> One interesting suggestion is to connect the *koinōnikous* fellowship community in 1 Timothy 6:18 with *autarkeias* in 1 Timothy 6:6, “But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment [*autarkeias*].” *Autarkeia* means self-sufficiency, independence, and contentment. If taken at the community level rather than the individual level, then the fellowship-community *koinōnikous* of 6:18 leads to the fellowship-community *autarkeias* – self-sufficiency, independence – of 6:6. Professor Korinna Zamfir explains, “Interestingly, these shift the focus of *autarkeia* from the individual to the community to promote sharing and *koinōnia*.” [Zamfir, K. (2014). The love of money is the root of all evils: Wealth and the well-to-do in 1 Timothy. In G. Benyik (Ed.), *The Bible and economics* (pp. 403-413). Jate Press. p. 425.]; See also Malherbe, A. J. (1996). Paul’s self-sufficiency (Philippians 4: 11). In J. T. Fitzgerald (Ed.), *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech* (pp. 125-139). Brill. p. 134-135.

<sup>18</sup> In reference to 2 Corinthians 8:14b, “that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality” (King James Version) See, e.g., “that their abundance also—The Greek being distinct from the previous ‘that,’ translate, ‘in order that,’ namely, at another season, when your relative circumstances may be reversed. The reference is solely to temporal wants and supplies.” [Jamieson, F., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1871). *Commentary critical and explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. p. 2883. <https://www.abiblecommentary.com/jamiesonfaussetbrownbiblecommentary.pdf> ]; See also “That as now in your abundance you help others with a share of your goods; so should others in the same way bestow some of their goods upon you.” [Calvin, J., et al. (1599). *Geneva Study Bible notes*. p. 3016. <https://hawramani.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/the-1599-geneva-bible-notes.pdf> ]

<sup>19</sup> See also Amplified Bible, “at this present time your surplus [over necessities] is going to supply their need, so that [at some other time] their surplus may be given to supply your need;” Weymouth New Testament, “but that, by equalization of burdens, your superfluity having in the present emergency supplied their deficiency, their superfluity may in turn be a supply for your deficiency later on, so that there may be equalization of burdens.”

Or,

“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it.” (2 Corinthians 8:14a NLT).

Although this financial reciprocity is not immediate, other forms of reciprocity are. Indeed, the gift immediately results in the recipients’ action. They will,

“glorify God ... for the liberality of your contribution to them.” (2 Corinthians 9:13).

The donor’s gift causes the recipients’ actions. The recipients direct actions toward God. They also direct actions toward the donor. The recipients will,

“by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Corinthians 9:14).

It’s common for ministries to ask for prayers from donors. Paul describes the reverse. The expectation of those receiving the funds is to, in turn, pray on behalf of the donors.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Partnership reciprocity: Real emotion***

Paul explains that the recipients will pray for the donors. But they do more than that. They will “yearn for” [*epithōntōn*] the donors. What does this mean? Various

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<sup>20</sup> This also appears to have been the practice in the early church. For example, in a work popular in the church for several centuries afterward, Hermas wrote around 160 A.D., “Let the poor render to God prayer and thanksgivings for the rich.” [Hermas, *Pastor*, III., Similitude 2.] Similarly, Professor Étienne Louis Chastel explains that the *Apostolic Constitutions* (375 A.D.), intended to serve as a manual of guidance for the clergy, “likewise recommend to widows and orphans to receive with reverence the aid accorded to them, and to render thanks for it to God; they advise that the bishop make known to the poor the names of their benefactors, in order that they may pray for them by name.” [Chastel, E. L. (1853/1857). *The charity of the primitive churches: Historical studies upon the influence of Christian charity during the first centuries of our era, with some considerations touching its bearings upon modern society*. (G. A. Matile, Tr.), JB Lippincott and Company. p. 79.]

translations render this as

- “have deep affection for you”<sup>21</sup>
- “express their affection for you”<sup>22</sup>
- “pour out their longing love towards you”<sup>23</sup>

A lexicon explains that this word means

“to experience a yearning affection for someone – ‘to have a great affection for, to have a yearning love for.’ ... ‘they will pray for you with great affection’ 2 Corinthians 9:14 ... ‘because of our great affection for you, we were ready to share with you’ 1 Thessalonians 2:8 ”

It goes on to explain,

“in 2 Corinthians 9:14 one may translate ‘they love you very much and will pray for you.’ In 1 Thessalonians 2:8 one may translate ‘because we love you so much, we were ready to share with you.’”<sup>24</sup>

Consider the practical impact of Paul’s fundraising appeal. Suppose you made a gift. As a result, you learned that the recipients’ response was,

“they love you very much and will pray for you.”

How powerful would that be? Wouldn’t you want to make that gift again? And the response gets better.

This love is not because of your money. It’s love because of who you are. The gift recipients will

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<sup>21</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible

<sup>22</sup> Berean Standard Bible

<sup>23</sup> Weymouth New Testament

<sup>24</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1988). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains* (Vol. 1, Introduction & domains). United Bible Societies. 1. 24.47. p. 294.

“yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Corinthians 9:14b).

What benefit in this world is greater than to be loved because of who you are? This is what Paul’s fundraising appeal promises.

Sharing is prompted by love for the other person. But that love and affection is not just from the donor. It’s also to the donor from the recipient.

This is a gift of love. But it also creates a response of love. It’s a gift of affection. But it also creates a response of affection. Love and affection motivate the gift. They also motivate the reciprocal response to the gift.

This is not a disconnected gift to an outsider. This is a gift of powerful mutual relationship.<sup>25</sup> It’s a gift of extreme reciprocal partnership. It’s a gift of deep, emotionally bonded, family partnership.

### ***Partnership reciprocity: Ministry organizations and ministry leaders***

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul writes a fundraising appeal. It promises reciprocity from the recipients. But what if we don’t have these kinds of recipients? What if we’re raising money to advance a cause, a concept, or a mission? What if we’re raising money to pay ministry salaries?

Reciprocity still works. In Philippians, Paul includes a gift acknowledgment. This wasn’t a gift to the poor in the

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<sup>25</sup> The term Paul uses here in 1 Timothy 6:18 inherently applies to everyone in the community. Professor John Reumann explains, “Even when *koinon*-terms, like the verb, are used in the singular, the individual Christian is being addressed as one within the whole community, to whom the precept applies.” [Reumann, J. (2010). *The Petrine ministry in the New Testament and in early patristic tradition*. In J. Puglisi (Ed.), *How can the Petrine ministry be a service to the unity of the universal church?* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 73.]

church as in 2 Corinthians. Instead, it was a gift to support Paul’s evangelism ministry. It supported the advancement of a cause, a concept, and a mission.

Paul confirms the great impact of their gift. (Philippians 4:14, 18). He confirms that their giving was *koinōnia*-sharing. He calls their giving *koinōnia* (Philippians 1:5), *synkoinōnēsantes* (Philippians 4:14), and *ekoinōnēsen* (Philippians 4:15).

But does Paul actually do anything for them? He does. He does exactly those things he promised the recipients would do in his appeal to the Corinthians. He thanks God for them. (Philippians 1:3). He prays for them. (Philippians 1:4). He yearns for them. (Philippians 1:8; 4:1) He writes,

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your *koinōnia* [‘participation’; ‘contribution’<sup>26</sup>; ‘gracious contributions’<sup>27</sup>] in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:3-5).

The Amplified Bible translates this as

“I thank my God in every remembrance of you, always offering every prayer of mine with joy (and with specific requests) for all of you, (thanking God) for your participation and partnership (both your comforting fellowship and gracious contributions) in (advancing) the good news (regarding salvation) from the first day (you heard it) until now.” (Philippians 1:3-5).

In 2 Corinthians 9:14, Paul promises that the donation recipients will “yearn for” the donors. They will,

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<sup>26</sup> Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation

<sup>27</sup> Amplified Bible

“pour out their longing love towards you.”<sup>28</sup>

And how does Paul respond to the Philippians’ donation? He does so in exactly this way. He delivers on this promise. The opening of his gift acknowledgment includes,

“God knows how much I love you and long for you”  
(Philippians 1:8 NLT).

The closing of his gift acknowledgment includes,

“I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy” (Philippians 4:1a NLT).

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul promises a response from the gift recipients. In Philippians 1 & 4, he delivers on that promise as a gift recipient.

### ***Partnership reciprocity: Other donors***

*Koinōnikous* is giving within an emotionally bonded, reciprocal relationship. This relationship is not just between the donor and the receiver. It’s also between the donor and other donors.

This additional set of relationships escalates the impact from giving. The mutual reciprocity is not just with the weak. It’s also with the strong.

With this positive, there is also a negative. These relationships escalate the benefits from giving. They also escalate the costs from refusing to give. Sharing means fulfilling mutual reciprocity. Not sharing means the opposite. It means being a visibly bad partner. It means a loss of reputation.

Paul was not subtle about this downside. He made

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<sup>28</sup> Weymouth New Testament

explicit threats. Should the Corinthians not be prepared to make an appropriate gift, they would face public shame. Their partners, the Macedonians, had made a large gift. They had done so, motivated by the Corinthians' intention to give. Should the Corinthians not fulfill that intention, their reputation would suffer. As Paul describes it,

“otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to mention you—would be put to shame by this confidence.” (2 Corinthians 9:4).

The argument is this:

“These other donors have given. They've done so relying upon your expected generosity. Violating that partnership expectation shows you, publicly, as an unreliable partner.”

This would result in being “put to shame.” This is the shame of breaking a mutual, reciprocal partnership. It's not merely violating the expectations of the poor recipients. It's violating the expectations of the fellow donors.

Consider the rich Christian who does not share. He's a member of a mutually-sharing community. Everyone shares whatever God has richly supplied to them. From the richest to the poorest, everyone does this. Everyone, except for him.

He alone withholds what God has richly supplied. He alone violates the shared social norm. He is the free rider. He is the bad partner. This makes for a bad reputation. This result is especially bad for the rich person.

In business and in life, there are many opportunities for mutually beneficial joint ventures. Such partnerships can be mutually profitable. But they come with a risk. They often include an opportunity to cheat. Selecting a reliable partner is key to success.



For the wealthy person engaged in business, reputation is valuable. Being – and being seen to be – a reliable, reciprocal partner is crucial. When others select partners for mutually beneficial joint ventures, the cheater gets left out. A person who violates mutual reciprocity gets left out. That person is a bad partner or at least a risky one. Relationships with such a person will be short and precisely counted. They'll be merely transactional.

In business, being – and being seen to be – an unreliable partner is deadly. This is especially true in close communities. These have long-term relationships and long-term reputations. For the wealthy businessperson,<sup>29</sup> publicly fulfilling mutual reciprocity can be central to success. Publicly violating such expectations can be costly.

Paul urges the public fulfillment of these expectations. He writes,

“Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.” (2 Corinthians 8:24).

The rich Christian is to become rich in visible-inspirational-noble good works. He is to connect with the reciprocal fellowship community openly and publicly. He is to openly fulfill partnership responsibilities.

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<sup>29</sup> The wealthy may not all be merchants, but they are nevertheless in the business of managing their wealth. The wealthy of Paul's time may have had much farmland. Extracting the value from this land was, and is, a full-time business. It requires hiring workers, working with suppliers, often working with processors like oil presses, risks of bad seasons, perhaps the need for credit or capital improvements, and so forth. Beyond this, Timothy is ministering in Ephesus, the financial center of that part of the world. Thus, Timothy's environment would have matched even more closely with the modern, non-agricultural business environment of today.

***Partnership reciprocity: Buying friends***

If a person has money, what should they spend it on? There's a lot of advice on this topic. Magazines, newspapers, and the internet are full of it.

“Buy this!”

“Don't buy that!”

“This one is better than that one!”

There are many ideas on how to spend money. But there's one suggestion we might never hear. It's this:

“Use your money to buy friends.”

No one would ever suggest this. That's not how it works. Even if we could do this, why would we even want “friends” that we had to buy?

No one would ever suggest this. Except Jesus. He says, “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9 NIV).

What does Jesus say about worldly wealth? First, he says to use it. Why? Because we know it's disappearing and uncertain.<sup>30</sup> The phrase “when it is gone” or “when it fails” is *hotan eklipē*. *Eklipē* means to die, expire, or come to an end. *Hotan* in the New Testament is,

“used of things which one assumes will really occur, but the time of whose occurrence he does not definitely fix.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> In 1 Timothy 6:17, “the uncertainty of riches” is “*ploutou adēlotēti*.” *Adēlotēti* can mean uncertainty, disappearing, and hiddenness.

<sup>31</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1886/1889). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. The American Book Company. p. 458. *Hotan*.

The wealth holding is going to expire. It's going to end. This disappearance is certain. Only the timing is uncertain. Wealth is both uncertain and disappearing [*adēlotētī*]. (1 Timothy 6:17). Being rich is temporary. Those who are rich are rich only "in the now time."<sup>32</sup> (1 Timothy 6:17).

The implication is obvious. If you have worldly wealth, don't just bury it and die with it. That's foolish. Instead, you should use it. The word for "use" here is *poiēsate*: do, make, or manufacture.

Jesus is telling us to do something with it. Make something with it. Manufacture something with it. Beyond this, he says to do, make, or manufacture something "for yourselves." And what should you make or manufacture for yourselves? Friends.

This seems like strange advice. It's even stranger as an imperative command. You use money "to gain friends for yourselves." What kind of friends? Ones that will welcome you when the money is gone.

Of course, the problem with trying to buy friends is that they aren't actually friends. When the money goes away, these so-called "friends" disappear too. That's not relationship reciprocity. That's just transactional reciprocity.

Jesus isn't telling us to do that. Instead, he's telling us to get the friends we'll need when the money is gone. These are not fair-weather friends. These are not gold diggers. These friends will welcome us when the money is gone. Their relationships will persist. Their reciprocity will persist.

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<sup>32</sup> In 1 Timothy 6:17, "those who are rich in this present world" is, literally, those who are rich "in the now time" or "*en tō nyn aiōni*."

What else do we know about these friends? These friends will welcome us into eternal dwellings. That's where they're headed. That's who we want to make friends with. These are not just worldly friends. These are lasting friends.

Jesus teaches using wealth to make such friends for yourself. This matches Paul's instructions to enjoy wealth by using it to be *koinōnikous*. A *koinōnos* is a partner, sharer, or companion. It can also be a friend. For example, in Philemon 1:17, Paul begins,

“If you consider me a friend [*koinōnon*] because of Christ,”<sup>33</sup>

Or,

“I beg you therefore by the common ties of friendship [*koinōnon*],”<sup>34</sup>

He writes in Galatians 2:9,

“They even gave Barnabas and me a friendly [*koinōnias*] handshake.”<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, the Septuagint uses *koinōnoi kleptōn* in Isaiah 1:23 for “friends of thieves.”<sup>36</sup>

So, how can we follow Jesus's instructions? Paul explains how. The friends that Jesus describes are found in the fellowship community. They're found in the *koinōnia*. We connect to the *koinōnia* through *koinōnikous*. We become one who shares with the fellowship community, *einai koinōnikous*.

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<sup>33</sup> Contemporary English Version; See also “If therefore thou accountest me a friend,” Worsley New Testament.

<sup>34</sup> Mace New Testament

<sup>35</sup> Contemporary English Version

<sup>36</sup> Good News Translation; Majority Standard Bible; Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; Berean Standard Bible; See also “Friends of crooks,” Contemporary English Version.

We use wealth to bond together with the shared fellowship community.

It's a good trade. Just at this moment, we happen to have uncertain and disappearing riches. So, we use them. We use them to make friends that welcome us into the eternal. We trade riches,

- In the now time “*en tō nyn aiōni*” (1 Timothy 6:18).

For friends who welcome us

- Into eternity “*eis tas aiōnious*” (Luke 16:9).

We use wealth to strengthen the fellowship community. We use it to strengthen our connection to the fellowship community. We use wealth to “buy” community. We use it to buy friends!

A friendship is a relationship of equality. We may be different, but we're together. It's a relationship of mutual reciprocity. We may be different, but we look out for each other. We help each other.

This reciprocity builds friendship. It also builds the fellowship community. It builds the *koinōnia*. It transforms giving into *koinōnikous*.

### PART III

## A LITERARY ALLUSION: HOW MENANDER'S *DYSKOLOS* ADDS MEANING

(Message 11: You're one of us!)

### ***The importance of literary references***

Ancient authors often allude to other works. This affects the meaning. Suppose a modern writer used the phrase “amber waves of grain.” An American reader would instantly understand. This is not just describing the color of a field; it's referencing the national anthem.

Understanding the reference affects the meaning. This is true in the Bible, too. Consider Jesus's statement on the cross. He says,

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”  
(Matthew 27:46b).

It affects the meaning to learn that Jesus is quoting the first line of a Messianic Psalm. He's quoting Psalm 22. This Psalm describes the Messiah's suffering. It describes some of the exact indignities Jesus was experiencing on that day. A Jewish audience would have gotten the reference. They would have understood the Messianic meaning of that exact phrase.

Of course, this is an extreme example. Normally, referencing another work only adds some special nuance to the meaning. This is the case with our passage. The meaning of our passage is clear without any knowledge of Paul's literary allusion. But understanding it helps. It adds a depth of meaning that otherwise would be missed.

## ***Menander's Dyskolos: External evidence***

Sections of our passage closely parallel a scene in Menander's play, *Dyskolos*. Why might we think this was intentional? To begin with, Paul quotes Menander elsewhere. 1 Corinthians 15:33 is a quote from Menander.<sup>1</sup>

And Paul wasn't the only one. When Paul wrote, he would have known of Philo's writings.<sup>2</sup> Paul and Philo lived at the same time. (Philo was a bit older.) Both were Diaspora Jews. Both were well-known theological writers.<sup>3</sup>

A few years before Paul wrote 1 Timothy, Philo also wrote about charitable giving. He wrote about the origins of the Jewish tithing. He wrote of God's rich provision, too. He wrote of God sharing possessions with His "friends." Philo does all

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<sup>1</sup> "The attribution to Menander is largely based on Jerome's authority. Jerome (circa A.D. 400), *Comment. ad Titum*, c. i.: 'To the Corinthians also ... he took an iambic verse from a comedy of Menander, "Evil communications corrupt good manners."' There is a similar reference in the same writer, *Comment. ad Galatas*, ii. 4; Menander is mentioned in this connection in a third passage, *Comment. ad Ephes.* iii. 5. The line is ascribed to Menander also by Euthalius (A.D. 458), Bishop of Sulce, writer of a commentary on the New Testament, and by Photius (*ad Amphilocho. Quaest.* 151) in the ninth century. The MS. *Laud.* 2 also contains a marginal note to the same effect, which appears to be copied from Euthalius." [Ling, P. H. (1925). A quotation from Euripides. *The Classical Quarterly*, 19(1), 22-27. p. 22.]

<sup>2</sup> Philo's *On Moses* has been dated to about 39-50 A.D. and *On Abraham* to about 41-50 A.D. The *New World Encyclopedia* explains, "Scholars who accept the epistle's Pauline authenticity admit that the language and style differ significantly from Paul's other letters, but explain this on the basis that it was most likely written toward the end of Paul's ministry, c. 62-67 C.E." while those who don't accept Pauline authorship would date the letter about 140 C.E. [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/First\\_Epistle\\_to\\_Timothy#Authorship\\_and\\_date](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/First_Epistle_to_Timothy#Authorship_and_date)

<sup>3</sup> In 1934, Professor Mary Andrews of Goucher College wrote, "The names of Philo and Paul have long been linked together by Christian writers. Certain factors of their experience have made this a natural procedure. They are contemporaries. Both are Jews of the Diaspora, residents of famous intellectual centers, Alexandria and Tarsus. Both are thoroughly conversant with the Gentile life of their time and both are trained in Jewish lore, Paul in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, Philo in Alexandria. Both are of high social standing in their respective communities, Philo a relative of the Alabarch, Alexander, and Paul a member of a Jewish family which boasted Roman citizenship." [Andrews, M. E. (1934). Paul, Philo, and the intellectuals. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 150-166. p. 150.]

this, in part, by quoting Menander. In both discussions, Philo references Menander’s proverb,

“the belongings of friends are held in common” (*koina ta philon*).

Philo’s Menander quote is about *koina*. In 1 Timothy 6:18 Paul’s new word, *koinōnikous*, is also from *koina*.

Knowledge of Menander wasn’t limited to intellectual writers like Philo and Paul. His plays were well known to everyone in Paul’s day. They were a core part of basic education.<sup>4</sup> Menander’s proverbs were even more famous.<sup>5</sup> They were widely distributed in collections such as *Menander’s Maxims*.<sup>6</sup>

Menander was well known across the Roman world. Thus, Philo – living in faraway Alexandria, Egypt – quotes Menander. The familiarity with Menander would have been especially strong in Ephesus where Timothy ministered.

Some simple geography helps to highlight this. Athens is where Menander first presented, among other things, *Dyskolos*. (It was immediately notable, winning the first-place prize at the

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Pitts writes, “The importance of Menander to the curriculum for Hellenistic education is seen in the fact that school texts of Menander are the third most common found among the Greco-Roman grammatical papyri (only surpassed by the writings of Homer and Euripides) and gnomic sayings and anthologies by Menander are more numerous than any other author.” [Pitts, A. (2007). *Paul and Hellenistic education: Assessing early literary and rhetorical influences* (Doctoral dissertation). McMaster Divinity College. p. 141.]

<sup>5</sup> Nervegna, S. (2013). *Menander in antiquity: The contexts of reception*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> One commentator explains of the reference in 1 Corinthians, “Paul knows the aphorism from a popular collection, akin to the famed Menander’s Maxims, which would become a common text in Hellenistic Greek education.” [Cover, M. B. (2018). The Divine Comedy at Corinth: Paul, Menander and the rhetoric of resurrection. *New Testament Studies*, 64(4), 532-550. p. 532.]



festival.<sup>7</sup>) Ephesus was the first port immediately east of Athens. Immediately to the west was Corinth.

Thus, Paul's quote of Menander in his first letter to the Corinthians fits the audience. So, too, would his allusion to a famous scene from Menander's play when writing to Timothy in Ephesus.

### ***Paul's "Christianizing" of contemporary culture***

Paul regularly used secular references familiar to his audience.<sup>8</sup> One commentator explains,

“since Paul conducted his ministry in the heart of Greco-Roman culture, if he wanted to be effective, he would have to address his audience in patterns of thought that were familiar to them (especially when attempting to persuade them to a particular course of action).”<sup>9</sup>

In Athens, Paul began his appeal using secular, even pagan, parts of their culture. He starts on common ground. He

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<sup>7</sup> Menander's play was first presented in 317-316 B.C. at an annual Athenian festival called *The Lenaia*.

<sup>8</sup> Paul may have had a good precedent for doing so. Professor John Bullard explains, “Eduard Meyer long ago held that the sacred literature of the Old Testament contains many vestiges of older secular poetry.” [Bullard, J. M. (1962). *Biblical humor: Its nature and function*. (Doctoral dissertation). Yale University. p. 90. (Citing *Geschichte der poetischen Nationalliteratur der Hebraer* (Leipzig, 1888).)]

<sup>9</sup> [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul's style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 263.]; See also “In addressing a Greek audience, even when he pointedly rejected the ‘wisdom of the world,’ Paul could not expect to be persuasive unless there was some overlap between the content and form of what he said and the expectations of his audience. What we need to do is to try to hear his words as a Greek-speaking audience would have heard them.” [Kennedy, G. (1984). *New Testament interpretation through rhetorical criticism*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.]

then moves to the Christian perspective. At the Areopagus, he begins,

“Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:22-23).

Paul starts with the familiar, even though it was pagan. He starts with their familiar story, but he then finishes and perfects it.

This same process may be exactly what Paul is doing in our passage. Timothy’s audience in Ephesus knows Menander. Paul starts with a well-known argument for generosity from Menander’s play *Dyskolos*. He starts with their familiar story, but he then finishes and perfects it. He “Christianizes” it into a more perfect form.

### ***Why we won’t see Dyskolos in older commentaries***

Reading older Bible commentaries can be enlightening.<sup>10</sup> But there are times when they won’t help. This is one of them. Why not? Because the discovery of the *Dyskolos* text didn’t happen until the 1950s. Its first publication wasn’t until 1958.<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning, the connection with our passage was obvious.<sup>12</sup> The first discussion of *Dyskolos* in Biblical

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<sup>10</sup> Whatever contemporary cultural biases they bring to the topic are, if nothing else, easy to spot from a modern perspective. Modern commentaries may also introduce cultural biases, but because we are living in the same time period, these are often more difficult to spot.

<sup>11</sup> Fontaine, M., & Scafuro, A. C. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of Greek and Roman comedy*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17-19 parallels the scene in *Dyskolos*. A more critical approach argues that 1 Timothy 6:17-19 was a separate, pre-existing instruction that was

scholarship appeared in 1964.<sup>13</sup> This first author quotes the dialogue discussed below and calls it,

“a fitting commentary on the words in I Tim. 6:17-19.”

The first Bible commentary to discuss this connection with *Dyskolos* appeared in French in 1969.<sup>14</sup> The first English language commentary noting this connection appeared only in 2000.<sup>15</sup> Since then, many commentators have noted this link.<sup>16</sup>

So, how does this help? How does this allusion add to our understanding? Let's start with the scene itself.

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added to the epistle. James Miller explains, “On the basis of the unusual vocabulary (six NT hapax legomena), and the awkward setting in the context, it is likely that the piece came ‘ready-made’ to an editor of the Pastorals who incorporated it here into the letter.” [Miller, J. D. (1997). *The Pastoral Letters as composite documents*. Cambridge University Press. p. 94.] Given that Menander was most widely known at the time through popularized segments, such as in *Menander's Maxims*, the original scene itself may have already been condensed into a contemporary song. Thus, an unseen intermediate step may exist between the original scene and the condensed, highly lyrical allusion appearing in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

<sup>13</sup> Danker, F. W. (1964). Menander and the New Testament. *New Testament Studies*, 10(3), 365-368.

<sup>14</sup> Spicq, C. (1969). *Les épîtres pastorales* (4th ed. *Études Bibliques*, Vol. 39). Gabalda. p. 1.576.

<sup>15</sup> “The closest parallel to the thought of I Timothy 6:17 on a man's depending on *ploutos* is Menander's *Dysc. 812*” [Quinn, J. D., & Wacker, W. C. (2000). *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New translation with notes and commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 548.] In earlier references, a dissertation discussed it in 1989 [Kidd, R. M. (1989). *Wealth and beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: An inquiry into a “bourgeois” form of early Christianity* (Doctoral dissertation). Duke University. p. 162-166.] So, too, a 1992 Spanish academic article [Cavallero, P. A. (1992). *La literatura griega precristiana y el pensamiento judeocristiano: Puntos de aproximación*. *Nova Tellus*, 21-44. p. 30-31.]

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., “Menander, writing at least four centuries before this document, strikes a similar chord in his dialogue between father and son.” [Witherington, B., III. (2006). *Letters and homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Vol I). InterVarsity Press Academic. p. 297-298.] [See also Collins, R. F. (2002). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 171-172; Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus*. Penn State Press. p. 201.]

***Menander's Dyskolos: Internal evidence***

The relevant scene from *Dyskolos* opens this way:

*Kallippides appears on the far right of the stage.*

SOSTRATOS. There, I see my father coming, smack on time.

GORGIAS. Kallippides!

He's your father?

SOSTRATOS. Sure, that's father.

GORGIAS. He's a millionaire, by god; He certainly deserves his riches; he's a farmer none can beat.<sup>17</sup>

Kallippides is rich, but deservedly so. Next, his son, Sostratos, encourages him to a generous act:

SOSTRATOS. You talk  
Of wealth, a thing on which you can't rely.  
For if you know that it will stay with you  
Forever, keep it then; don't give a share  
To anyone. But where you're not the master  
And hold it not by right but by the gift  
Of Fortune [Tyche], father, don't begrudge a share  
Of this to anyone. For Fortune [Tyche] may  
Take all from you and hand it on perhaps  
To someone less deserving than yourself.  
And so I say that all the time you have  
It, father, you should use it generously,  
To help all men and through your means enrich  
As many as you can. Such deeds will live,  
And if you chance to fall yourself some time,  
You will receive a fair return from them.  
Far better, father, is a friend you see  
Than hidden treasure buried underground.

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<sup>17</sup> Blame, M. (2001). *Menander: The plays and fragments*. Oxford University Press. p. 34.

KALLIPPIDES. You surely know my nature, Sostratos;  
I shall not carry with me to the grave  
What I have gained. How could I? It is yours.  
You want to make a man your friend for good;  
You've tested him? Then do so, and good luck!  
Why preach at me? Get on with it; you're right.  
Give, share! I'm totally convinced by you.

SOSTRATOS. And willingly?

KALLIPPIDES. Yes, willingly; that need.  
Not worry you.<sup>18</sup>

Note the parallel arguments with our passage.

- Our passage begins by identifying the audience for the argument to be generous. It is the rich person:

“Instruct those who are rich in this present world”  
(1 Timothy 6:17a).

This scene begins by identifying the audience for the argument to be generous. It is a rich person:

“He’s a millionaire, by god;”

- Next, our passage references past and continuing positive characteristics of the rich person:

“not to be conceited [present infinitive: an already in-progress continuing process] or to set their hope [perfect infinitive: the present result of a past action]” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

Next in this scene, a bystander mentions,

“He certainly deserves his riches;”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Blame, M. (2001). *Menander: The plays and fragments*. Oxford University Press. p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> The scene does not specifically reference the wealthy father as being not conceited, although his actions dictate this judgment. There is also a similar

- Next, our passage references the uncertainty (and/or hiddenness) of wealth:

“on the uncertainty of riches” (1 Timothy 6:17c).

In this scene, the argument for generosity opens with this reference:

“You talk of wealth, a thing on which you can’t rely.”

- Next, our passage references the Godly source of wealth:  
“but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17d).

Next in this scene, Sostratos references the pagan godly source of wealth:

“But where you’re not the master and hold it not by right but by the gift of Fortune [Tyche].”  
Tyche, in Greek religion, is the goddess of chance.

- Next, our passage instructs the wealthy person to be generous:

“Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous, and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

Next in this scene, the argument continues in the same way:

“And so I say that all the time you have it [wealth], father, you should use it generously, to

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reference elsewhere in Menander. Our passage references not being conceited/arrogant/haughty as *mē hypsēlophronei*. Menander warns that “[e]xcessive luxury becomes somehow overproud [*hyperēphanon*], and wealth strands its possessor and leaves him with a different character and not the man he was before.” [Allinson, F. H. (1921). *Menander: The principal fragments*. Loeb Classic Library, 1 Fr. 587.] Thus, Menander references the problems of both arrogance and isolation from the community resulting from wealth.

help all men and through your means enrich as many as you can.”

- Next, our passage references the long-term future benefits to the donor from being generous:

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Next, this scene references the long-term future benefits to the donor from being generous:

“Such deeds will live, and if you chance to fall yourself some time, you will receive a fair return from them.”

- Bible commentators have long suggested that in 1 Timothy 6:19, Paul is referencing Jesus’s teachings both positively in Luke 16:9,

“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings”.<sup>20</sup>

And negatively in Matthew 25:25,

“I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground.”<sup>21</sup>

Next in this scene, the argument concludes,

“Far better, father, is a friend you see than hidden treasure buried underground.”

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<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., this reference to 1 Timothy 6:19, “Compare our Lord’s words in Luke 16:9, where the same truth is taught, and a similar promise made.” [Ellicott, C. J. (1897). *A New Testament commentary for English readers* (Vol. 1). Cassell and Company.]

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 8-III, “Wealth is not for hiding.”

Our passage and this scene make similar arguments. They make them in a similar sequence. These parallels are clear in English. Others are obvious only in Greek.

### ***Greek parallels: Eumetadotous***

In our passage, Timothy instructs the wealthy person to be “generous.” The Greek word is *eumetadotous*. This word is actually new. It appears nowhere prior to Paul writing it. Paul made it up. But the reader still knows what it means because it’s a compound word: *Eu+meta+dotous*. Each subpart is well known.

In this scene, the father authorizes the son to “Give, share!”<sup>22</sup> In Greek, this is “*didou, metadidou*.” This shows an escalation of generosity. First, he says, “give” (*didou*). Then he says “share” (*meta-didou*). The prefix *meta-* adds a reference to “with,” “among,” or “in company with.”

Next, the scene escalates this generosity one step further. After the father instructs the son to “Give, share [*“didou, metadidou”*]!” The son responds, “And willingly?” The father says, “Yes, willingly; that need not worry you.” This is third-level generosity. First, give. Second, share. Third, share willingly.

Paul matches this same three-part concept. He does so by inventing a new three-part word, *eumetadotous*.

The base word is *-dotos*. This is the same as the first word from the scene: *didou*. Adding the second part creates *-metadotous*. This is the same as the second word from the

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<sup>22</sup> Blame, M. (2001). *Menander: The plays and fragments*. Oxford University Press. p. 35.



scene: *metadidou*. The third part creates *eumetadotous*. The *eu-* prefix adds the idea of giving willingly.<sup>23</sup>

Paul's three-part word parallels the three-level philanthropy from *Dyskolos*. First, give. Second, share. Third, share willingly.

### ***Greek parallels: Adēlotēti***

Paul references “the uncertainty of riches.” Yet, he uses a word that can also mean “the hiddenness of riches.”<sup>24</sup> He could have chosen a word that only meant uncertainty. He could have chosen a word that only meant hiddenness. But he didn't. Instead, he chose a word that could mean both things.

This matches *Dyskolos*. That scene makes both arguments. Paul's word choice does the same. It condenses and “Christianizes” the familiar scene.

Sostratos's argument for generosity begins with,  
“You talk of wealth, a thing on which you can't rely  
[*abebaios* - uncertain].”

It ends with,

“Far better, father, is a friend you see than hidden  
[*aphanēs* - hidden] treasure buried underground.”

Is this scene referencing the uncertainty of wealth? Yes. Is it also referencing the hiddenness of wealth? Yes. What word would simultaneously reference both arguments? It is the

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<sup>23</sup> The prefix *eu-* here, “emphasizes the nuance either of liberality, or the ease, promptitude, and joy with which one makes one's wealth useful to others.” [Spicq, C. (1994). *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (Volume 2). (J. D. Ernest, Trans.). Hendrickson. p. 121.]

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 8-III, “Wealth is not for hiding.”

exact word that Paul uses: *adēlotēti*. The reference makes the meaning obvious.

This scene mentions “hidden” treasure. But it goes further. It mentions “hidden treasure buried underground.” The allusion would have been particularly poignant for a Christian audience. It would be impossible not to recall Jesus’s words in the Parable of the Talents,

“So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground.” (Matthew 25:25 NIV).

### ***Greek parallels: Koinōnikous***

In our passage, Paul creates another new word. He creates *koinōnikous*. This is the fourth way to enjoy what God has richly provided. It’s perhaps the highest level of philanthropy. The instruction is,

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share [*koinōnikous*]” (1 Timothy 6:18).

*Koinōnikous* is sharing with the *koinōnia*. It’s sharing among the fellowship community. Understanding the *Dyskolos* allusion affects the meaning of the word. It dramatically intensifies the meaning.

In *Dyskolos*, the father is not being asked to just write a check. This is no disposable income gift. He’s being asked to permanently share 100% of his wealth now and forever. He’s being asked to permanently join his family with another, relatively poor, family.

This wealthy father has only two children, a son and a daughter. His son is asking permission to marry the only daughter of the poor family. And he is asking permission to allow his sister to marry the only son of the same poor family.

The proposed dual wedding binds these two families together. It does so in the most extreme way possible. All wealth becomes shared wealth for generations to come. The rich family and the poor family go from being entirely disconnected to being as closely linked as is humanly possible. This creates a new family. They will permanently be sharing all things. They will share children, grandchildren, and all current and future wealth.

The allusion to *Dyskolos* intensifies the meaning of *koinōnikous*. It suggests an extreme bond. It is philanthropy as extreme community. It is philanthropy as multiple-bonded family. Treating donors “like family” is not a new idea. 1 Timothy 6:18 takes that idea to its greatest extreme!

### ***The importance of Dyskolos***

1 Timothy 6:17-19 appears to allude to this well-known scene from Menander’s *Dyskolos*. However, we can still understand the passage without it. It’s not mandatory to know – or accept – the allusion. But it is helpful.

It adds confidence in understanding some words. *Adēlotēti*’s dual meaning is intentional. It adds context to others. Creating the new three-part word *eumetadotous* is meaningful. It adds extreme intensity to others. *Koinōnikous* is sharing. But it’s sharing within an intensely bonded, extreme-family community.

Understanding the allusion helps. It adds nuance, meaning, and intensity. It provides insight into Paul's words. It follows the wise suggestion that

“What we need to do is to try to hear his words as a Greek-speaking audience would have heard them.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Kennedy, G. (1984). *New Testament interpretation through rhetorical criticism*. University of North Carolina Press. p. 10.



## Chapter 14

### Message 12: You're being a good partner in a great partnership!

- *Biblical fundraising offers beneficial reciprocity with God and the fellowship community.*
- *Ordinary fundraising asks for a disconnected one-way transfer to outsiders.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on **God, who richly supplies us** with all things to enjoy [*Instruct them*] **to do good**, to be rich in good works, to be generous and **ready to share**, **storing up for themselves** the treasure of a good foundation for the future, **so that they may take hold** of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### MORE PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

### *It's not altruism*

At first glance, this passage appears to teach altruism. The rich should give because there is a need. Paul is telling the rich to be altruistic. Except, he's not.

What Paul is describing is not altruism.<sup>2</sup> It doesn't

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi **Theō tō parechonti hēmin** panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, **koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois** themelion kalon eis to mellon, **hina epilabōntai** tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

<sup>2</sup> Professor Risto Saarinen explains, "The motivation of doing favors in [1 Timothy] 6:19 differs from Seneca's *On Favors*. Whereas Seneca emphasizes disinterested giving, Paul says that the giver is rewarded in the future life. Philosophically speaking, this view downplays the free gift and approaches the idea of economic

qualify. It doesn't meet the definition. Instead, Paul makes the case for reciprocal altruism.<sup>3</sup>

What's the difference? The biggest difference is this. Altruism does not benefit the giver. Reciprocal altruism does.

The benefit to the giver might come from the gift recipient. It might come from others who also support the cause. Either way, reciprocal altruism must benefit the giver. That's what makes it reciprocal.

Altruism requires no response to the gift. Reciprocal altruism does. Altruism can be an isolated, hidden, one-way transfer. Reciprocal altruism cannot. Reciprocal altruism is different. It's part of an ongoing partnership.

### ***It's reciprocal partnership***

Paul encourages generosity. But that generosity is not just a detached transfer to those in need. It can also be part of ongoing beneficial partnerships. Dr. Verlyn Verbrugge and Professor Keith Krell write,

“Paul extrapolates what may be called the law of reciprocity ... that the giver and receiver should be equally involved and equally concerned about each other.”<sup>4</sup>

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exchange.” Saarinen, R. (2008). *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*. Brazos Press. p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> “Altruism is suffering a cost to confer a benefit. Reciprocal altruism is the exchange of such acts between individuals so as to produce a net benefit on both sides.” Trivers, R. (2006). Reciprocal altruism: 30 years later. In P. M. Kapeler & C. P. van Schaik (Eds.), *Cooperation in primates and humans* (pp. 67-84). Springer-Verlag. p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Verbrugge, V., & Krell, K. R. (2015). *Paul and money: A Biblical and theological analysis of the Apostle's teachings and practices*. Zondervan Academic. p. 173.

Professor Stephan Joubert explains of Paul's collection,

“The collection is to be understood in terms of the social convention of *benefit exchange*.... In particular, the principles of reciprocity that were embedded and reflected in benefit exchange relationships provided the *basic interpretive framework* for the collection.” (italics in original)<sup>5</sup>

This same “basic interpretive framework” also applies to our passage. Why should we give? In this passage, we give because

1. We're good (reciprocating) partners.
2. We're in great (beneficial) partnerships.

The mutual partnership with the fellowship community motivates giving. It does so in many ways:

- We give because we're not disconnected from or above the fellowship community:  
“Not to be high-minded”. (We're good partners.)
- We give because by sharing, we help and connect to the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]:  
“To be generous and ready to share [*koinōnikous*]”. (We're good partners.)
- We give because all of us, together, share the various good things that God has richly provided:  
“God who richly supplies us with all things ... to be generous and ready to share”. (We're in a great partnership.)

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<sup>5</sup> Joubert, S. (2000). *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy, and theological reflection in Paul's collection*. Wipf & Stock. pp. 4, 11.



- We give because this partnership will not disappear, even if all our wealth does:  
“The uncertainty of riches ... the treasure of a good foundation for the future”. (We’re in a great partnership.)

The mutual partnership with God also motivates giving. It does so in many ways:

- We give because we expect great things from God. In fact, we have already put our hope in Him:  
“Set their hope on ... God, who richly supplies us with all things ... storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future”. (We’re in a great partnership.)
- We give because our wealth will disappear, but God will not:  
“Not to ... set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God”. (We’re in a great partnership.)
- We give because what we’re giving was supplied to us by God:  
“God, who richly supplies us with all things”. (We’re in a great partnership.)
- We give because we’re responding to God’s rich provision by putting it to work, as he would want:  
“To do good ... good works”. (We’re good partners.)
- We give because we’re responding to God’s generosity with our own generosity towards God’s fellowship community:  
“To be generous and ready to share [*koinōnikous*]”. (We’re good partners.)

- We give because we're storing up treasure for the future. God rewards those who are faithful with what He gives them:  
"Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future". (We're in a great partnership.)
- We give because we can thereby take hold of that which is truly life.  
"So that they may take hold of that which is truly life."  
(We're in a great partnership.)

The message is about partnerships. It's about partnership values. A good partner is connected. He cares. He repays. It's also about partnership benefits. These partnerships provide amazing rewards.

### ***Partnership values are not transaction values***

These are beneficial relationships. But these are not market-exchange relationships. Instead, these are social-emotional relationships. Partnership values reflect social-emotional bonding. Market-exchange transactions do the opposite.

A transactional mindset violates partnership values. Anthropologists find this across human cultures, explaining that

"attempts to [strictly] balance exchanges are tantamount to ending ... relationships."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hames, R. (2017). Reciprocal altruism in Yanomamö food exchange. In L. Cronk, N. Chagnon, & W. Irons (Eds.), *Adaptation and human behavior: An anthropological perspective* (pp. 397-416). Routledge. p. 411. (Citing Arensberg, C. M. (1959). *The Irish countryman: An anthropological study*. P. Smith; Mauss, M. (1967). *Essai sur le don. The gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies* (I. Cunnison, Trans.). Norton. (Original work published 1923).)

Others explain,

“Explicit contingent exchange and turntaking reciprocation are the forms of altruism that exist when trust is low and friendship is weak or absent, and treating others in such a fashion is commonly interpreted as a communication to that effect.”<sup>7</sup>

Insisting on a tit-for-tat trade shows a lack of bonding. It’s what strangers do. Sustainable partnerships are beneficial but not transactional. Acting transactionally violates partnership values.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Partnership types***

Our passage encourages giving. But this is partnership giving. It’s giving that shows partnership values. It’s giving that provides partnership benefits. It’s giving that reflects

1. We’re good (reciprocating) partners.
2. We’re in great (beneficial) partnerships.

It’s easy to think of a partnership as just one type of relationship. It’s not. Instead, it’s a category of relationships.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (1996). Friendship and the banker’s paradox: Other pathways to the evolution of adaptations for altruism. *Proceedings of the British Academy, 88*, 119-144. p. 139.

<sup>8</sup> And it certainly wasn’t well received by Peter when Simon tried to behave in a transactional way in Acts 8:18-24!

<sup>9</sup> A wide variety of reciprocal partnerships, friendships, and relationships were commonplace in Paul’s time. Professor Stephan Joubert explains, “For example, apart from *euergetism* and patronage, diverse forms of friendship were formed between individuals outside the parameters of the *familia* or *oikos* in which either or both of these functions were institutionalized, such as guest-friendships, friendships between socially disproportionate individuals, friendships between status equals, ritualised friendships, etc.” Joubert, S. (2000). *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy, and theological reflection in Paul’s collection*. Wipf & Stock. p. 69.

In each partnership type, the relationship is valuable. It provides important benefits. These benefits can include

- Future return gifts
- Insurance in a crisis
- The fruits of teamwork
- The benefits of shared community

In Paul's arguments for sharing, these partnerships include:

"Pay it forward" partnership

X gives to Y. Y returns the favor by supporting those people or values X cares about. Y fulfills partnership values.

Mutual gifting partnership

X gives to Y without compensation. Y, in turn, later does the same for X. Y fulfills partnership values.

Donor community partnership

X, Y, and Z all pull together to accomplish a task. Y gives less effort than either X or Z. Y violates partnership values by shirking.

Recipient community partnership

X, Y, and Z all benefit from the varied things they share as a group. Y receives much but shares little of what he has. Y violates partnership values.

Temporary manager partnership

X appoints Y as the temporary manager of X's property or business while X is away. Y manages counter to X's instructions. Y violates partnership values.

Simple insurance partnership

X and Y agree to help each other if either is in need. X gives to Y during Y's time of need. Y returns the favor during X's time of need. Y fulfills partnership values.

[Extreme] family insurance partnership

X and Y agree to save each other in any crisis even if the cost is extreme and could never be repaid. Because of the potentially high cost and the risk of an unreliable "fair-weather" partner, such partnerships usually arise only in family or family-like relationships.<sup>10</sup>

***Partnership types in the passage***

The repeated theme in this passage is partnership sharing. It's giving because

1. We're good (reciprocating) partners.
2. We're in great (beneficial) partnerships.

This applies to each partnership type. For example:

"Pay it forward" partnership

This reciprocity doesn't give directly to the partner. Instead, it helps people or values that the partner cares about. This is useful when a direct transfer won't work. The partner may be gone. Or, he may not have a personal need.

Suppose we receive support and guidance from a grandmother. After her passing, we can't return the favor directly. But we can support the things she cared about. This might be gifting to a cause that was important to her. It could be supporting our own family in a similar way. We "return the

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<sup>10</sup> Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (1996). Friendship and the banker's paradox: Other pathways to the evolution of adaptations for altruism. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 88, 119-144.

favor” by doing things she would have wanted. We “return the favor” by imitating her generosity.

This theme appears in our passage. God richly supplies us with all things. We cannot return benefit directly to God. God isn’t in need. But we can benefit those people and values that God cares about.

The rich person does this by putting his wealth to work. He uses it to do good. He uses it to generously share with God’s fellowship community. The rich person imitates God’s generosity.

Professor Robert Wall writes that the passage “does not demand the forfeiture of wealth, ... but rather a **reciprocal action** according to which the congregation’s wealthy **follow the example of God**, who richly gives good things for people to enjoy (vv. 17-18)” (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Professor Risto Saarinen explains,

“Following this paradigm, rich people need to be generous and rich in giving, imitating the model given by God (6:18).”<sup>12</sup>

This concept appears even in the word choice used to describe the giving. One commentary notes,

“‘Do good’ is a single word in the Greek, a word used only one other place in the New Testament, where it

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<sup>11</sup> Wall, R. W., & Steele, R. B. (2012). *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. p. 150.

<sup>12</sup> Saarinen, R. (2008). *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*. Brazos Press. p. 112

speaks of God showering his good gifts on his hearers (Acts 14:17).”<sup>13</sup>

God has richly supplied us. We respond by supporting the people and values that are important to God. We do good. We become rich in good works. We “pay it back” by imitating God. By doing so, we fulfill our partnership values. We act as good (reciprocal) partners.

### Mutual gifting partnership

As donors we can imitate God. We can “pay forward” the blessings God has given. But the reciprocity cycle doesn’t stop there. This partnership creates many future benefits. It results in,

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

Giving results in reciprocal benefit. It results in a good foundation for the future. Professor Saarinen proposes,

“In giving, one also receives something, namely, the gratitude of the recipients. This gratitude transforms into the favor of God, who is in charge of our future life. In this gift exchange the ‘uncertain’ capital becomes transformed into a ‘good foundation.’”<sup>14</sup>

Paul describes this reciprocity elsewhere. (2 Corinthians 9:7-15). God responds to giving with His blessings. He will provide “an abundance for every good deed.”<sup>15</sup> The giver “will

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<sup>13</sup> Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Crossway Books. p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Saarinen, R. (2008). *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*. Brazos Press. p. 112

<sup>15</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:8b

be enriched for everything for all liberality.”<sup>16</sup> As Jesus explains,

“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” (Luke 6:38 ESV).

The Old Testament directs giving to the poor brother. It explains,

“You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work, and in all your undertakings.” (Deuteronomy 15:10).<sup>17</sup>

The partnership with God is a mutual gifting partnership. We give. God responds with His own gifts. Giving is beneficial. It supports a great (beneficial) partnership!

### Donor community partnership

A partnership arises whenever a group works together to accomplish a task. Suppose the task is to pull a rope attached to a heavy object. In a good partnership, each person will pull as hard as possible. In a bad partnership, some won't. Some will hold the rope but give little effort.

This passage describes giving in a similar way. Giving is part of a joint effort. It's not just the rich who are richly supplied. God richly supplies each of us with all things. God's rich supply has a purpose. It allows us to do good. It allows us to be generous and ready to share.

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:11a

<sup>17</sup> See also Proverbs 22:9, “One who is generous will be blessed, because he gives some of his food to the poor.”

Proverbs 11:25, “A generous person will be prosperous, and one who gives others plenty of water will himself be given plenty.”



We each follow the same rule. We each give generously from what God has richly supplied. The rich person who isn't generous breaks this rule. He becomes the one holding the rope who isn't really pulling. He violates partnership values.

### Recipient community partnership

This passage encourages sharing. This is *koinōnikous* [sharing] with the *koinōnia* [fellowship community]. When we give in this way, we benefit the community. We are also part of that community. Our giving helps our community, our people, and our partners. Our giving strengthens our bond with that fellowship community. It strengthens our partnership with this community.

This partnership is valuable. It provides many benefits. This works because the other partners share, too. They, too, have been richly supplied. They, too, generously share from those things. We receive as a member of this partnership. We receive as part of the fellowship community.

If we were to receive like others but not give like others, we would be “free riding.” Others generously share from what God has given them. But we don't. That would violate partnership values.

### Temporary manager partnership

A store owner leaves for a long trip. He pays a manager to run things while he's gone. The manager has a choice:

1. He can fulfill his partnership duties. He can manage the business according to the owner's instructions.

Or,

2. He can violate those duties. He can manage the business against the owner's instructions. He might spend

everything for his own pleasures.<sup>18</sup> Or, instead of running the business, he might shut it down. He could just put it all in storage.<sup>19</sup> Either way, he's a bad partner. He violates partnership values.

The temporary manager analogy is recurrent in Jesus's teaching. We see it in Matthew 24:45-51. We see it in Matthew 25:14-30. We see it in Mark 13:33-37. We see it in Luke 19:11-26.

These partnerships start with benefits. The manager is given control of everything. The manager then fulfills – or violates – partnership values. Fulfilling partnership values leads to even greater partnership benefits. Violating them leads to punishment.

This same theme is referenced here. The rich person has control of wealth. But this control is temporary. The wealth itself is unreliable. It is uncertain or disappearing [*adēlotēti*]. It is not worth setting our hope in. Also, the manager's role is temporary. Paul writes,

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.” (1 Timothy 6:7).

Again, the manager can either fulfill or violate the owner's instructions. Here, the rich person fulfills them. Unlike the bad servants in Matthew 25:25 and Luke 19:20, he does not trust in the hiddenness [*adēlotēti*] of wealth. He does not bury the wealth. Instead, he acts like the faithful servants

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<sup>18</sup> Matthew 24:48-49, “But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards” (ESV).

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 25:25, “And I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground. See you still have what is yours.”

Luke 19:20, “And then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I kept tucked away in a handkerchief;’”

in Matthew 25:16-17. They put the money to work [*ērgasato*]. He does the same. He uses it to do good [*agathoergein*]. He uses it for good works [*ergois kalois*]. He creates the kind of “return on investment” the owner desires.

Again, fulfilling partnership duties leads to more rewards. The generous rich person stores up for himself the treasure of a good foundation for the future. Like the faithful managers in Luke 19:13, he makes a profitable trade.<sup>20</sup> He exchanges unreliable wealth for wealth that lasts.

Here, the rich person is a good manager. He is being a good (reciprocal) partner. He is fulfilling partnership values. He is in a great (beneficial) partnership. He receives partnership rewards.

### Simple insurance partnership

This passage references sharing, *koinōnikous*. This is not simple altruism. It's reciprocal altruism. Paul contrasts these two types of giving. He explains,

“For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship,” (2 Corinthians 8:13a).

In other words, this is not simple altruism. Instead, it's reciprocal altruism. He continues,

“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.” (2 Corinthians 8:14 NLT).

This is giving with partnership insurance. Today, we are up, and they are down. Tomorrow, this may be reversed. By

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<sup>20</sup> In Luke 19:13, *pragmateusasthe*, “do business,” is also “trade” (American Standard Version; English Revised Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; Weymouth New Testament).

giving, we enter into a great (beneficial) partnership. We protect against an uncertain future. This is giving but with reciprocity. It's giving with insurance for the future. It's giving with benefits.

[Extreme] family insurance partnership

This passage describes reciprocal altruism. It's giving as part of beneficial partnerships. This goes beyond simple partnerships. It goes to an extreme. This extreme partnership is family partnership.<sup>21</sup>

A normal partnership is an ongoing mutual relationship. It's not a carefully balanced exchange, but it's still mutually beneficial. A family partnership is different. It's different when things go bad. It's different in a crisis.

If we lose everything, we're no longer attractive partners. We have nothing to offer. In such circumstances, normal partnerships will fade away. They're no longer mutually beneficial. But a family partnership remains. It's different. It continues no matter what. It will save us in a crisis.

The partnerships in this passage are like this. God saves. He saves even when we have nothing to offer in return. When we die, He is our only hope. We can lose everything, but our relationship with God remains.

The same is true for the relationship with the fellowship community. Even if we lose all riches, it remains. This beneficial partnership continues. It's a permanent connection. It's like family.

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<sup>21</sup> In academic literature, such partnerships outside of kin-relationships have been described as friendship reciprocity. [Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (1996). Friendship and the banker's paradox: Other pathways to the evolution of adaptations for altruism. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 88, 119-144.]

These partnerships are strong and reliable. They last. Thus, the benefits of generous giving also last. A rich person can become poor. But the status of having shared generously with the fellowship community doesn't change. God's recognition of that generosity doesn't fade. The partnership with the fellowship community doesn't fade. Like a family, these are permanent relationships.

In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul describes the church as the "household" of God.<sup>22</sup> This family theme continues throughout. Timothy appeals to older men as fathers.<sup>23</sup> He appeals to younger men as brothers.<sup>24</sup> He appeals to older women as mothers.<sup>25</sup> He appeals to younger women as sisters.<sup>26</sup> This family relationship also says something about the giving relationship. This is not just sharing within a community. It's sharing within a family.

This idea would have been more obvious and intense for Paul's contemporary audience. Our passage references (and Christianizes) a scene from Menander's play *Dyskolos*.<sup>27</sup> In it, a son convinces his wealthy father to act generously. The father permits his only son to marry a poor family's only daughter. And he allows his only daughter to marry the same poor family's only son.

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15, "I write so that you will know how one should act in the household [*oikō*] of God, which is the church of the living God". This *oikō* is where we get the English word "economics." Thus, it is no surprise that instructions for the management of this household include instructions about money management!

<sup>23</sup> 1 Timothy. 5:1a, "Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father"

<sup>24</sup> 1 Timothy 5:1b, "and to the younger men as brothers,"

<sup>25</sup> 1 Timothy 5:2a, "to the older women as mothers,"

<sup>26</sup> 1 Timothy 5:2b, "and to the younger women as sisters, in all purity."

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 13-III, "A literary allusion: How Menander's *Dyskolos* adds meaning."

This is extreme wealth sharing. All of the rich father's wealth now becomes the inheritance of the new combined family. This is wealth sharing as part of family creation. It's wealth sharing within a multiple-bonded, exclusively-connected family. This literary allusion intensifies the family nature of the sharing in our passage.

This passage encourages giving. But it's not just giving. It's giving within partnerships. And these are not just normal partnerships. They're extreme partnerships. They're family partnerships. And these are not just normal family partnerships. They're extreme family partnerships. They're like a multiple-bonded, exclusively-connected family partnership from a double-marriage of all children.

***Reciprocal partnerships: This one is different***

Encouraging simple altruism is great. But this is different. This ministry of major gift fundraising is different. It uses different processes. It has a different audience. It has a different message.

Our passage does not describe simple altruism. It describes reciprocal altruism. It's not an argument to simply give away. It's an argument for reciprocity. This is not isolated, disinterested giving. It's giving as part of a partnership. It's giving with massive partnership benefits. It's giving with benefits right now, today. It's giving with lasting benefits in the future.

These partnerships are beneficial. But this is not simply a transaction. This sharing is not a commercial exchange. Instead, it's part of a lasting, deeply connected, reciprocal relationship. It's not just a beneficial partnership. It's an extreme partnership. It's a family partnership. It's an extreme family partnership.

These are important distinctions. They're important for understanding this type of giving. They're also important for understanding this type of fundraising.

## PART II

### GOOD GRATITUDE CONFIRMS PARTNER IMPACT AND RELATIONSHIP

(Message 12: You're being a good partner in a great partnership!)

#### ***Your response is requested***

Charitable giving in scripture is not just about disconnected transfers to those in need [*eleēmosynē*]. Much of it involves partnerships here on earth. The key point about these relationships is that they are mutual. They are reciprocal.

Thus, giving is not just about the donor's responsibilities. Fundraising is not just persuasion. These partnerships require actions by the recipients or recipient organizations. These are obligations to respond to the gift. They are obligations of reciprocity. The right response is gratitude. It's good gratitude.

#### ***Gratitude and Biblical fundraising: Impact and relationship***

Good gratitude confirms the impact of a gift. It also confirms relationship reciprocity. The donors do receive benefit, but not through transaction. They receive benefit through personal relationship.

For example, donors can gain status through an admirable social identity.<sup>1</sup> They can connect with an emotionally bonded, reciprocal fellowship community. They

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<sup>1</sup> The donors themselves become rich in visibly beautiful good works [*ergois kalois*]. They're not just doing something [*agathoergein*]. They're also being someone [*einai*]. They're not just giving [*dotous*]. They're giving "with or among" [*metadotous*]; in other words, they're sharing. They're being [*einai*] a good sharer [*eu-metadotous*]. They're being [*einai*] a good sharer with a mutual, reciprocal, fellowship community [*koinōnikous*].



can connect with an emotionally bonded, reciprocal God. That's how they store up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation. That's how they experience the life that is really life.

This is the ideal donor experience. It delivers meaningful impact. It delivers beneficial relationships. So then, how should we respond to a gift? We respond by confirming and delivering this ideal donor experience. We respond with good gratitude. Good gratitude confirms both impact and relationship reciprocity.

### ***Bad at gratitude: Impact and relationship***

Here is the reality of modern fundraising. People will make a gift. But they won't do it again. Data from thousands of charities shows new donor retention of 20%.<sup>2</sup> New donors will try out a charity. But 4 out of 5 don't repeat their mistake.

Charities are good at asking for a gift. They get the first gift. But they're bad at responding to a gift. They lose those donors. Why are charities so bad at donor retention?

One study interviewed lapsed donors from several charities. Why had they stopped giving? The answers were about impact and relationship. The top three reasons related to the charity were these:

- “I feel that other causes are more deserving.” [i.e., impact]
- The charity “did not acknowledge my support.” [i.e., relationship]

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<sup>2</sup> Bloomerang. (2020). A guide to donor retention [Website]. <https://bloomerang.co/retention>

- The charity “did not inform me how my money had been used.”<sup>3</sup> [i.e., impact and relationship]

Why are charities so bad at donor retention? Because they’re bad at responding to a gift. What is the right response? It’s gratitude. Good gratitude signals impact and relationship.

### ***Gift gratitude levels: Impact and relationship***

Suppose I mail a gift to another person. What happens next reflects impact and relationship.

Suppose my gift is returned. The recipient just mails it right back to me. This says, blatantly and harshly, that we are not in a relationship.

Suppose I get no response at all. I reached out. I made a gift. They made no response. The response doesn’t seem to reflect a relationship. The gift didn’t seem to make any impact.

Suppose I get a transactional response. I gave some item. The response is a check for the retail price of the item. (It even includes a website printout showing the price.) This says we are not in a personal relationship. It’s purely transactional.

Suppose I get a simple acknowledgment. I make a gift. Later, I get a response letter. It states the gift amount. It says simply, “Thank you for your contribution.” If this is gratitude, it’s the lowest level of gratitude. It doesn’t signal impact. It doesn’t signal relationship. It doesn’t signal reciprocity.

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<sup>3</sup> This omits non-charity causes such as donor finances, death, or relocation. One final reason, the inability to remember making the initial gift, likely also relates to the charity’s lack of impact reporting or relationship expression. Sargeant, A. (2001). Managing donor defection: Why should donors stop giving? *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*, 2001(32), 59-74. p. 64, Table 4.1.

Suppose I get an expression of gratitude for the gift. This response letter is different. It says,

“Thanks so much for this wonderful gift! It made such a difference for me. I really appreciate it.”

This is gratitude. It’s gratitude for the gift. It signals that the gift made an impact. It might even suggest some willingness to be reciprocal.

Now, suppose I get a slightly different response. This letter says,

“Thanks so much for this wonderful gift! It made such a difference for me. You are such a wonderful and thoughtful friend. You mean so much to me.”

This reflects the highest level of gratitude. It signals both impact and relationship. It’s not just gratitude for the gift. It’s gratitude for the giver. It reflects an emotionally bonded, reciprocal relationship.

In each case, the gift response reflects the relationship. It can reflect

- A negative relationship
- A neutral relationship
- A transactional relationship
- A generally reciprocal relationship
- A personal, emotionally bonded, reciprocal relationship

From rejection to true gratitude, different responses reflect different reciprocity levels.

## ***Good and bad gratitude in fundraising: Impact and relationship***

Many charities are bad at gratitude. Sometimes, they don't want to express gratitude. Sometimes, they don't know how. Either way, this hurts fundraising.

Getting good at gratitude starts by understanding what it is. Good gratitude confirms impact and relationship. Ideally, it expresses an emotionally bonded, reciprocal, social relationship. Bad gratitude does not do these things. Good gratitude works. Bad gratitude probably won't.

This is not just theory. We can see it in scientific experiments. Confirming gift impact works.<sup>4</sup> It increases future giving. Expressing gratitude for the gift does too.<sup>5</sup>

One study examined 70,441 donations on a charitable crowdfunding platform. What caused donors to keep giving?

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., "past donation use increases the perceived donation impact, then induces warm glow which translates into a higher intention to donate in future" [Shehu, E., Clement, M., Winterich, K., & Langmaack, A. C. (2017). "You saved a life": How past donation use increases donor reactivation via impact and warm glow. In A. Gneezy, V. Griskevicius, and P. Williams (Eds.), *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* (Vol. 45). Association for Consumer Research, p. 270-275. p. 272. [http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v45/acr\\_vol45\\_1024372.pdf](http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v45/acr_vol45_1024372.pdf)]

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., "If expressions of gratitude are then targeted to individuals who select into pledges, renegeing can be significantly reduced and contributions significantly increased." [Andreoni, J., & Serra-Garcia, M. (2021). The pledging puzzle: How can revocable promises increase charitable giving? *Management Science*, 67(10), 5969-6627. p. 5969];

In another example, a reminder to "be grateful for what you have" increased both the likelihood of making donations and the size of those donations. [Paramita, W., Septianto, F., & Tjiptono, F. (2020). The distinct effects of gratitude and pride on donation choice and amount. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101972, 1-10. p. 4.]

See also [Merchant, A., Ford, J. B., & Sargeant, A. (2013). 'Don't forget to say thank you': The effect of an acknowledgement on donor relationships. In R. Bennett, F. Kerrigan, & D. O'Reilly (Eds.), *New horizons in arts, heritage, nonprofit and social marketing* (pp. 5-22). Routledge]; and a review of the effects of gratitude on prosocial behavior in [McCullough, M. E., Kilpatrick, S. D., Emmons, R. A., & Larson, D. B. (2001). Is gratitude a moral affect? *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 249-266.]

Gratitude for impact and relationship. The study found

“successful donation result and ‘Thank-You’ feedback from fundraisers can significantly decrease [donors’] attrition rate.”<sup>6</sup>

Gratitude works. But it’s important to understand how it works. In experiments, gratitude works by signaling a reciprocal social relationship.<sup>7</sup>

This social-emotional reciprocity can be beneficial. But this is not a market transaction. It’s not exchange reciprocity. It’s relationship reciprocity. As Gail Perry puts it,

“Donors want to be appreciated as people, not pocketbooks.”<sup>8</sup>

Good gratitude is not just gratitude for what the donor has done. It’s gratitude for who the donor is being. It confirms the donor’s positive identity. It confirms a relationship based on identity.

Thanking a donor for “their generous gift” is one message. Thanking them for “being a generous donor” is a different message. This may seem like a slight difference. But it’s important. The first message is gratitude for the gift. The second is gratitude for the giver.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Xiao, S., & Yue, Q. (2021). The role you play, the life you have: Donor retention in online charitable crowdfunding platform. *Decision Support Systems*, 140, 113427.

<sup>7</sup> Szyner, D., Delton, A. W., Robertson, T. E., Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (2019). The ecological rationality of helping others: Potential helpers integrate cues of recipients’ need and willingness to sacrifice. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 40(1), 34-45. See also Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(6), 946-955.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> In the same way, saying that you hope they will “give again” delivers one message about your desire for their money, while saying that you hope they will

The second message is more powerful than the first. Like Paul's message, it describes the donor's attractive identity. It confirms their "I am" [*einai*] statement as a generous sharer.

One experiment found this in a different pro-social activity. Instead of charitable giving, it looked at voting.<sup>10</sup> One group was asked questions about voting. The other group was asked the same questions about being a voter. For example, some questions asked either,

- How important is it to you to (vote/be a voter) in the upcoming election?
- How much do you care about (voting/being a voter) in the upcoming election?
- How much do you want to (vote/be a voter) in the upcoming election?

One set of questions asked about their action. The other set asked about their identity. The wording change was slight. But the impact was great. Of those asked the identity questions, 96% voted in the following election. Among those asked the action questions, only 82% did.

A later experiment tried this for a different election in a different state. The results happened again. Among those asked about "being a voter," 90% voted. Among those asked about "voting," only 79% did. Asking about a pro-social action didn't help. Asking about a pro-social identity did.

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"continue being a supporter" may deliver a different message about their ongoing identity.

<sup>10</sup> Bryan, C. J., Walton, G. M., Rogers, T., & Dweck, C. S. (2011). Motivating voter turnout by invoking the self. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(31), 12653-12656.

This same idea applies to fundraising. Consider this practical example. In one study, students called donors to their university. This included an update on the fundraising campaign, its impact, and a thank you.<sup>11</sup> This worked. It increased the likelihood of future gifts.

However, one small addition more than doubled the impact of the call.<sup>12</sup> It added these two sentences to the thank you message:

“You went out of your way to support us, and we want you to know how much we appreciate you. Basically, we think you’re great.”<sup>13</sup>

Notice the change. This was not just gratitude for the gift. It was gratitude for the giver. It confirmed the donor’s positive identity. It confirmed their identity in relationship. Its language expressed a positive, emotionally bonded, social relationship.

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<sup>11</sup> “I’m calling to thank you for your gift of [Last Gift Amount] to the Appalachian Fund for our iBackAPP Day efforts! Your participation helped us exceed our 2,500 donor goal for iBackAPP Day and you’re helping make a difference on our campus by providing money for scholarships, student mentoring, faculty research, and other areas of greatest need at Appalachian. As a current student, I want to personally say thank you for making a difference in my collegiate experience!” [Dwyer, P. (2020). Gratitude and fundraising: Does putting the ‘you’ in thank you promote giving? [online video]. *2020 Science of Philanthropy Initiative Conference*, [https://iu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/1\\_oz1cxzxn](https://iu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/1_oz1cxzxn) at 3:46 ]

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 4:54. [Note this difference arose only for actual phone conversations, not for voicemails.]

<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 3:58; A replication of this study using text messages appears in Vaz, A. H. (2022). *Giving and gratitude: Comparing communication media and expressions of gratitude on subsequent annual giving* (Doctoral dissertation). Appalachian State University. In that experiment, the tested phrases were, “You went out of your way to support Appalachian during this critical time, and we want you to know how much we appreciate you. To put it simply, you rock! :)” and “Your gift is making a direct impact by supporting critical needs at Appalachian. As a current student, I want to thank you for making a difference in my college experience! :)” The effect of gratitude expressions on subsequent giving in this study was stronger than in the original phone calling experiment. (p. 49)

What about the opposite? Can a “thank you” be so bad that it doesn’t work at all? Yes. Another experiment showed this. It used generic “thank-you” telemarketing calls. These calls were not from anyone at the charity. They came from an outside telemarketing firm. Rather than warm, personal, social language, the calls used phrases like,

“This call may be monitored or recorded for quality assurance,” and

“If you have any questions regarding your donation, please call member services.”

And the calls were late. On average, the telemarketers called six months after the gift.

So, did these “thank you” calls work? Not really.<sup>14</sup> Is this a surprise? Not really. Good gratitude expresses an emotionally bonded, social relationship. These calls failed to do that. They failed to express real gratitude.

What can we learn from these experiments? Good gratitude expresses impact and an emotionally bonded, reciprocal, social relationship. Bad gratitude does not. Good gratitude works. Bad gratitude probably won’t.

How can we deliver good gratitude that works in real-world fundraising? Scripture shows us how.

### ***Gratitude: Paul promises a reciprocal relationship***

In his fundraising appeal letter, Paul tells the donors to expect gratitude. The recipients’ response will express an

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<sup>14</sup> Although donations were still higher among those who received the calls than those who didn’t, the overall effect of being on the list of those who were at risk of potentially being contacted in the experiment was not statistically significant. See Samek, A. & Longfield, C. (2019, April 13) *Do thank-you calls increase charitable giving? Expert forecasts and field experimental evidence*. SSRN. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3371327>



emotionally bonded, reciprocal, social relationship. This includes reciprocity in the future. Paul explains,

“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.” (2 Corinthians 8:14 NLT).

It also includes reciprocity right now. The recipients will pray to God for the donors. They will express gratitude for the donors. They will do so in many ways. (2 Corinthians 9:13-14).

This is not a transaction. It’s not a trade or market exchange. Instead, it’s an expression of an emotionally bonded, social relationship. Paul explains to the donors that the gift recipients will “yearn for” them. (2 Corinthians 9:14). A lexicon explains the meaning here as,

“to experience a yearning affection for someone – ‘to have a great affection for, to have a yearning love for.’ ... For example, in 2 Corinthians 9:14 one may translate ‘they love you very much and will pray for you.’”<sup>15</sup>

This reciprocity expresses an emotional relationship of love. Love is essential to meaningful giving.<sup>16</sup> Good gratitude confirms this relationship. It confirms a social-emotional reciprocal partnership relationship.

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<sup>15</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1988). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains* (Vol. 1: Introduction & domains). United Bible Societies. 1. 24.47. p. 294.

<sup>16</sup> Giving without this emotion is pointless. Paul explains, “And if I give away all my possessions to charity, and if I surrender my body so that I may glory, but do not have love, it does me no good.” (1 Corinthians 13:3). Interestingly, this word for “have” can also mean “receive.” For example, the same word is used in 2 Corinthians 1:15, “In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing.” Reading 1 Corinthians 13:3 with such an alternate meaning provides an interesting perspective. Gratitude helps the donor to receive love. It also helps the donor to maintain love, as reciprocated love is always easier to sustain!

So, does this work in real-world fundraising? In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul encourages donors to fulfill their gift pledge or intention. A modern study examined the best ways to increase pledge fulfillment. It found the answer. The answer was this:

“If expressions of gratitude are then targeted to individuals who select into pledges, renegeing can be significantly reduced and contributions significantly increased.”<sup>17</sup>

Expressions of gratitude increase pledge fulfillment. Paul’s approach worked in the ancient world. It still works today.

### ***Gratitude: Paul confirms a reciprocal relationship***

Paul responds to the Philippian donors’ gift. He writes of their donation,

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern [*phronein*] for me;”  
(Philippians 4:10a).

Paul responds by expressing emotion. He rejoices. He also calls their gift an expression of emotion. Their gift expresses

- “Concern for me”
- “Caring for me”<sup>18</sup>
- “Care for me”<sup>19</sup>
- “Thought for me”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Andreoni, J., & Serra-Garcia, M. (2021). The pledging puzzle: How can revocable promises increase charitable giving? *Management Science*, 67(10), 5969-6627. p. 5969.

<sup>18</sup> Literal Standard Version

<sup>19</sup> King James Version; New King James Version

<sup>20</sup> American Standard Version; Contemporary English Version

- “Thoughtfulness”<sup>21</sup>
- “Thinking about me”<sup>22</sup>

Paul expresses gratitude for their gift. He does more. He expresses gratitude for them. He thanks God for them. (Philippians 1:3). He prays for them. (Philippians 1:4) He expresses gratitude for their long history of past giving. (Philippians 1:5). This past giving was no mere financial transaction. In Philippians 1:5, he calls it *koinōnia*. In Philippians 4:15, he uses the verb form, calling it *ekoinōnēsen*.

Paul’s gift acknowledgment delivers the 1 Timothy 6:17-19 experience. It confirms the donor’s positive identity in a relationship. Their giving expresses personal care, concern, and thoughtfulness. It demonstrates *phronein*.

He confirms that the donors are being not *hypsēlo-phronein*. (1 Timothy 6:17). He confirms their positive identity. Their gift expresses an emotionally bonded, reciprocal partnership relationship. It demonstrates *koinōnia*. He confirms that they are being *koinōnikous*. (1 Timothy 6:18).<sup>23</sup> He confirms their positive identity.

In many charities, making a gift results in silence. Or it may generate only a formal, transactional acknowledgment. This isn’t how Paul responds to a donation. The donor’s gift does not generate silence. Instead, it generates multiple confirmations of a personal, reciprocal, social-emotional relationship.

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<sup>21</sup> Weymouth New Testament

<sup>22</sup> Legacy Standard Bible

<sup>23</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is structured in a poetic form as a series of contrasts called a chiasmus. In that structure, *koinōnikous* contrasts with *hypsēlophronein*.

In experimental research, what donor acknowledgment did not work? The one that used formal, transactional language. What donor acknowledgment did work? The one that used personal, emotional relationship language. This is what worked 2,000 years ago. It's what still works today.

***Gratitude: Paul confirms long-term relationship***

What else do we see in Paul's donor acknowledgment letter? Paul goes out of his way to frame their gift as part of a long-term relationship. He acknowledges that they were, in fact, lapsed donors. They had stopped giving. He writes,

“now at last you have revived your concern for me”  
(Philippians 4:10b).

He acknowledges the lapse in giving. Then, he immediately excuses it. He writes,

“indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked an opportunity to act.” (Philippians 4:10c).

Circumstances interfered. It happens all the time. But Paul explains to them that the relationship still continued. He explains that they were still concerned, even though they stopped giving. Such temporary issues are trivial in the context of the long-term relationship.

Paul drives home his point by reviewing the donors' long history of support. He writes,

“You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.” (Philippians 4:15-16).

He writes,

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your *koinōnia* [‘participation’; ‘contribution’<sup>24</sup>; ‘gracious contributions’<sup>25</sup>] in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:3-5).

Paul doesn’t just acknowledge their gift as a gift. He acknowledges it as part of a long, ongoing history of gifts. It’s part of a long-term, social-emotional relationship. They didn’t just make a gift. Their long-term, ongoing identity is one of being a good sharer.

### ***Gratitude: Modern fundraising confirms long-term relationship***

Paul thanks God for the donors. He prays for them. He doesn’t do this simply in view of their current gift. He does this in view of their entire history of giving. Does this still work for fundraising? Does reminding donors of their entire history of giving work?

One experiment tested a variety of different headlines across 50,000 fundraising letters.<sup>26</sup> The most effective headline was this:

“CAMPAIGN DONOR FOR \_\_\_\_ YEARS

Your most generous gift was \$ \_\_\_\_ . Thank you.”

Reviewing the length and depth of the donor relationship worked. It showed their long history of giving. It showed their

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<sup>24</sup> Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation

<sup>25</sup> Amplified Bible

<sup>26</sup> Khan, H. & Hardy, E. (2019). *Using behavioural insights to encourage charitable donations among repeat donors*. Privy Council Office: Impact Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ih-ci/documents/pdfs/HS-eng.pdf>

personal backstory as long-term donors. It mentioned the biggest gift they had made in the past.

Paul was working with lapsed donors. What modern approach works well to reactivate lapsed donors? Patrick Schmitt calls it a “time traveler” note. He shares this example:

“Hi Devon!

I was going through our records, and I saw you made a really meaningful gift to our museum in March of 2011. (March 17th to be exact!) Thank you again for being someone who supports access to art!

That was certainly a different time - Barack Obama was still in his first term, Adele had just released her first album, and the world barely ever used video chat!

I’d be curious to better understand what motivated that gift, and I’d love to share how those resources have been put to use over the years.

Would you mind if I gave you a call this week?

All my best,  
Patrick”<sup>27</sup>

Notice what this lapsed donor message does. It starts by expressing gratitude for their long history of support. This matches Paul’s approach. It takes a moment to recount this history for them. This, too, matches Paul’s approach. It’s the latest, greatest, best practice in fundraising. And it’s also 2,000 years old.

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<sup>27</sup> Schmitt, P. (Feb. 27, 2024). *How to effectively steward major donors in 2024*. [Slide deck]. Slide 54. <https://www.nonprofits.freewill.com/resources/webinars/how-to-effectively-steward-major-donors-in-2024>

Beyond this, Paul also thanks God for the donors. He prays for them. Does this still work for fundraising? A study of the fundraising practices of parachurch organizations found that

“there was a statistically significant relationship between those who pray regularly for their donors and their financial success in fundraising.”<sup>28</sup>

This is what worked 2,000 years ago. It’s what still works today.

### ***Gratitude: Paul confirms the donors’ practical impact***

Good gratitude reflects a relationship. It confirms a personal, emotionally bonded relationship of ongoing reciprocity. It confirms *koinōnikous*. (1 Timothy 6:18). It binds together the *koinōnia* – the mutually sharing fellowship community.

Good gratitude also does something else. It demonstrates impact. It shows that their gift has resulted in intrinsic good work. It confirms *agatho-ergein* [“to do good”]. (1 Timothy 6:18). It confirms that their gift has produced beautiful, good works. It confirms *ergois kalois* [“good works”]. (1 Timothy 6:18). It reveals that their gift has made a difference.

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<sup>28</sup> A study of 507 parachurch members of the ECFA. The associated responses ( $r=.120$  and  $p=.006$ ) were 1 to 5 (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Frequently, Always) “When a donor is considering making a gift to your organization, how often does your staff pray specifically for that donor’s decision-making process?” and 1 to 5 (Failure, Marginally Successful, Average, Successful, Highly Successful) “How would you rank your fund-raising efforts in fiscal 2001-2002 in terms of meeting your financial goals?” [Morris, A. J. (2002). *The fund-raising techniques of evangelical parachurch organizations and God’s view of money and possessions* (Doctoral dissertation). Biola University. p. ii.]

Paul's gift acknowledgment letter does this too. It describes and praises the impact of the donors' gift. Paul writes,

“Nevertheless, you have done well [*kalōs*] to share with me in my difficulty.” (Philippians 4:14).

“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent” (Philippians 4:18a).

Their gift addressed a serious need. The donors shared with Paul in his difficulty. They shared in his

- “Troubles”<sup>29</sup>
- “Affliction”<sup>30</sup>
- “Hardship”<sup>31</sup>
- “Distress”<sup>32</sup>

Their gift fixed the problem. Paul is now amply supplied. The donors are not left to wonder, “I made a gift. What changed?” Paul describes the change. Because of their gift, he went from “hardship” to having “an abundance.”

Did they do good [*kalois*] works [*ergois*] as 1 Timothy 6:18 directs? Yes. Paul confirms it in Philippians 4:14. They “have done well” [*kalōs epoiēsate*]. (*Kalōs* is just the adverb

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<sup>29</sup> New International Version; Good News Translation; International Standard Version

<sup>30</sup> King James Version; English Revised Version; New American Standard Bible 1995

<sup>31</sup> Christian Standard Bible; New Heart English Bible

<sup>32</sup> New King James Version; New Revised Standard Version; New American Bible



form of the adjective *kalois*. Both *epoiēsate* and *ergois* mean to work or accomplish. <sup>33</sup>)

Were they generous [*eumetadotous*] as 1 Timothy 6:18 directs? Yes. *Metadotous* means sharer. *Eu-metadotous* is a good sharer of abundance.<sup>34</sup> In Philippians 4:18, Paul confirms he has received “an abundance.” They were indeed sharers of abundance.

Paul’s gift acknowledgment completes the loop. It confirms the donors’ accomplishment. It delivers proof of impact. It confirms their good actions.

### ***Gratitude: Paul confirms the donors’ emotional relationship impact***

The donors made an impact. Paul confirms it. But this impact was not merely transactional. It was part of a closely

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<sup>33</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com); Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. *Poiēō*.

<sup>34</sup> In 1 Timothy 6:18 the rich Christians are to be *eu-metadotous*, i.e., they are to be *eu*-sharers. This *eu*- prefix means “good,” specifically in the senses of ready, happy, and/or abundance. Thus, 1 Timothy 6:18 may reference being a sharer of abundance both in the sense of the source of the gift and the size of the gift. The donor’s gift from abundance results in abundance for the gift recipient. The promised result of the gift in 2 Corinthians 9:12 is “not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.” Thrall notes, “Hence, whilst it will supply the wants of the Jerusalem Christians, it will do more than that. There will be an abundance of good effects. What does this ‘abundance’ consist of? Chrysostom suggests that the contributors to the collection will furnish its recipients with even more than they need,” [Thrall, M. E. (2000). *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. T & T Clark. p. 587.] In such a view, Paul’s confirmation of his abundance as a gift recipient in Philippians 4:18 parallels both the promise of 2 Corinthians 9:12 and the instruction of 1 Timothy 6:18. The goal of giving is not simply to meet the need, but rather to leave the recipients in abundance. In this case, the donor does not simply share from abundance; the donor actually shares abundance. The sharing results in both donor and recipient having an abundance. So, too, such extravagancy matches with the notion of the hilariously joyful [*hilaron*] giver of 2 Corinthians 9:7. Producing these abundance results for the recipients may indeed be a more enjoyable way to give than accomplishing a bare meeting of needs.

bonded relationship. The effect of the donors' gift was to  
“share with me in my difficulty.” (Philippians 4:14).

Others translate this as

“fellowship with me in my affliction”<sup>35</sup>

“partnering with me in my hardship.”<sup>36</sup>

The word here is *synkoinōnēsantes*. It means to have fellowship with. It combines *syn*, “identified with,” and *koinōneō*, “share in.” Again, Paul frames the donors' giving as an expression of *koinōnia*.

What was his response to their gift? It was joy. He writes,

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me;” (Philippians 4:10a).

Others translate this as

“The Lord has filled me with joy because you again showed interest in me.”<sup>37</sup>

“it is a great joy to me that after so long a time you once more had the chance of showing that you care for me.”<sup>38</sup>

The donors' gift created an emotional impact. How does Paul's joy in receiving the gift relate to gratitude? It actually is gratitude. The Contemporary English Version reads,

“The Lord has made me very grateful that at last you have thought about me once again.” (Philippians 4:10a).

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<sup>35</sup> Legacy Standard Bible; American Standard Version, “ye had fellowship with my affliction”.

<sup>36</sup> Christian Standard Bible

<sup>37</sup> GOD'S WORD® Translation

<sup>38</sup> Good News Translation

Paul delivers gratitude. He confirms impact and relationship. He does this in his letter. He also goes further. He combines this “direct mail” response with the “personal visit.”

Paul sends his representative, Timothy. (Philippians 2:19). He also sends Epaphroditus back to the donors’ congregation. (Philippians 2:25). Having briefly worked alongside Paul in the ministry, this was an ideal person to confirm impact and relationship. (Philippians 2:25).

### ***Gratitude: Paul confirms impact without instability***

Paul’s gift acknowledgment letter leaves no doubt. The donors’ gift made an impact. This impact was made even greater because of the difficult circumstances. The donors

“have done well to share with me in my difficulty”  
(Philippians 4:14b).

Modern fundraising letters often point to difficulties. A crisis can trigger a gift. But such messages can also be dangerous. Major investment gifts don’t go to unstable organizations. They go to solid, reliable organizations.<sup>39</sup>

Paul addresses this issue. The gift came during a time of difficulty. It came at an opportune moment. But Paul’s ministry was never at risk. It would continue no matter what.

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<sup>39</sup> Large gifts tend to go to large charities with large endowments. More than two-thirds of all donations over \$1 million go to universities that hold large endowments or foundations that are large endowments. See, e.g., Coutts and Co. (2015). *Coutts million pound donors report*, <http://philanthropy.coutts.com/en/reports/2015/united-states/findings.html> and <http://philanthropy.coutts.com/en/reports/2015/united-kingdom/findings.html>

For example in 2019, nine of the ten largest charitable gifts went to such entities. Yakowicz, W. (2019, December 29). The biggest philanthropic gifts of 2019. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/willyakowicz/2020/12/29/the-top-10-philanthropic-gifts-of-2019>

(Philippians 4:13). After mentioning the donors' lapse in giving (Philippians 4:10) and before referencing his difficulty (Philippians 4:14), he writes,

“Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with little, and I also know how to live in prosperity;” (Philippians 4:11-12a).

Paul does not speak from need [*hysterēsin*]. This word means he is not delivering a fundraising message of,<sup>40</sup>

- “Need”
- “Poverty”
- “Falling short”
- “Deficiency”
- “Destitution”

Such fundraising messages of need or deficiency can be tempting for ministries. They can trigger gifts, but there's a problem. They tend to trigger only small gifts. And they will do so at the cost of future major life investment gifts. Large gifts go to strong, stable ministries.

Yet, even strong, stable ministries can have difficult times. Paul is forthright in mentioning in Philippians 4:14 that the donors shared with him during a time of difficulty [*thlipsei*].

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<sup>40</sup> *Hysterēsin* (5304) “a falling short, i.e., a penury: - want”; from *hystereō* “to be inferior; ... to fall short (be deficient): come behind (short), be destitute, fail, lack, suffer need”. [Strong, J. (1890/1990). A concise dictionary of the Greek New Testament in *The new Strong's exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson. p. 75]; See also *hysterēma* as “a coming short, deficiency, need” [Liddell, H. G., & Scott, R. (1901). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. p. 1647.]

Strong, stable ministries can have *thlipsei*. In other words, they can have

- “Difficulty”
- “Troubles”
- “Affliction”
- “Distress”
- “Hardship”
- “Tribulation”<sup>41</sup>

Such times may increase the impact of a gift, but they do not project instability. Paul makes clear that his ministry would continue no matter what. (Philippians 4:13).

He also does something else. He writes that he can manage “prosperity.” He can manage “abundance.” This issue is a common barrier preventing donors from making a large gift.

High-capacity donors often worry that a ministry may not be ready for abundance. It wouldn’t know how to use such abundance effectively. It often doesn’t even have plans for such a scenario. It wouldn’t even know where to begin. Paul emphasizes that his ministry is not in this situation. He knows how to manage such circumstances. He knows how to manage abundance.

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<sup>41</sup> *Thlipsis* (2347) “afflicted, affliction, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble.” [Strong, J. (1890/1990). A concise dictionary of the Greek New Testament in *The new Strong’s exhaustive concordance of the Bible*. Thomas Nelson. p. 36]; See also “pressure ... oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits” [Thayer, J. H. (1896). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 291]; “pressure, ... oppression, affliction” [Liddell, H. G., & Scott, R. (1901). *A Greek-English lexicon*. Clarendon Press. p. 678.]

This message is practical. Charities should communicate that they know how to manage large gifts. A first step is to simply put them on the menu. This requires thinking through specific examples of what good work different large gifts could do. Only then can a ministry offer donors a specific, visualizable impact as an option. This helps to show that the charity could manage “prosperity” or “abundance.”

### ***Paul separates gratitude from asking***

It is common for gift acknowledgment letters to also include a request for funds. This seems efficient. It costs money to send a letter. Why pay for two different mailings?

Here is the issue. Effective gratitude confirms an emotionally bonded, reciprocal, social relationship.<sup>42</sup> It should make a person feel “socially valued.”<sup>43</sup> An immediate financial request contradicts this feeling. It delegitimizes the expression of gratitude. It feels more like a pretext to ask for more money. Experiments confirm this. The positive effect from expressing gratitude disappears if it is coupled with another request.<sup>44</sup>

Paul’s gift acknowledgment does not contain another gift request. In fact, it goes to an extreme. It delivers the opposite message. He writes,

“But I have received everything in full and have an

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<sup>42</sup> Sznycer, D., Delton, A. W., Robertson, T. E., Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (2019). The ecological rationality of helping others: Potential helpers integrate cues of recipients’ need and willingness to sacrifice. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 40(1), 34-45.

<sup>43</sup> “Our results support the communal perspective rather than the agentic perspective: Gratitude expressions increase prosocial behavior by enabling individuals to feel socially valued.” [Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(6), 946-955. p. 946.]

<sup>44</sup> Carey, J. R., Clicque, S. H., Leighton, B. A., & Milton, F. (1976). A test of positive reinforcement of customers. *Journal of Marketing*, 40, 98-100.

abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent,” (Philippians 4:18a).

In modern fundraising, the typical response to a gift is  
“Thanks for the gift. Could you send more, please?”

Paul’s message is the opposite. He writes, “I am amply supplied.” This word, *peplērōmai*, literally means “I am full.” Can you imagine receiving such an acknowledgment for your gift? It might say,

“Thanks for your gift. Because of what you sent, we now have an abundance! We’re all full! Thanks!”

This message might seem to undermine future fundraising. It shows that the ministry is not in need. But it actually sets the stage for future gifts.

This message shows that the donors’ gift made a huge impact. The ministry went from “difficulty” to “abundance” and “amply supplied.” It delivers a satisfying donor experience. Making the experience enjoyable means it’s worth repeating. It justifies making the next gift whenever the next opportune moment arises.

Good gratitude is essential. It confirms the donor’s impact. It confirms the donor’s identity in a beneficial partner relationship. It delivers the 1 Timothy 6:17-19 experience. It delivers on the best deal ever!

## Chapter 15

### Message 13: You're making an investment with real permanence!

- *Biblical fundraising emphasizes lasting investment results.*
- *Ordinary fundraising just needs cash now.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [. *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, **storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future**, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### PAUL'S CHARITABLE ENDOWMENT LANGUAGE

#### *Donor benefits on earth (and in heaven)*

There are many objective benefits of giving. It can be enjoyable. It can establish a valuable reputation. It can help connect to reciprocal partnerships – business or social. It can be a great way to live.

Paul, too, presents a long list of donor benefits.<sup>2</sup> Here,

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.* (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)

<sup>2</sup> "v. 18 'Command' is carried into the NIV from near the beginning of v. 17, although the imperative is not actually restated here. By not restating the command, the rhetorical feel is of a list of positive outcomes the rich can attain, ... v. 19. In Greek there is no new sentence here. It begins rather the fifth in a series that began in the previous verse." [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Eerdmans. p. 335, 337.]



he adds that donors are

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

These future benefits apply both here and in heaven.<sup>3</sup> Other scriptures confirm that they apply in heaven. Empirical data confirm that they apply here.

The exact nature of the heavenly results is much disputed. These questions relate to issues of heavenly rewards, salvation, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> That’s not something we’re going to resolve here. This is, after all, a book about fundraising.

So instead, let’s get practical. What can we say about this phrase as a matter of practical fundraising? We can confidently say this. Paul is telling Timothy to use endowment language. He uses almost precisely the same words we would use to describe a modern endowment.

### ***Modern endowment language***

What is an endowment? It’s a fund held by a charitable (or government) entity. It has these features:

1. The donor’s giving creates or results in a wealth-holding entity or fund. In simple terms, this is a heap or store of accumulated riches.

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<sup>3</sup> Professor Robert Yarbrough references the next phrase as “an already/not yet promise”. [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Eerdmans. p. 338.]

<sup>4</sup> The four common interpretation approaches to this ending section of the passage are: (1) It is not referring to heavenly rewards at all; (2) It is referring to heavenly rewards, but not to salvation; (3) It is referring to salvation, however, it is not about earning salvation but rather demonstrating one’s salvation; (4) It is referring to salvation as a result of giving. Note that none of these approaches run counter to the idea that the benefits of giving also include those arising in this world.

2. Once transferred, the donor does not own the original gift. However, the accumulated fund is still indirectly connected to them.
  - a. The fund is normally named for the donor or the donor's family.
  - b. It's legally required to follow the donor's instructions. These are recorded in the gift agreement or foundation documents.
3. It can be a special type of fund called a foundation. (This references a financial instrument, not the base of a structure.)
4. This must be a fund for good. It must support charitable causes. This charitable good is normally public and visible.
  - a. This good work is usually identified with the donor's name.
  - b. This good work activity must be reported on publicly available tax forms.
5. The fund is created for the purpose of the future. It's intended to last a long time. It's not just making a one-time impact. It's usually permanent.

These five points describe a modern endowment, whether a foundation or fund. This is a technically accurate modern description. (As an estate-planning attorney, I can attest to that.) Yet, these descriptors are not new.

### ***Paul's endowment language***

Paul writes about the results of the donor's giving. He writes of

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:18a).

In Latinized Greek, this is

*“apothēsaurozontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon”*

1. *Apothēsaurozontas*. The donor’s giving
  - a. *Apo-*: results in or leads to
  - b. *Thēsaurozontas*: A heap or store of accumulated riches
2. *Heautois*. Once transferred, the donor does not own the original gift. However, the accumulated fund is still indirectly connected to them.
  - a. *Heautois* refers to the donors “themselves.”
  - b. It’s in the dative case. This means the gift is still possessed indirectly by them or is to their advantage or benefit.
3. *Themelion*. This word can be a type of fund or a foundation. (Here, it likely references a financial instrument, not the base of a structure.)
4. *Kalon*. The fund, *themelion*, is good, *kalon*. This is good that is normally public and visible. It is beautiful, honorable, noble, and seen to be so. It reflects the donor’s good, noble, and honorable character or identity.<sup>5</sup>
5. *Eis to mellon*. The fund [*themelion*] is for the purpose of [*eis*] the future [*to mellon*].

These five points are the same as the previous five. They’re the same five points just used to describe a modern

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<sup>5</sup> *Kalos*, “beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.” [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.]

endowment. They match the features of a charitable foundation or fund.

Wealthy donors often consider setting up a private foundation. As an attorney, how might I explain this option to a client? I might advise them that

“By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a NLT).

I would say this even without trying to quote scripture. I’m just trying to describe a private family foundation.

Suppose instead I was fundraising for a charity. I would still use similar words. I would just replace the word “foundation” with “fund.” (Foundation describes an endowment held as a separate nonprofit. Fund describes an endowment held by a public charity.)

In either case, I would emphasize the donor’s connection to the fund. I would describe it as their fund or their family’s fund. I would emphasize the beautiful, noble, inspirational good works their fund would accomplish. I would emphasize the permanence of their fund. I would emphasize its long-term, future impact. These are all motivational ways to describe an endowment. They also mirror the words from this passage.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to this phrase in 1 Timothy 6:19, note also the endowment concepts within the description of God’s rich provision in 1 Timothy 6:17. God is continually providing – implied in the present tense of *parechonti*. He has and is and will provide for us. However, there is another important notion imbedded here. The word *parechonti* includes the idea of “to hold beside” or “hold in readiness”. [Liddel, H. G., & Scott, R. (1889/1975). *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon*. Oxford University Press. at *parexō*.] Thus, the concept is of a secure principal, set aside, held in readiness, and used to permanently deliver ongoing rich provision. In this way we are like beneficiaries of a rich endowment. The New English Bible uses the phrase, “God, who endows us richly with all things to enjoy” in 1 Timothy 6:17. Thus, the donor is already the beneficiary of one endowment which he then uses (in an enjoyable process) to build up for himself another endowment.

## ***Modern endowment statistics***

A 2022 study examined the largest gifts received by various colleges and universities. It included the largest gifts at every type of school.<sup>7</sup> These ranged from community colleges to flagship research universities. Here was the result:

“The majority of principal gifts were intended to provide long-term or perpetual benefits to the institution. Nearly two thirds of all gifts were designated in whole or part for endowment ... Just under half of the gifts (46%) provided funding for new buildings or renovations”<sup>8</sup>

Let that sink in for a moment. Two-thirds of these large gifts funded endowments. Almost half funded (or also funded) buildings, which provide similar long-term benefits. (Owning a debt-free building is equivalent to having a long-term endowment that pays for rent.)

That’s what wealth sharing looks like during life. What about estate giving? According to IRS data, for estates over \$5 million, 78% of all charitable dollars went to private family foundations.<sup>9</sup> Consider what this means. Public charities received only 22% of all charitable estate dollars!

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<sup>7</sup> Such giant gifts are called “principal” gifts. This distinguishes them from the merely large “major” gifts.

<sup>8</sup> Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A. & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Among decedents in 2004 and 2007 with estates of more than \$5 million, the share of charitable dollars going to private foundations was 70% and 78%, respectively. [Raub, B. G. (2008, Spring). Federal estate tax returns filed for 2004 decedents, *Statistics of Income Bulletin*, 27(115), 125-28. p. 136; Raub, B. G. & Newcomb, J. (2011, Summer). Federal estate tax returns filed for 2007 decedents, *Statistics of Income Bulletin*, 31(182), 188-91. p. 191. See discussion in James III, R. N. (2020). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285.] Note that exemption amounts in subsequent years more than doubled, thus preventing observation of estates at these lower wealth levels.

These results are extreme. Whether current gifts or estate gifts, they tell the same story. Massive charitable gifts go to endowments and foundations.

Modern donors make these gifts to create something. They make them to create the exact results that Paul describes in this passage. Paul accurately defines what motivates modern major gift donors. And he did it nearly 2,000 years ago.

### ***Ancient endowments***

Paul's language matches descriptions of modern endowments. Of course, Paul wasn't referencing modern legal entities. Yet, very similar structures were well known in Paul's day.

The Oxford Classical Dictionary explains,

“Endowments in antiquity were set up by vesting property in a public or private body, and stipulating how the income should be used ... in Hellenistic Greece religious endowments predominated; in Rome under the Principate social ones.”<sup>10</sup>

Professor Sophia Aneziri of the University of Athens writes,

“These endowments are transfers of land or movables effected in the ancient Greek world via donations, dedications or testaments, by private or public persons, to *poleis*, *koina*, sanctuaries or associations, to fund a specific purpose on a regular basis ... These gifts differ from ordinary donations or bequests in that they require the transferred property to be invested in order to achieve a permanent financing of the purpose. In general the number of such benefactions increased from

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<sup>10</sup> Johnston, D. (2015). *Oxford classical dictionary*. Endowments. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.2406>

the 3rd century BC on, and the practice bloomed spectacularly in the Roman Imperial period.”<sup>11</sup>

These perpetual endowments in Greek antiquity are variously described as “endowment,” “foundation,” or “fund.”<sup>12</sup> They were created by donations of money or real estate to be held indefinitely.<sup>13</sup> Evidence of these endowments comes from hundreds of surviving archeological inscriptions.<sup>14</sup> For

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<sup>11</sup> [Aneziri, S. (2020). Aspects of female euergetism in the Ancient Greek World. *Mètis-Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 103-122. p. 104.]

Foundations in India also date to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Researchers explain, “The oldest extant stone epigraphs referring to foundations in India date from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.” [Chitwood, Z., Lohse, T., Sánchez, I., & Schmiedchen, A. (2017). Endowment studies—Interdisciplinary perspectives. *Endowment Studies*, 1(1), 1-59. p. 31.]

However, foundation/endowment entities are much older than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Private foundations in Pharaonic Egypt are dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C. Professor Shafik Allam explains, “Many records attest indeed to the fact that foundations / endowments were established as early as the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.” [Allam, S. (2007). Foundations in Pharaonic Egypt: The oldest-known private endowments in history. *Die Welt des Orients*, 37, 8-30. p. 13]

Although the earliest foundation-type entities benefitting gods or deceased ancestors may be dated to roughly 3000 B.C. in Babylon and Egypt, those involving a philanthropic founder and beneficiaries did not appear until the middle part of the first millennium B.C. [Borgolte, M. (2017). Five thousand years of foundations: A typology from Mesopotamia to the USA. *Endowment Studies*, 1(1), 60-95.]

<sup>12</sup> “The same phenomenon is described as “Stiftungen,” “fondations,” and “foundations” in earlier literature” [Aneziri, S. (2020). Aspects of female euergetism in the Ancient Greek World. *Mètis-Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 103-122. p. 104.]; See also “In the interest of variation I use the words ‘endowment,’ ‘foundation’ and on occasion ‘fund,’ where they describe economic foundations, interchangeably.” [Sosin, J. D. (2000). *Perpetual endowments in the Hellenistic world: a case-study in economic rationalism*. (Doctoral dissertation). Duke University. p. 2.]

<sup>13</sup> “It is important to bear in mind that perpetual endowments came in the form of both cash foundations and revenue-generating properties” [Liu, J. (2008). The economy of endowments: the case of Roman associations. In K. Verboven, K. Vandorpe, & V. Chankowski (Eds.), *Pistoi dia tèn technèn: Bankers, loans, and archives in the ancient world: Studies in honour of Raymond Bogaert*. Peeters. 231-56.]

<sup>14</sup> Describing inscriptions of permanent endowments, Professor Sophia Aneziri explains, “For gifts of this type made exclusively by men in the Hellenistic period we have 82 confirmed attestations, and around four times that number from the Roman Imperial period. The purely female endowments number 11 in the Hellenistic and roughly 40 in the Imperial period.” [Aneziri, S. (2020). Aspects of

example, in the region near Corinth, one inscription records,

“shortly after the middle of the 1st century BC, Phaena, priestess of Demeter, after the end of a priesthood during which she had spared no expense, she gave the association (*synodos / koinon*) of priestesses of Demeter an endowment (*philanthrōpian aiōnion*) to cover, in perpetuity, the costs of the cult, and engaged her daughter and granddaughter to continue this everlasting service after her death.”<sup>15</sup>

These endowments were often religious but could be for other purposes. Another inscription records,

“In Aigosthena ... in the second half of the 3rd century BC, a woman called Arete assigned to the *koinon* of the Aigosthenitans half of a garden worth 1,000 drachms ... the income from which would go towards a sacrifice and contests in honour of Poseidonios. This Poseidonios was a male member of her family, possibly her deceased husband.”<sup>16</sup>

This was not just a Greek practice. It was also a Roman one.<sup>17</sup> Writing of these, Professor Jinyu Liu explains,

“At least eighty-four instances have survived of perpetual endowments designated to associations in the Latin-speaking provinces. No doubt this pool represents only the tip of the iceberg.... The majority of these

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female euergetism in the Ancient Greek World. *Mètis-Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 103-122. p. 113.]

<sup>15</sup> Aneziri, S. (2020). Aspects of female euergetism in the Ancient Greek World. *Mètis-Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 103-122. p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> Aneziri, S. (2020). Aspects of female euergetism in the Ancient Greek World. *Mètis-Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 103-122. p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> Permanent charitable endowments for religious purposes were also common in Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist history. [Chitwood, Z., Lohse, T., Sánchez, I., & Schmiedchen, A. (2017). Endowment studies—Interdisciplinary perspectives. *Endowment Studies*, 1(1), 1-59.]



benefactions date to the second and the third century A.D., but two of them are securely dated to the first century A.D.”<sup>18</sup>

Such endowments were designed for the future, often in perpetuity. Professor Aneziri explains that Greek inscriptions describe,

“The endowments of movable or landed property, which were undertaken in order to furnish a permanent income for the perpetual support of a specific purpose.”<sup>19</sup>

The Latin inscriptions reflected this, too. Professor Liu explains,

“The endowments were meant to be long-lasting, as indicated by phrases such as *om(nibus) an(nis) in perpetuum* or *quod ann(is) in perpet(uum)*.”<sup>20</sup>

### ***Endowments in Timothy’s Ephesus***

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. Timothy was in Ephesus. Permanent foundations were particularly common there. Ephesus was home to The Artemisium (Temple of Artemis). The goddess Artemis was thought to protect funds deposited there. This temple was called the “Bank of Asia” or

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<sup>18</sup> Liu, J. (2008). The economy of endowments: the case of Roman associations. In K. Verboven, K. Vandorpe, & V. Chankowski (Eds.), *Pistoi dia tèn technèn: Bankers, loans, and archives in the ancient world: Studies in honour of Raymond Bogaert*. Peeters. 231-256.

<sup>19</sup> Aneziri, S. (2020). Aspects of female euergetism in the Ancient Greek World. *Mètis-Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens*, 103-122. p. 108-109.

<sup>20</sup> Liu, J. (2008). The economy of endowments: The case of Roman associations. In K. Verboven, K. Vandorpe, & V. Chankowski (Eds.), *Pistoi dia tèn technèn: Bankers, loans, and archives in the ancient world: Studies in honour of Raymond Bogaert*. Peeters. 231-256.

“General Treasury of Asia.”<sup>21</sup> This translates the original phrase of

“*tameion te koinon tēs Asias*”

Which can also be rendered as,

“treasury of the common fund of Asia.”

This temple functioned as an international trust bank. It held the wealth and followed the depositor’s instructions. Professor Jerome Murphy-O’Connor explains,

“The temple had no authority to do anything more unless it was explicitly authorized by the depositor.”<sup>22</sup>

These funds could be held permanently for community or charitable purposes. Another researcher explains,

“Such accounts are labeled with terms such as *themelion*, “treasury or reserve,” and *koinos*, “common fund.” The former term appears in 1 Timothy 6:19 and six times in [Ephesian inscriptions] linked to accounts for projects such as gymnasia, kitchens, or latrines. The latter term occurs in inscriptions linked to various funds established at the Artemisium for defined purposes. For example, Gaius Vibius Salutaris established a *koinos* in the temple and outlined instructions for the use of the financial resources in perpetuity.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Aelius Aristides, *Orations* 23.24.

<sup>22</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, J. (2008). *St. Paul’s Ephesus: Texts and archaeology*. Liturgical Press. p. 65.

<sup>23</sup> As with all quotations, the Greek letters in the original quote are Latinized. Also, “IvE 438, 448, 455, 491, 1073” in the original is replaced with “Ephesian inscriptions.” IvE refers to the Ephesian Inscriptions recorded by Wankel, H. (1979-1984). *Die Inschriften von Ephesos*. 10 Vols. Bonn. [Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus*. Penn State Press. p. 207.]

Timothy was in the global center of charitable endowments and foundations. He was physically surrounded by inscriptions dedicated to these endowments. These inscriptions described the endowments using words like *themelion* and *koinos*.

In our passage, donors move their wealth from an uncertain/disappearing form into a good foundation. This word for foundation is *themelion*. It has multiple meanings, just like the English word “foundation.” It can mean a heavy rock at the base of a building. It can reference the basis for an idea. But here, it likely references a financial fund.<sup>24</sup>

In Ephesus, *themelion* often meant a charitable fund. The word appears in Ephesian inscriptions recognizing donors.<sup>25</sup> These charitable funds would have been well known to Timothy’s audience. They were literally chiseled into Ephesian buildings. They were inscribed into the architecture.

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<sup>24</sup> “The language of the clause is awkward, for storing up (the Gk. Verb is *apothesarizein*: lit. ‘to amass treasure’) and foundation represent two quite different ideas (although the Greek word for the latter, *themelion*, can also, in a transferred sense, mean ‘fund’).” [Kelly, J. N. D. (1963). *A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Adam & Charles Black. p. 149];

“It is possible, too, that he plays on the double meaning of the Greek word, which can signify a ‘fund’ as well as a ‘foundation.’” [Scott, E. F (1936/1957). *The Pastoral Epistles*. Hodder and Stoughton. p. 81];

Writing of *themelion* in 1 Timothy 6:19, “Thus the word seems to have taken on a meaning approaching the ambiguous word ‘funds.’” [Dibelius, M. & Conzelmann, H. (1972). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*. Fortress Press. p. 91.]

<sup>25</sup> “21. The term *Themelion* occurs in Ephesian benefaction inscriptions: IVE 438, 448, 455, 491, 1073, 2260 linked to a fund in the present time. Cf. BDAG, 448-49, ‘treasure,’ ‘foundation,’ or ‘reserve.’ The text connotes a future reserve.” [Hoag, Gary G. (2015). *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus*. Penn State University Press. p. 197. fn 21.]

Managing financial funds was a central part of the Ephesian economy. Professor Alfred Plummer notes,

“The wealthy heathen in Ephesus were accustomed to deposit their treasures with ‘the great goddess Diana,’ whose temple was both a sanctuary and a bank.”<sup>26</sup>

Ephesus was a city focused on financial funds. Paul’s reference would have made sense to them as a financial fund. One commentary explains of 1 Timothy 6:19,

“The idea is that of a deposit into a treasury or storehouse for use at a later date. Another metaphor comes into play. This treasury deposit now becomes a ‘foundation’ (*themelios*; originally, to lay down a stone).”<sup>27</sup>

Professor Ernst Wendland explains the usage as

“*Themelios* - foundation in the sense of a sum of money which draws interest or brings dividends.”<sup>28</sup>

*Themelion* as a financial fund, including a charitable fund, was commonplace in Ephesus. Paul deliberately uses this endowment language. Timothy, and his Ephesian audience, would have immediately understood the reference.<sup>29</sup> Paul

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<sup>26</sup> [Plummer, A. (1903). *The Pastoral Epistles*. A. C. Armstrong and Son. p. 198]; More recently, Professor Ben Witherington III explains, “The concept of storing up treasures in heaven comes in part from the fact that treasures in antiquity were often stored in temples, frequently serving as the banks of antiquity and the places where people kept important documents. They believed that the god resident there would protect their deposits.” [Witherington, B., III. (2006). *Letters and homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Vol I). IVP Academic. p. 297. fn 501.]

<sup>27</sup> Jackson, W. (2007). *Before I die: Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus*. Christian Courier Publications. p. 186.

<sup>28</sup> Wendland, E.H. (1975). *First Timothy*. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File. p. 93.

<sup>29</sup> Professor Reggie Kidd refers to “the common linguistic milieu shared by the Pastorals and the discourse of municipal beneficence.” For example, Emperor Pius wrote to the Ephesians (A.D. 145) rebuking them for showing insufficient gratitude to a wealthy benefactor who had built a cultural center for the city, explaining that the benefactor had spent on “that by which he hopes [*elpizei*] to make the city

instructs Timothy to use endowment language in his fundraising with the wealthy.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Long-term charitable funds in the Bible***

New Testament passages suggest some endowment-like financial activities. Older widows placed on the list received lifetime support. This suggests the presence of a long-term, or even permanent, fund.<sup>31</sup> (Otherwise, donation fluctuations would have threatened their survival.)

This matches an Old Testament practice. One of the tithes was for the Levites and

“the stranger, the orphan, and the widow who are in your town” (Deuteronomy 14:29b).

It was given so that they

“shall come and eat and be satisfied” (Deuteronomy 14:29c).

Feeding the stranger, the orphan, and the widow is important. But here’s the thing. This tithe was taken only once every three

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more imposing in the future [*pros to mellon*],” matching 1 Timothy 6:17-19’s uses of *ēlpikenai*, a form of the same verb as *elpizei* [*elpizō*], and “*eis to mellon*” matching “*pros to mellon*.” [Kidd, R. M. (1989). *Wealth and beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: An inquiry into a “bourgeois” form of early Christianity* (Doctoral dissertation). Duke University. p. 173.]

<sup>30</sup> A modern example of an endowment that buys “good work” in perpetuity is the endowed chair at a university. Such chairs are permanent funds that support researchers in a particular area of inquiry. These, too, are not new. They date to at least 176 A.D. and may have existed during Paul’s time as well. Professor Jinyu Liu explains, “The earliest endowed chairs were established by the Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius in Athens in A.D. 176. Aurelius created one endowed chair for each of the major schools of philosophy: Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism.” [Liu, J. (2008). The economy of endowments: The case of Roman associations. In K. Verboven, K. Vandorpe, & V. Chankowski (Eds.), *Pistoi dia tèn technèn: Bankers, loans, and archives in the ancient world: Studies in honour of Raymond Bogaert*. Peeters. 231-256.]

<sup>31</sup> See 1 Timothy 5:3-16.

years. It had to be stored up to last a long time. The instructions directed this storing up of the gift:

“At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates.” (Deuteronomy 14:28 NKJV).

Storing up and distributing over many years is nothing new. Long-term charitable funds are nothing new.

### ***Restricted charitable funds in the Bible***

The idea of “restricted” gifts for special purposes is also nothing new. For example, the Old Testament tithe wasn’t just one thing. There were three different tithes. The first paid the Levites, who functioned as priests and caretakers of the tabernacle.<sup>32</sup> The second was restricted to pay for festival celebrations.<sup>33</sup> The third was restricted to feeding Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows.<sup>34</sup>

The New Testament also references restricted gifts. Paul encouraged donors to make restricted gifts to a designated project. These were separate from any “unrestricted” gifts to the church. Paul’s fundraising campaign in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 and elsewhere was for exactly this type of project.

Paul directed these donors to save money over time as a personal charitable fund.<sup>35</sup> They would accumulate, hold, and

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<sup>32</sup> Numbers 18:21-26

<sup>33</sup> Deuteronomy 14:22-27

<sup>34</sup> Deuteronomy 14:28-29

<sup>35</sup> “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save [NASB footnote: literally “put with himself”] as he may prosper, so that no collections need to be made when I come.” (1 Corinthians 16:2). Other translations for “put aside and save” or “put with himself” include “lay by him in store” (King James Version), “let every one of you put apart with himself” (Douay-Rheims Bible), “let each person of you lay aside in his house” (Aramaic Bible in Plain English).

control these funds themselves.<sup>36</sup> However, they would earmark them for future charitable transfer. They would create “homemade” Donor Advised Funds.

Thus, from the New Testament text alone, we see the following in the church:

- A likely long-term church fund or endowment
- Directions to make restricted gifts
- Directions to use “homemade” Donor Advised Funds

Once again, modern fundraising concepts are not so new after all.

### ***Endowments in the early church***

Common funds [*to koinon*] appeared from the earliest days of the church. The literary record shows this.<sup>37</sup> However, there is no matching archeological record. Public endowment inscriptions would have made no sense for a banned sect. Thus, none appear prior to the conversion of Constantine in 312 A.D.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “1 Corinthians 16:2 suggests that each person will store up money at home, and pool it only on Paul’s arrival.” [Barclay, J. M. G. (2016). *Pauline churches and diaspora Jews*. Eerdmans. p. 115.]

<sup>37</sup> Referencing writings dating from about A.D. 90 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Hermas, *Similitudes*), about A.D. 97 to 117 (Ignatius, *Polycarp*), about A.D. 155 to 177 (Justin Martyr, *First Apology*), and about 197 A.D. (Tertullian, *Apology*), Professor John M. G. Barclay explains, “Exhortations abound for almsgiving, but the context often reveals that this is primarily exercised within the Christian community: there the poor and the rich support one another, like elm and vine (Hermas, *Sim.* 1-2). For this to work, it is clearly becoming necessary for funds to be centrally gathered, and centrally distributed. Justin expects almsgiving to go to widows and orphans *via the president* of the community (*First Apology* 67), while both Ignatius (Polycarp 4.3) and Tertullian (*Apology* 39) assume that Christian communities will have a common ‘chest’ (*to koinon*, [Latin] *arca*).” [Barclay, J. M. G. (2016). *Pauline churches and diaspora Jews*. Eerdmans. p. 117.]

<sup>38</sup> “The private religious foundations that are the subject of this study had their origins in the age before the conversion of Emperor Constantine (306-337) to Christianity. Since for most of this period, Christians were a proscribed sect, it is not to be expected that the sources will be readily employable for determining the

Yet, even in the earliest times, the church did offer endowment-like giving opportunities. Donors could give houses or land – not to be sold but to be held by the church.<sup>39</sup> The property would produce rent or be used rent-free.

These assets were not sold for distribution. They were held by the church, producing ongoing benefits of income or rent-free use. Financially, this functions like a church endowment. If the church owns and leases out real estate, it's holding an asset that pays rent. If it owns and uses the real estate, it's holding an asset that eliminates the cost of renting.

An alternate arrangement is when the donor keeps the building but donates rent-free use. This is still an asset that covers the cost of renting. But the donor controls and manages the asset. That makes it more like a private foundation than a church endowment. Either way, the asset still eliminates the church's ongoing cost of renting.

Once Christianity became legal, the record of formal church endowments is clear. By 390 A.D., these were commonplace. In that year, John Chrysostom referenced their size and ubiquity. In fact, he complained about it. Church

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institutional origins of these foundations." [Thomas, J. P. (1987). *Private religious foundations in the Byzantine Empire*. Dumbarton Oaks. p. 6.]

<sup>39</sup> The early church typically met in the large homes of wealthy members. (See Rom. 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philem 2.) Later, homes were often gifted to the church to be converted to permanent ecclesiastical use. In financial terms, the church held the asset and benefitted from ongoing rent-free use rather than selling it for immediate disbursement. This is the financial equivalent of holding a monetary endowment that pays for rent.

John Philip Thomas explains, "These renovated private dwellings are known as *domus ecclesiae* ... The *domus ecclesiae* of Dura-Europos is one of the earliest and certainly the best known of these churches. Based on a private structure erected early in the third century, the *domus ecclesiae* itself would appear to date after renovations undertaken ca. 231." [Thomas, J. P. (1987). *Private religious foundations in the Byzantine Empire*. Dumbarton Oaks. p. 8-9.] It is even possible that one of the homes referenced in the New Testament may have already been donated to the church and yet, in honor of the donor, retained its designation as the house of the donor.



endowments had grown large. He worried that they turned religious leaders into business managers. He worried that they discouraged people from giving.<sup>40</sup>

The use of such endowments and foundations continued in the following years. Writing of church finance in the fifth and sixth centuries, Professor A. H. M. Jones summarizes,

“Most founders of churches were private benefactors, and most of them endowed the churches which they built ... Most charitable institutions [hospitals, orphanages, almshouses] seem also to have been autonomous, having been endowed by their founders.”<sup>41</sup>

In 530 A.D., the Emperor Justinian made such endowments mandatory. No new church could be constructed without an endowment to pay for its ongoing operation and maintenance.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “But now the priests of God attend at the vintage and harvest, and at the sale and purchase of the produce; and whereas they that served the shadow had an entire immunity from such matters, although entrusted with a more carnal service; we, who are invited to the very inmost shrines of the heavens, and who enter into the true holy of holies, take upon ourselves the cares of tradesmen and retail dealers.” [Chrysostom, J. (390/1888). Homily 85 on Matthew (G. Prevost, Trans.). In P. Schaff (Ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 10*. Christian Literature Publishing.]

<sup>41</sup> [Jones, A. H. M. (1960). Church finance in the fifth and sixth centuries. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 84-94. p. 87.] These endowments were most commonly from real estate investments. “[T]he churches derived their income from two main sources: the offerings of the faithful, and the rents of lands and house property given or bequeathed by benefactors or more rarely purchased.” (p. 84).

As an example of endowment giving from the early fifth century, see “Melania the Younger was advised by African bishops not to distribute alms casually to monasteries, but instead to ‘give to each monastery a house (*oika*) and an income (*prosodon*)’ in order to assure permanent benefits for the recipient institutions.” [Thomas, J. P. (1987). *Private religious foundations in the Byzantine Empire*. Dumbarton Oaks. p. 18.]

<sup>42</sup> “We decree that no new church shall hereafter be constructed before having recourse to the bishop, and determining the amount requisite for lighting, for the holy service, and for keeping the building in good condition, as well as for the maintenance of those who have charge of it; and if the amount given appears to be sufficient, the preliminary donation shall be made, and the church erected.”

Beyond these early examples, the use of endowments for churches and Christian organizations has continued throughout the centuries. Thus, historically, endowments for churches and Christian charities were common – or even mandatory.

### ***Endowments and donor stewardship***

Are endowments a good idea? The answer is, “It depends.” An endowment is just a spending plan. Sometimes immediately spending everything is wise stewardship. Sometimes it’s not. Sometimes spending over time is wise stewardship. Sometimes it’s not.

Ministry leaders can spend much effort disputing the wisdom of this spending plan. Such disputes, however, ignore a key issue. We can agree that the core Biblical principle is stewardship. But we can forget the answer to another question:

Who is the steward of the donor’s wealth?

The answer:

The donor is the steward of the donor’s wealth.<sup>43</sup>

The donor is not forced to give wealth. But he is responsible for his giving. As Peter explained to Ananias about his gift,

“While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?”  
(Acts 5:4a).

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[Justinian, *Novellae Constitutiones*, 67 in Scott, S. P. (1932). *The civil law: Including the twelve tables*. The Central Trust Company.]

<sup>43</sup> Notably, John Locke based his philosophy of natural property rights in part on 1 Timothy 6:17, “God has given us all things richly”. [Locke, J. (1689). Two treatises of government, II, 31.]

Ananias didn't have to give anything. But he did. He made a gift. That was good. And then he lied about it. That was bad. That was dumb (and deadly). It was dumb because the gift was optional. This wasn't like a Roman tax. It wasn't mandatory giving.

The donor is not forced to give wealth. But he is responsible for his giving. A donor can choose to give or not give. But when he gives, he is responsible for the giving.

A donor can also choose what specific project to give to. Paul's most famous fundraising campaign was for a special project. It was fundraising for restricted gifts. Paul didn't appeal to the church leaders to fund his project out of general church funds. He didn't appeal to donors to give to general church funds. He appealed to the donors to make a restricted gift to a specific project. This decision was the donor's decision.

Giving to this special project wasn't a command.<sup>44</sup> It was an option. It was, in Paul's opinion, an attractive option.<sup>45</sup> But it was still just an option.

Donors can choose to share wealth. They can choose not to share wealth. Donors can choose to give to a specific project. They can choose not to give to a specific project. But when they give, they are responsible for their giving.

Our passage goes a step further. Donors are not simply instructed to give. They are instructed to generate outcomes. They are instructed to do good. They are instructed to be rich in good works.

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<sup>44</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:8a, "I am not saying this as a command".

<sup>45</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:10-11, "I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the willingness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability."

It's possible that making unrestricted gifts to an organization does this. If so, that's great. But if not, it's the donor's responsibility to try something else. The donor might instead give to a restricted project. Or the donor might just give elsewhere.

Regardless, the donor's responsibility is to produce the result. The donor is to do good. The donor is to become rich in good works. The donor is the steward. The donor is responsible for his giving.

A charity does not have to offer endowments. But suppose the donor believes that wise stewardship dictates that his gift be spent over many years. If so, then he is responsible for executing that plan.

And what if the administrator of a charity disagrees with this spending plan. Does that change the donor's responsibility? No. The donor is responsible for his wealth. God has placed him in charge of that wealth. He must answer for it. He is the steward.

That may mean giving elsewhere. Or, it may mean making a restricted gift instead. It may mean giving through a private foundation. It may mean giving through a community foundation. The instruments are secondary. The important thing is the outcome. The outcome is,

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

This can be accomplished with immediate usage. It can also be accomplished with usage over time.

The timing of the spending is a stewardship decision. What's the best plan? It depends. One plan is not always good or bad in every circumstance. The key idea is this. This

stewardship decision is the decision of the steward. The donor is the steward of the donor's wealth.

### ***Endowment language vs. endowment structure***

Paul instructs Timothy to conduct his fundraising using endowment language. This is clear. Paul, Timothy, and the Ephesians would have been thoroughly familiar with charitable endowments. This is also clear. However, directing endowment language is different from directing actual endowments.

Paul's language neither mandates nor prohibits endowments. It's possible that Timothy's church did not offer endowment gift opportunities. It's possible they would not have accepted gifts of houses or land to be held indefinitely by the church.

Yet, endowments would still have been critical. Timothy's church was surrounded by charitable endowment opportunities. Even if Timothy was not offering endowments, he was still competing with them. For the wealthy donor, they were still an attractive charitable option. This was true in Paul's day. It's true today.

Today we might offer actual endowments. Or we might simply adopt Paul's endowment language to compete with them. Either way, Paul's words remain critical for effective fundraising.

## PART II

### PAUL'S INVESTMENT DIVERSIFICATION LANGUAGE

(Message 13: You're making an investment with real permanence!)

#### ***Investment diversification***

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is a fundraising passage. It encourages the wealthy to give. But notice what it does not say. It never says simply, "Give your money away!" That message emphasizes loss. It creates resistance. It works against the natural inclinations of the wealthy.

Here, Paul writes something different. This is not an argument for wealth dissipation. It's an argument for wealth diversification. It does not tell wealthy donors to give it away. It tells them to save it up. The New English Bible reads,

"Tell them to hoard a wealth of noble actions by doing good"<sup>1</sup> (1 Timothy 6:18).

The message isn't "Stop being wealthy." It's "Be wealthy in even more ways!" In investment terms, it says, "Diversify!"

I teach in a university department focused on financial planning and wealth management. The first principle of wealth management is diversification.

Suppose a client has a \$50 million stock portfolio. Is he financially secure? Not if his portfolio is all in one speculative stock. If something happens to that one company, he's broke. He needs to diversify.

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<sup>1</sup> New English Bible (1961)

Suppose all his shares were in one oil company. So, he diversifies across 10 different oil companies. That's slightly better. But it's still not great. Why not? Because these will all rise or fall together. Real diversification does the opposite. It means adding investments that don't fall when others do. Ideally, they remain even if everything else collapses.

This investment theory matches the giving messages of Paul and Jesus. It's not just giving away; it's shifting to a different asset type. It's not becoming less rich; it's becoming rich in even more ways.

For wealth holders, this diversification message is familiar. It's persuasive. It matches wealthy investors' natural inclinations. It's pro-savings. It's risk-reducing. It's planning for the future.

### ***Diversification language in sales***

As an estate-planning attorney, I often worked with life insurance professionals. The most successful acted differently. They weren't just more persistent. They communicated differently.

They used different language. They didn't sell a policy. They sold an outcome. (They sold client benefits.) They didn't lead with policy features. They led with stories. (They told stories about what other people like the client had done.) And finally, they didn't frame the sale as a sale.

They never "sold" a policy. A client never "bought" a policy. Instead, the client "moved" money. He moved it into a better investment. This was not trading wealth for a product. It was shifting some wealth into a different wealth category. It was diversifying.

Call it spending, and we'll haggle to spend as little as possible. An investing framework is different. If we find a better investment, we want to put in more, not less. This reframing is powerful. The wealth isn't disappearing. Instead, it's being moved into a better investment.

Suppose our bank account earns 2% interest. We then find a safer bank that pays 6%. We don't think, "What's the smallest amount I can invest?" That wouldn't make sense.

It wouldn't make sense because this isn't a spending framework. This is an investment framework. We're not losing wealth. We're trying to move wealth into a better investment. So, we want to move as much as possible. We're not losing anything. We're gaining a superior investment.

### ***Diversification in Biblical fundraising***

Our passage frames giving as wealth diversification. The message isn't,

"You've saved up too much! Give it away!"

Instead, it's,

"You've got a risky, disappearing portfolio. You need to diversify. Shift your savings into something long-term."

Paul doesn't say,

"Stop storing up treasure for yourself."

He says,

"Store up for yourselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future."



He doesn't say,

“Stop being rich.”<sup>2</sup>

He says,

“Be rich in even more ways! Be rich in good works.”

This is a pro-investment message.<sup>3</sup> It's a message of investment diversification.

Jesus says,

“Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure [*thēsauron*] in heaven, where no thief comes near nor does a moth destroy.” (Luke 12:33).

And,

“But store up [*thēsaurizete*] for yourselves [*hymin*] treasures [*thēsaurous*] in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal” (Matthew 6:20).

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<sup>2</sup> This is not a new idea. In 387 A.D., John Chrysostom wrote, “But here, it is worthy of enquiry, for what reason he does not say, Charge those who are rich in the present world, not to be rich; charge them to become poor; charge them to get rid of what they have; but, ‘charge them, not to be high-minded.’ ... A covetous man is one thing, and a rich man is another thing.” [Chrysostom, J. (1889). Concerning the statutes, Homily 2.14. In P. Schaff (Ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 9* (W.R.W. Stephens, Trans.). Christian Literature Publishing Co. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/190102.htm>].

In 1773, Charles Chauncy explained of 1 Timothy 6:17, “Where would be the pertinency of this charge to Timothy, if the supposition of rich men in the church of Christ was a contradiction of the gospel establishment? In this case, the direction to him must have been, say to such as are rich, sell your possessions, and cease being rich. But not a word to this purpose do we meet with here, or in any passage of scripture, in what is said to them that were rich.” [Chauncy, C. (1773). *Having all thing in common, explained and improved*. Kneeland & Davis. p. 15.]

<sup>3</sup> Professor Linda Belleville's chapter on 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is titled “Investments for Abundant Life.” [Belleville, L. (2017). Investments for abundant life. In J. S. Duvall & V. Verbrugge (Eds.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to Inspire and Instruct*. Zondervan Academic. p. 110.]

Paul’s message closely parallels Jesus’s message. This is even more obvious in the original words:

- 1 Timothy 6:19 instructs *apo-thēsaourizontas* [store up treasure] *heautois* [for yourselves].
- Matthew 6:20 instructs *thēsaourizete* [store up] *hymin* [for yourselves] *thēsaourous* [treasures].
- Luke 12:33 uses *heautois* [for yourselves] and *thēsaouron* [treasure].

These start as identical messages. They use identical investment words. But then the messages diverge.

### ***Diversification benefits: Heaven and here [eis to mellon]***

Jesus and Paul use identical investment words. But Jesus talks specifically about heaven. These are treasures “in heaven” [*en ouranō*]. (Matthew 6:20). This is treasure “in the heavens” [*en tois ouranois*]. (Luke 12:33).

Paul uses different words. Instead of heaven, he writes about the future. The treasure is “for the future” [*eis to mellon*]. The future can certainly include heaven. But it’s not only heaven.<sup>4</sup> The future is also a week from now. It’s also a

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<sup>4</sup> Paul does not, for example, reference treasure for a future age, *aiōn*. In a discussion of the term “age to come,” Jamie Davies of Trinity College notes of “*eis to mellon*” in 1 Timothy 6:18 that “the crucial term *aiōn* is conspicuous by its absence.” [Davies, J. (2021). Why Paul doesn’t mention the ‘age to come’. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 74(3), 199-208. p. 202].

Professor Vincent Skemp argues for excluding a heavenly reference. He writes, “Note the idioms in First Timothy [6:19] and Tobit [4:9] do not refer to a positive afterlife. Although the First Timothy, unlike the Book of Tobit, carries a belief in a life after death (e.g., 1 Timothy 1:16, “for everlasting life”), the idiom in 1 Timothy 6:19 echoes the meaning in Tob 4:9 without explicit mention of afterlife. Thus, 1 Timothy 6:19 uses a common cultural idiom in a way that maintains the original meaning despite the different eschatological context. The idiom in First Timothy therefore stands in contrast with the eschatology in Matthew 6:20 and 19:21, both of which refer to ‘treasures in heaven.’” [Skemp, V. (2023). Avenues of intertextuality between Tobit and the New Testament. In J. Corley & V. Skemp

year or a decade from now.<sup>5</sup>

This matches other differences. Jesus here is speaking of almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. Paul is writing about sharing [*koinōnikous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnia*].

Almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*] is supposed to be secret and hidden. There may be no observers other than God. The benefit to the donor comes exclusively from God. The benefit is in heaven.

Sharing with the fellowship community [*koinōnikous*] is different from almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. It's supposed to be open and public.<sup>6</sup> It's part of a mutual, reciprocal partnership.<sup>7</sup> That partnership reciprocity starts here on earth. It starts right away. We are to do good

“especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” (Galatians 6:10b)

These recipients are themselves reciprocal. They will,

“by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Corinthians 9:14).

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(Eds.), *Intertextual studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in honor of Alexander A Di Lella*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 63.] The quote references Tobit 4:9, “for [by giving alms] you store up a good prize for yourself on the day of necessity.”

<sup>5</sup> As an example of this more immediate sense of the term, note that “*eis to mellon*” in the Luke 13:9 reference to a fig tree is rendered in the New American Standard Bible as, “and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down,” with “year, fine” being added. The reference to “next year” is also used in the New International Version, New Living Translation, English Standard Version, Contemporary English Version, and many others. More literal translations do not insert a reference to next year. For example, the Literal Emphasis Translation uses, “And if it should make fruit unto the time about to be”.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., 2 Corinthians 8:24; See also Chapter 11-II, “The historical context of donor recognition”.

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 14-1, “More partnership relationships.”

This reciprocity continues in the future. Paul explains,

“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it.” (2 Corinthians 8:14a NLT).

These are friends who share back. They’re reciprocating friends for now and for later.

Jesus, too, talks of giving that creates such friendships. These are the kind of friends who

“will welcome you into eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9).

What does Jesus say will happen when a person gives up something

“for My sake and for the gospel’s sake” (Mark 10:29b)?<sup>8</sup>

They get immediate and future rewards. They

“will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age ... and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Mark 10:30b,d)

Jesus explains that they receive

“brothers and sisters and mothers and children” (Mark 10:30c).

These immediate benefits include friends that are like family. In the church age these friends are in the fellowship community [*koinōnia*].

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<sup>8</sup> This was not simple almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. Jesus didn’t use that word here. This giving was for a specific purpose. It was for the sake of the gospel. It was not for the sake of poverty relief or the poor. Although this giving might have helped the poor, the purpose was different. Here, the giving or leaving behind was physically necessary to unburden oneself to allow for following Jesus in his earthly ministry. In the same way, Paul’s collection benefitted the poor in the church, but it was not almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. Instead, it was *koinōnian* (2 Corinthians 8:4) and *koinōnias* (2 Corinthians 9:13). Its purpose wasn’t simply poverty relief or *eleēmosynē*. The purpose was to benefit the fellowship-community, the gospel, and the cause of Christ.

This treasure is not only “in heaven [*en ouranō*]”. It is also, more broadly, “for the future [*eis to mellon*]”. This is giving with benefits. It has benefits across all parts of the future.

***Diversification benefits: A good reputation [kalon]***

Paul’s donors are becoming rich. They are becoming, “rich in good [*kalois*] works” (1 Timothy 6:18b).

They are

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good [*kalon*] foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

This type of good, *kalos*, is,

“beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”<sup>9</sup>

Jesus says of this type of good,

“Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good [*kala*] works” (Matthew 5:16a).

The audience for this good, *kalos*, includes God. But it’s not only God. It’s also other people.

In 1 Timothy, earthly reputation matters. A reputation for good, *kalos*, matters. It matters in heaven, but it also matters here. Do you want to be a church leader? Paul says you

“must have a good [*kalēn*] reputation with those outside the church” (1 Timothy 3:7b).

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<sup>9</sup> Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.

Do you want to serve as a deacon? Among the benefits is that deacons

“gain an excellent [*kalon*] reputation for themselves” (1 Timothy 3:13).<sup>10</sup>

Are you a widow who wants to be put on the list for support from the church? That can happen only if you are one

“having a reputation for good [*kalois*] works” (1 Timothy 5:10a).

Becoming rich in good [*kalois*] works does lead to treasure in heaven. But it’s not just heaven. It’s also a good [*kalon*] foundation for next week, next year, and next decade. It’s a good foundation for all of the future.

Commentaries have noted this earthly application of 1 Timothy 6:19. One explains,

“Giving away is here represented as a ‘laying up’ in store, a laying down of a foundation. A time may come when he will be glad of some help himself, and to have amassed for himself in other hearts a great store of thankfulness on account of what he was able to do for them will stand him in good stead now that he is in want of sympathy, or assistance of any kind.”<sup>11</sup>

Using more academic terms, Professor Anthony Giambrone explains,

“Reference to the ‘treasure in heaven’ metaphor in 6:19 would help secure a generic almsgiving topos, but the language here might also be read as a this-worldly investment, a material reward wealth ethic common to both Paul (2 Corinthians 8:14; 9:8-10; cf. Sirach 29:11-

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<sup>10</sup> International Standard Version

<sup>11</sup> King, G. H. (1962). *A leader led: A devotional study of I Timothy*. Christian Literature Crusade. p. 112.

13; 22:23) and pagan sources (e.g. Seneca, On Consolation: To Marcia 9.1; Ovid, Tristia 5.8.4-18).”<sup>12</sup>

Paul is not subtle about this earthly reciprocity. Sharing with the fellowship community leads to reciprocity. It leads to reciprocity now. (2 Corinthians 9:14). It leads to reciprocity in the future. (2 Corinthians 8:14). It’s not just spiritual. It’s financial.

In the church of 1 Timothy, a good [*kalos*] public reputation was valuable. It provided access to paid – or even “double paid” – leadership.<sup>13</sup> It provided access to paid retirement for the poorest widows.

Openly sharing with a mutually supportive fellowship community provides both social and economic benefits. This occurs naturally and informally. In 1 Timothy, Paul makes it formal. He infuses explicit financial benefits directly into the church polity. These benefits are explicitly contingent on a good [*kalos*] public reputation.

Good [*kalos*] works and good [*kalos*] reputation creates a good [*kalos*] foundation for the future. These benefits are long-term, ongoing, and stable. A person may lose every other treasure, but these benefits remain. This is true in heaven. Paul’s church guidelines in 1 Timothy also make it true on earth.

### ***Diversification benefits: Trading temporary for permanent [eis to mellon]***

The rich person’s other investments all have the same

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<sup>12</sup> Giambone, A. (2014). ‘According to the commandment’ (Did. 1.5): Lexical reflections on almsgiving as ‘The Commandment.’ *New Testament Studies*, 60(4), 448-465. p. 453.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 5:17-18

problem. They're going to disappear. Paul's wealth diversification message offers a solution. It offers permanence. The donors are

“storing up for themselves the enduring riches of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19 Amplified Bible).

One commentary explains of this verse,

“Stability is the essential characteristic of a foundation. There is a contrast implied between the shifting uncertainty of riches as a ground of hope, and the firm and permanent foundation of a Christian character.”<sup>14</sup>

Financial investments can disappear. They are uncertain/disappearing. (1 Timothy 6:17). Thieves can steal them. (Luke 12:33; Matthew 6:20). Even if they're not stolen, they can disintegrate. Moths destroy. Rust decays. Markets crash. Countries fall.

And even if they survive all that, they will still be lost. Ownership ends at the end of life. As Paul explains,

“We have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.” (1 Timothy 6:7).

The emphasis on permanence is the key point of this phrase. The structure of the passage highlights this. It's a chiasmic structure.<sup>15</sup> This is a series of contrasts surrounding the main point. Each segment is a contrast with another.

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<sup>14</sup> White, N. J. D. (1910). 1-2 Timothy. In W. R. Nicoll (Ed.), *The expositor's Greek Testament, Volume 4: Thessalonians through James*. Dodd, Mead & Company.

<sup>15</sup> The chiasmic structure of the passage is A, B, C, D, E, F, G, F', E', D', C', B', A' where B is “rich in the now time” and B' is “storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future”. See the previous section “Poetry with a point: Chiasmus” in Chapter 7-II, “Enjoying wealth: Don't miss the point”.



In these parallel segments,

“those who are rich in the now [*nyn*] time,”

contrasts with those who are

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future [*mellon*]”.

The structure contrasts now [*nyn*] and future [*mellon*].<sup>16</sup> Treasure “in the now time” is temporary. The treasure of “a good foundation for the future” offers lasting permanence.

These are both forms of wealth. They’re just different forms of wealth. One kind is only for now: *nyn*. We can’t take it with us. Even as we try to hold it, it’s uncertain and disappearing: *adēlotēti*. The other kind of treasure is permanent. It’s lasting. That permanence starts right away.

Suppose a person is known for beautiful, inspirational, good [*kalois*] works. They are rich in good works. And then their investments collapse. Or they’re stolen. They lose all their wealth.

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<sup>16</sup> Several have noted this parallelism between the phrases. See, e.g., “*eis to mellon*, ‘for the coming [age],’ is parallel with *en tō nyn aiōni*, ‘in the present age,’ of v 17; those who are rich in the present age should use their wealth with a view to the coming age.” [Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary Volume 46: Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 368];

“The injunction, bracketed by the *nyn*, ‘now,’ and *mellon*, ‘future,’ statements, directs rich individuals to use earthly wealth for eternal purposes. Within those brackets, prohibitions and expectations are set forth.” [Hoag, G. G. (2015). *Wealth in ancient Ephesus and the first letter to Timothy: Fresh insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus* (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement Vol. 11). Penn State Press. p. 196.]

The desire to read this as exclusively eschatological has led some to translate “for the future” as “for the coming age.” One author explains, “The coming age’ in v. 19 translates *to mellon*, ‘the coming,’ with ‘age’ supplied by an understood *aiōn* (translated ‘world’) back in v. 17.” [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 338.] Such eschatological implications are not wrong. This segment clearly includes a reference to heaven. However, the original language allows for both earthly and heavenly outcomes. This same dual meaning, encompassing both heaven and here, can also apply to the next phrase: “so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Are they still rich in good [*kalois*] works? Yes. Have they still stored up for themselves the treasure of a good [*kalon*] foundation for the future? Yes.

These are not just theological concepts. They're also economic ones. Reputation matters. It is economically valuable. This is true for the payments from the church described in 1 Timothy. It's also true in the business world.

Corporations are pure profit-making entities. And yet, they still make donations. Why? Because it's profitable. It builds an economically valuable reputation. Research shows that a charitable reputation has real economic benefits.<sup>17</sup> This is true for corporations. It's also true for individuals.

Many joint ventures offer the chance for gain but require trusting a partner. A person might lose everything. But if he still has a good reputation, he is still a valuable partner. Others will still want to include him in future opportunities.

This isn't just theory. It's observable in the lab. When people pick a leader or partner for a joint venture after a sharing opportunity, they almost always pick the person who was the most generous.<sup>18</sup> A charitable reputation has real economic benefits.

These financial benefits are real. They're also lasting. Suppose a person has status and opportunities only because he has money. Then his money disappears. What happens to his

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<sup>17</sup> Brammer, S., & Millington, A. (2005). Corporate reputation and philanthropy: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 61(1), 29-44.

<sup>18</sup> Barclay, P., & Willer, R. (2007). Partner choice creates competitive altruism in humans. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 274(1610), 749-753; Hardy, C. L., & Van Vugt, M. (2006). Nice guys finish first: The competitive altruism hypothesis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32(10), 1402-1413.

status? It disappears too. What happens to his future opportunities? Those also disappear.

Now, suppose a person has a reputation for sharing with the fellowship community. He fulfills his responsibilities and much more. He's a beneficial member of any partnership or fellowship community. He shares freely. He's generous.

Then something happens. His money disappears. What happens to his valuable reputation? Nothing. It remains. What happens to those valuable future opportunities? Nothing. He's still an attractive partner. Even on this earth, his reputation endures. It's valuable. And it's lasting.

Thus, even in a secular context, giving has lasting benefits. As Professor Stephan Joubert explains,

“Any benefactor could therefore echo Mark Anthony's ironic words: *hoc habeo, quodcumque dedi* ('whatever I have given, that I still possess!'). As a matter of fact, the only way in which one can make one's material possessions one's own, is to give them away as gifts. The moment a gift is given away, it turns into a benefit.”<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Professor Duncan Derrett explains that ancient sources often reflected the idea that,

“Helping others is a permanent asset.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Joubert, S. (2000). *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul's collection*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> Derrett, J. D. M. (2002). Early Buddhist use of two Western themes. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 12(3), 343-355. p. 345. (Citing Menander, *Dyscolos* V (fragment 128K). Cf. Horace, *Satires*, Book 2, Satire 3, 119; Seneca, *De Benefices*, 3.4, 1; Sirach 31:11.)

## ***Diversification benefits: A future focus matches major gifts [eis to mellon]***

Paul uses time-oriented, future-focused language. This matches modern experimental research. People give more when they are first asked about issues of time.<sup>21</sup> Focusing on time creates a more reflective, “socioemotional” mindset. This encourages sharing. Starting with a money ask does the opposite. It leads to a more “transactional” mindset.<sup>22</sup> This discourages sharing.

Paul’s time-focused language also matches the natural inclinations of the rich. They don’t blow wealth on wild living. They focus on the future. They are accumulators. They want to hold on to wealth.

In one study, I worked with a Ph.D. advisee to uncover any “special” characteristics of major donors. Yes, they had wealth. Yes, they were charitable. But were they different from other donors in other ways? Analysis of a national dataset said, “Yes.”

Even comparing those with the same wealth, major donors were different. They had a longer “financial planning time horizon.”<sup>23</sup> They were significantly more likely to focus many years into the future in their spending and saving decisions. They were focused on results for the future [*eis to mellon*].

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<sup>21</sup> Liu, W., & Aaker, J. (2008). The happiness of giving: The time-ask effect. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(3), 543-557.

<sup>22</sup> Liu, W., & Aaker, J. (2008, February). Reflective versus transactional mindsets in donation requests: The “time-ask” effect. In *The Proceedings of the Society for Consumer Psychology 2008 Winter Conference* (p. 347).

<sup>23</sup> Liu, Z., James, R. N., & Aboohamidi, A. (2020). Finding the next major donor: The relationship between financial planning horizon and charitable giving. *Journal of Personal Finance*, 19(2), 49-65.

In this world of instability, risk, and loss, the most attractive offer for them is permanence. The most attractive offer is,

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:18a).

This offer matches the natural tendencies of Paul’s target audience. That was true then. It remains true today. Major donors focus on the future. So does Paul’s message.

### ***Diversification benefits: Trading anxiety about the future for certainty with God***

The rich Christian has not placed their hope in the uncertainty [*adēlotēti*] of hidden [*adēlotēti*] riches. This phrasing highlights the anxiety for the future caused by managing wealth. In prior Greek literature, this word often appeared in a setting of anxiety about the future.<sup>24</sup> For example, Polybius writes in *Histories*,

“each in alarm for their own safety owing to the rapidity and secrecy [*adeloteta*] with which the enemy could descend on them by sea.”<sup>25</sup> (Other translations reference the “silence” or “unexpectedness” of the enemy’s arrival.<sup>26</sup>)

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<sup>24</sup> “In secular Greek the term occurs as early as the philosopher Protagoras (fifth century B.C.E.; cf. LSJ s.v. and Freeman, *Ancilla*, p. 126 for a translation of this famous dictum on the existence or not of the gods, knowledge of which is precluded by “the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of the human life”).” [Quinn, J. D., & Wacker, W. C. (2000). *The first and second letters to Timothy: A new translation with notes and commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 548. (Citing Freeman, K. (1948). *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic philosophers. A complete translation of the fragments in Diels’ “Fragmente der Vorsokratiker”* Oxford: Blackwell.)]

<sup>25</sup> Polybius. (1923). *The histories of Polybius*. Loeb Classical Library edition. 5.2.3.

<sup>26</sup> “each would be in alarm for their own safety, because the approach of an enemy by sea is so silent [*adeloteta*] and rapid.” Polybius. (1889). *Histories*. (E. S. Shuckburgh, Trans.). Macmillan Co. 5.2.3; “Polybius 5.2.3 employs the noun for “the swiftness and unexpectedness (*tēn adēlotēta*)” of an enemy’s arrival (*parousias!*) by sea. Plutarch, *De Crasso* 2.4, is most appositely cited by Spicq, *EP*, p.

Here and elsewhere, *adēlotēs* points to anxiety about the future. Plutarch writes in *Camillus*,

“The utterance fell at the crisis of their anxious thought for the uncertain [*adeloteti*] future”.<sup>27</sup>

And in *Alexander*,

“These words, then, deeply affected Alexander, who was reminded of the uncertainty [*adeloteta*] and mutability of life”.<sup>28</sup>

In our passage, Paul contrasts the uncertainty [*adēlotēs*] of buried wealth with the certainty of a future [*mellon*] from our richly providing God. Paul’s older contemporary, the Jewish theologian Philo, makes a similar point. Philo writes,

“For not even about the future [*mellontōn*] can uncertainty [*adēlotēs*] be found with Him, since nothing is uncertain [*adēlon*] or future [*mellon*] to God.”<sup>29</sup>

And also,

“[God] calls upon them to look not only to the present, but ... to consider the future [*mellon*] also ... all things

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576, with its description of the owners of buildings, threatened by fire, letting them go for a song ‘because of fear and uncertainty (*dia phobon kai adēlotēta*).” [Quinn, J. D., & Wacker, W. C. (2000). *The first and second letters to Timothy: A new translation with notes and commentary*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 548.]

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch. (1914). *Camillus*, 32.2, in *Plutarch lives, II: Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus* (B. Perrin, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library Edition.

<sup>28</sup> [Plutarch, *Alexander*, 59.3, in *Plutarch Lives, VII, Demosthenes and Cicero. Alexander and Caesar* (B. Perrin, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library Edition.] See also in *Pericles*, “he neither undertook of his own accord a battle involving much uncertainty [*adeloteta*] and peril, nor did he envy and imitate those who took great risks,” [Plutarch, *Pericles*, 18.1, in *Plutarch Lives, Vol. III, Pericles and Fabius Maximus. Nicias and Crassus* (B. Perrin, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library Edition.]; and, “the war actually brought with it much uncertainty [*adeloteta*] and great peril,” [Plutarch, *Pericles*, 28.6, in *Plutarch Lives, Vol. III, Pericles and Fabius Maximus. Nicias and Crassus* (B. Perrin, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library Edition.]

<sup>29</sup> Philo Judaeus. (1988). On the unchangeableness of God. 1.277. In *Philo*, Vol. 3 (F. H. Colson, & G. H. Whitaker, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press.

are subject to ... the uncertainty of the future [*mellontos adēlotēs*].<sup>30</sup>

Philo uses this same phrase elsewhere, such as in

“still the uncertainty of the future [*mellontos adēlotēs*] cannot entirely fail to strike fear into the most courageous”<sup>31</sup> and,

Thus, in both historical and contemporary uses, *adēlotēs* pointed to anxiety about the future [*mellon*]. Paul uses this anxiety to motivate an immediate decision. The uncertainty [*adēlotētī*] about the future of wealth means we must not wait. Now is the opportune moment. Now is the time to diversify into a good investment fund [*themelion kalon*] for the future [*eis to mellon*].

### ***Diversification benefits: Storing up more wealth*** **[*apothēsaurizontas*]**

Paul repeatedly uses wealth language in this passage. These are not income words. These are words for an accumulation of valuable assets. He continues that repetition here.

This phrase begins with *apothēsaurizontas*. This is a compound word: *apo* + *thēsaurizontas*. *Thēsaurizontas* is a form of the verb *thēsaurizō*. It means:

“to gather and lay up, to heap up, store up: to

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<sup>30</sup> Philo Judaeus. (1999). On the virtues. 152. In *Philo*, Vol. 8 (F. H. Colson, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press. p. 256-257.

<sup>31</sup> Philo Judaeus. (1988). Embassy to Gaius. 322. In *Philo*, vol. 10 (F. H. Colson, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press. p. 162-163; *Also*, “reserving nothing save what in provision for the uncertainty of the future [*mellontos adēlotēs*] may fitly be stored in safe-keeping.” Philo Judaeus. (1988). Embassy to Gaius. In *Philo*, vol. 10 (F. H. Colson, Trans.). Loeb Classical Library. Harvard University Press. p. 26-27.

accumulate riches.”<sup>32</sup>

The noun form is *thēsauros*. It means a treasure or a treasury.

The prefix *apo-* has two meaning groups. First, it can reference a setting apart or a separation of some part of a whole. This matches the wealth diversification message.

The donors are rich, yes. But they’ve put all their eggs in one basket. And it’s a disappearing basket. Why not move a share of it into this lasting form of treasure? Wouldn’t it be wise to diversify?

This *apo-* prefix can also reference the cause or motivation for something. This sense is described as,

“the cause on account of which anything is or is done” or  
“the moving or impelling cause.”<sup>33</sup>

Some translations will explicitly mention this notion of purpose or cause. Examples include:

- “In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves”<sup>34</sup>
- “In this way storing up for themselves the enduring riches”<sup>35</sup>
- “By doing this they will be storing up their treasure”<sup>36</sup>
- “By doing this they store up a treasure for themselves”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 290.

<sup>33</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 57-59.

<sup>34</sup> New International Version; See also “In this way they will store up for themselves a treasure” (Good News Translation); “In this way they will save up a treasure for themselves” (New English Translation Bible).

<sup>35</sup> Amplified Bible

<sup>36</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>37</sup> International Standard Version; GOD’S WORD® Translation



- “thus storing up treasure for themselves”<sup>38</sup>
- “To lay up in store for themselves”<sup>39</sup>

Others leave out this explicit reference. Nevertheless, the cause-effect relationship is still clear.<sup>40</sup> It comes from the context of the passage itself.<sup>41</sup> These examples include:

- “Laying up in store for themselves”<sup>42</sup>
- “storing up for themselves”<sup>43</sup>
- “treasuring up for themselves”<sup>44</sup>
- “storing up for themselves the treasure”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> English Standard Version; *See also* “thus accumulating as treasure” (New American Bible); “thus storing up for themselves the treasure” (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>39</sup> Douay-Rheims Bible

<sup>40</sup> “The participle *apothēsaurizontas* expresses the intended result of the commanded actions (vv. 17-18). More precisely, the participial clause compliments the infinitives listed in verse 18, namely, *agathoergein*, *ploutein en ergois kalois*, and *einai eumetadotous* and *koinōnikous*.” [Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul’s theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 154.]

<sup>41</sup> The cause-effect meaning comes from the context and need not rely on the *apo-* prefix. Thus, choosing to employ *apo-* in the sense of a setting apart or a separation of some part of a whole does not alter the causative nature of the phrase. Consequently, in this context, both the causation and the diversification (setting apart) concepts can be simultaneously employed.

<sup>42</sup> King James Version; English Revised Version; New Heart English Bible; Webster’s Bible Translation; World English Bible; *See also*, “‘laying up in store’ is all one word in the Greek, *apothēsaurizontas*. It comes from *thesauros*, which first meant ‘a treasury’ and then ‘a treasure.’” [Ensey, J. R. (1990). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on I & II Timothy & Titus*. Word Aflame Press. (Citing Earle, R. (1986). *Word meanings in the New Testament*. Baker Book House. p. 400.)]

<sup>43</sup> New King James Version; Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; American Standard Version; Weymouth New Testament

<sup>44</sup> Berean Standard Bible; Berean Literal Bible; Majority Standard Bible; *See also* “treasuring up to themselves” in Literal Standard Bible and Young’s Literal Translation.

<sup>45</sup> New American Standard Bible; Legacy Standard Bible

- “storing for themselves the treasury”<sup>46</sup>

Again, Paul’s message is not simply, “Give!” That message emphasizes loss. It fights against the natural inclinations of accumulators. Instead, Paul directs them to *apothēsaurontas*. This directs them

“to gather and lay up, to heap up, store up: to accumulate riches.”<sup>47</sup>

It directs them to

“lay something aside for the purpose of preserving, and therefore collect.”<sup>48</sup>

This matches the accumulator personality. It speaks the language of the rich. It uses their inherent tendencies for good.

### ***Diversification benefits: Enjoy storing it up*** **[*apothēsaurontas*]**

The purpose of God’s rich supply is “for enjoyment.” Previous chapters explain how this enjoyment is achieved by using wealth

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

However, this enjoyment also applies to “storing up for themselves.” This, too, is a means of enjoying wealth. Some hint of this notion comes from an early manuscript.

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<sup>46</sup> Hart’s The New Testament: A Translation [Hart, D. B. (2023). *The New Testament: A translation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Yale University Press. p. 422.]

<sup>47</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 290.

<sup>48</sup> Huther, J. E. (1885). *Critical and exegetical hand-book to the epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Vol. 9, D. Hunter, Trans.). Funk & Wagnalls. p. 237. Referencing *apothēsauroizein* in 1 Timothy 6:19.

The second oldest appearance of the passage is in the Codex Alexandrinus. It is dated as early as 390 A.D.<sup>49</sup> Here, a small raised dot appears after *apolausin*, *agathoergein*, *kalois*, and *koinōnikous*. This generally indicates a pause or slight break. It could match the modern colon, comma, semicolon, or bullet point. Using bullet points, this would read as

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy:

- To do good
- To be rich in good works
- To be generous and ready to share
- Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future

Thus, “storing up” is one of the “bullet points” that explains “for enjoyment.” It, too, is a means of wealth enjoyment.

Storing up in this way can be even more enjoyable than storing up earthly riches. The miser stores up what he will never enjoy. Those riches are stored only to be lost to death or misfortune. Paul’s “treasuring up” is more enjoyable. It’s more secure. It leads to lasting enjoyment.

Accumulating for the future can be enjoyable. That’s especially true for this group. Saving, rather than spending, is their natural tendency. It’s why they became or stayed wealthy. Paul’s message matches. It says, “Save up for the future!” This might not appeal to everyone. But it does appeal to the accumulators. It does appeal to the rich.

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<sup>49</sup> “Codex A was certainly written a generation after Codex X and B, but it may still belong to the fourth century; it cannot be later than the beginning of the fifth.” [Scrivener, F. H. A. (1875). *Six lectures on the text of the New Testament and the ancient manuscripts which contain it*. Deighton, Bell & Co. p. 54.]

Paul’s message matches their natural tendencies. It just redirects them. It moves them to a more lasting accumulation.<sup>50</sup> It uses their natural “storing up” sensibilities. It doesn’t ask them to give away. It asks them to “store up” in a better way.

***Diversification benefits: It’s for you! [heautois]***

Paul has been listing a series of donor benefits. The donors are supposed to enjoy their wealth. That’s what it’s for [*eis apolausin*]. That’s the reason God gave it to them. They get to enjoy it in several ways:

- They get to enjoy making an intrinsically good impact. They get “to do good” [*agathoergein*].
- They get to enjoy the accumulated status from many visibly good impacts. They get to be rich in good works [*ploutein en ergois kalois*].
- They get to enjoy the act of sharing itself because this is joyful sharing. Their identity becomes that of a joyful/abundance sharer [*eumetadotous einai*].
- They get to enjoy bonding with a mutually reciprocal fellowship community. Their identity becomes that of a fellowship-community sharer [*einai koinōnikous*].

Now, Paul describes yet another donor benefit. This one is different. It’s not shared with others. It’s just for the donor. It’s a personal benefit.<sup>51</sup> As a result of their giving, they get to

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<sup>50</sup> Paul directs treasuring up [*apothēsaurozontas*] this lasting accumulation in contrast with the uncertainty and disappearing [*adēlotēti*] nature of wealth. James goes further and, in his characteristically negative tone, writes of the unrighteous wealthy that they have treasured up [*ethēsauroisate*], not simply wealth to be lost, but that their gold and silver “have corroded, and their corrosion will serve as a testimony against you and will consume your flesh like fire” (James 5:3).

<sup>51</sup> “The phrase ‘for themselves’ emphasizes that generous givers may imagine that they are helping others, but they also are storing up significant personal benefits.”

lay up treasure [*apothēsaurozontas*]. They do this *heautois* – “for themselves.”<sup>52</sup>

Paul’s language matches modern experimental research. Emphasizing donor benefits is particularly attractive for high-status donors.<sup>53</sup> Further, donor benefits work best when they’re in the distant future.<sup>54</sup> An immediate tit-for-tat trade doesn’t work well. It feels more like a market transaction. It’s not framed as a gift, so it doesn’t encourage sharing.

Paul uses a long list of donor benefits. He does it in his own fundraising appeals in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. He does it in this passage, too. That includes this specific phrase. And he’s not subtle. They’re not only storing up treasure. They’re storing up treasure, explicitly “for themselves.”

This donor benefit list makes sense as a “sales” technique. But it’s even more important theologically. Paul is in a two-front theological battle. On one side, he’s fighting the destructive greed of endless accumulation. On the other side, he’s fighting asceticism.

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[Lea, T. D. & Griffin, H. P. (1992). *The new American commentary: 1, 2 Timothy; Titus* (Vol. 34). Broadman Press. p. 176.]

<sup>52</sup> “As a dative plural reflexive pronoun, *heautois* fits within the category of the dative of advantage or disadvantage. The context makes it clear in this case that it is the dative of advantage. If the wealthy follow the apostolic imperatives to perform good works, to be generous, to be willing to share, and to be rich in good works, they will lay up ‘for themselves’ *themelion kalon*.” [Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul’s theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 156.] For a discussion of this form of dative, see Porter, S. E. (1999). *Idioms of the Greek New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Biblical Languages: Greek 2). Sheffield Academic. p. 98. 2.5.2. *Advantage or disadvantage*.

<sup>53</sup> Ye, N., Teng, L., Yu, Y., & Wang, Y. (2015). “What’s in it for me?” The effect of donation outcomes on donation behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(3), 480-486.

<sup>54</sup> Ye, N., Teng, L., Yu, Y., & Wang, Y. (2015). “What’s in it for me?” The effect of donation outcomes on donation behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(3), 480-486.

In asceticism, the ideal donor is the suffering donor. If there's no suffering, it's not a good gift. Scripture teaches the opposite. God loves a cheerful, "hilariously" joyful [*hilaron*] giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving is even happier [*makarion*] than receiving a gift. (Acts 20:35). It's supposed to fulfill God's purpose of richly providing us all things for "party-time" enjoyment [*apolausin*]. (1 Timothy 6:17).

Emphasizing donor benefit destroys the egoism of ascetic giving. The ascetic giver is proud of his suffering. He "pays for" his righteous status by his financial severity to himself. His giving is voluntary suffering to show just how spiritual he is.

Paul's message destroys this ascetic approach. The egoism of the ascetic's giving falls apart if we give because it's fun, joyful, and enjoyable. This message says,

"Why bury wealth just to lose it either during life or at death? That's painful and depressing. Don't do that! Instead, you should enjoy it. That's why God gave it to you!"

The ascetic's prideful suffering can't fit here. Giving is just the best way to enjoy wealth.

Paul adds to these benefits here. These now and future benefits are explicitly for the donors. They are *heautois* – "for themselves." He offers donors the best deal ever. Paul's long list of donor benefits opposes the ascetic ideal of the suffering donor.

***Diversification benefits: Store up even more for yourself! [themelion]***

Normally, giving feels like giving away. It involves a loss. It's a tradeoff between the pain of this loss and the impact of

the gift. Paul reverses this loss framing. He replaces it with gain framing.

The donors do not give away. Instead, they store up.<sup>55</sup> They become rich. They become rich in different ways. They become “rich in good works.” They are

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

One translation renders this as

“this is the way they can amass a good capital sum for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).<sup>56</sup>

As Professor Aida Spencer explains,

“By the rich sharing their riches, they would now be contributing to a different kind of bank account, one that truly helped for the future in order that they might grasp the real life (6:19).”<sup>57</sup>

The donors don’t have to lose the wealth to enjoy it. They enjoy it by building up even more wealth in more diverse ways. They enjoy wealth by being rich in visibly good [*kalois*] works. This results in a visibly good [*kalon*] foundation. One

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<sup>55</sup> “Giving and sharing sounds like losing out and having less for yourself. Paul says it’s like storing up and planning wisely for the future.” [Virgo, T. (2011). *The spirit-filled church: Finding your place in God’s purpose*. Monarch Books. p. 95.]

<sup>56</sup> New Jerusalem Bible; See also “they can save up a good capital sum for the future” [Reinhardt, J. (2021). “God, who giveth us richly”: Wealth, authorship, and audience in 1 Timothy 6. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*, 2(1), 101-114. p. 106.]

<sup>57</sup> [Spencer, A. B. (2013). *1 Timothy: A new covenant commentary*. The Lutterworth Press. p. 162-63]; Professor Raymond Collins writes, “What they would do is to store up for themselves a solid foundation (*themelion kalon*) for their future. In modern terms, they would be investing in their future. What is the yield on this investment? The Pastor says that it is ‘real life.’” Collins, Raymond F. (2002). *I & II Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. p. 172.

commentary explains the connection this way:

“This is a concise expression, which might have been more fully worded thus—Laying up in store for themselves a wealth of good works as a foundation.”<sup>58</sup>

Paul’s argument is not to give away. It’s not to lose wealth. His argument is to enjoy wealth by diversifying it. The choice is not between keeping and losing. The choice is between two investments. One is disappearing. Holding it is stressful. It’s subject to loss at any moment. The other is permanent. Holding it is enjoyable. It’s secure.<sup>59</sup>

***Diversification benefits: The shrewd manager trades a disappearing asset***

Paul argues for diversification of a disappearing asset. So does Jesus. One commentary notes of 1 Timothy 6:17-19,

“One is reminded of that story that the Master told about

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<sup>58</sup> [Ellicott, C. J. (1897). *A New Testament commentary for English readers (Vol. 1)*. Cassell and Company]; Professor George Knight III explains that Jesus “taught that good works show that a person has an indestructible foundation (Matthew 7:25 using the cognate verb *Themelioo*).” [Knight, G. W. III. (1992). *The Pastoral epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. Eerdmans. p. 275.]

<sup>59</sup> Andy Stanley explains, “What is given away cannot be taken away. Money invested in God’s kingdom is immediately out of reach of the most turbulent of economic conditions. It is the most secure of all investments.” [Stanley, A. (2004). *Fields of gold*. Tyndale House. p. 115];

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.” [October 28, 1949 diary entry from Missionary Jim Elliott];

See also “He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose.” [Attributed to Philip Henry (1631-1696) in Harman, A. (2012). *Matthew Henry: His life and influence* [Kindle]. Christian Focus. p. 345-47];

“Charitable Christians are wise merchants, happy users, parting with that which they cannot keep that they may gain that which they cannot lose.” [Brooks, T. (1762). *A cabinet of choice jewels, or, A box of precious ointment*. Robert Smith Bookseller. p. 18.]



the unjust steward, in Luke XVI, 1-9.”<sup>60</sup>

Another explains,

“Perhaps the best commentary on this teaching is Jesus’ parable of the unjust steward or shrewd manager (NIV).”<sup>61</sup>

Jesus tells a story of a steward. He was a wealth manager. And he had just lost his job. He was preparing to leave and give his final accounting. He was losing control of the wealth.

But he was shrewd. So, he converted his disappearing control into something that would last. He converted the assets into reciprocal partnerships. He converted financial capital into relationship capital. He used wealth to buy friends. He said to himself,

“‘I know what I will do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.’ And he summoned each one of his master’s debtors, and he began saying to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ And he said, ‘A hundred jugs of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ And he said, ‘A hundred kors of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’” (Luke 16:4-7).

The manager didn’t just do them a favor. He locked them in as partners. He didn’t simply reduce their debt. Instead, he instructed them to commit fraud. The debtors got a

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<sup>60</sup> King, G. H. (1962). *A leader led: A devotional study of 1 Timothy*. Christian Literature Crusade. p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> Stott, J. W. R. (1996). *The message of 1 Timothy & Titus*. Inter-Varsity Press. p. 162.

financial benefit. But that benefit was contingent upon the manager's silence. This built reciprocal partnerships. He converted disappearing wealth into lasting relationships. He "acted shrewdly." (Luke 16:8).

Jesus wasn't condoning financial fraud. This was not the behavior of "the sons light." (Luke 16:8). But it was clever. It was smart. It was smarter than how "the sons of light" conducted their own stewardship.

We, too, have been placed in temporary control of wealth. We, too, will soon lose our control of it. We, too, could decide to convert it to something permanent. But often we won't. We won't convert the disappearing asset into the lasting one. That's not shrewd. That's not smart stewardship.

Fear causes people to hoard. We grasp wealth tightly because,

"You never know what might happen."

But that's a false statement. We actually do know what will happen. We know it with absolute certainty. We're going to die. Sooner or later, we're going to lose it all.

And what then will have been a wise use of wealth? Burying it? No. That's just dumb. We know we can't take it with us. We need to enjoy it now. And we need a better fund for the future.

We can do both. We can have a better near-term future and a better long-term future. We can enjoy wealth. We can enjoy it by becoming rich in a new way. We can be rich in good works. We can convert disappearing treasure into lasting treasure. We can move money into a better investment. That's a shrewd investment decision.

## ***Conclusion: Diversify your investments***

Paul frames wealth sharing as investment diversification. He discusses it as a form of “saving up.” It’s not losing or giving away wealth. It’s shifting wealth into a better investment. It’s a more secure investment. It’s a more enjoyable investment, both now and later. It’s a good deal.

Paul’s investment language matches the natural inclinations of wealthy donors. One fundraising text explains that business owners who give

“don’t talk in terms of charitable giving, they talk about it as an investment.”<sup>62</sup>

Paul’s language matches this. Paul’s phrasing isn’t about giving money. It’s about investment diversification. It’s about a financial plan that produces the best returns. These are returns paid in impact and enjoyment, both now and later.

It’s a great investment. It has great and lasting benefits. It makes a great and lasting impact. These lasting results are motivational. They motivate major gifts of wealth.

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<sup>62</sup> “Grace reported that young entrepreneurs ‘don’t talk in terms of charitable giving, they talk about it as an investment’.” [Kottasz, R. (2004). How should charitable organisations motivate young professionals to give philanthropically? *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 9(1), 9-27. p. 12, citing to Grace, K. S. (2000). *High impact philanthropy*. John Wiley and Sons. New York.] Indeed, Grace repeatedly uses the term “donor-investor” to describe major donors who can make transformational gifts.

### PART III:

#### PAUL'S DEATH REMINDERS TRIGGER PERMANENCE DESIRES

(Message 13: You're making an investment with real permanence!)

### ***Wealth management and death***

In 1 Timothy 6, Paul's message about wealth focuses on enjoyment. But it starts with death. It's an obvious reality. We're going to die. We're going to die, and we can't take any wealth with us.<sup>1</sup> Our wealth holding is temporary. It might be ours at this moment. But it's not ours to keep.

Jesus shared this same message about wealth holding. He shared it in the Parable of the Rich Fool.<sup>2</sup> He shared it in

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<sup>1</sup> James begins with a similar death focus for the wealthy in James 1:10-11, "But the one who is rich should exult in his low position, because he will pass away like a flower of the field. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its flower falls and its beauty is lost. So, too, the rich man will fade away in the midst of his pursuits." (Berean Standard Bible). Here, the word for "pass away" [*pareleusetai*] also means to perish. The word for "fade away" [*maranthēsetai*] also means to die.

James directs the rich not only to focus on their mortality, but depending on the translation, they are to "exult in," "be glad," "boast in," "glory in," "take pride in," or "rejoice in" their low position resulting from their mortality. How does this make sense? 1 Timothy 6 explains how. The anxiety, stress, and suffering of those trying to protect and grow their wealth, described in 1 Timothy 6:10, can be extreme. An antidote to this stress is recognizing that it's all passing away and disappearing anyway. The question is not if you are going to lose your wealth; the question is merely how you are going to lose your wealth. The focus on mortality in 1 Timothy 6 can free the wealthy person to enjoy their wealth rather than anxiously hoarding it just to inevitably die with it buried in the ground. Facing mortality can free them from the suffering of pointless wealth hoarding (v. 10) and instead replace it with meaningful wealth enjoyment (v. 17-19). The result of facing their mortality is being glad or rejoicing. The anxiety from wealth building disappears because we recognize "that being rich in this present age means almost nothing in light of eternity. In the end, it's just not that big a deal." [Dillehay, T. (2018). *Seeing green: Don't let envy color your joy*. Harvest House Publishers. p. 104.]

<sup>2</sup> Luke 12:13-21

the Parable of the Minas.<sup>3</sup> He shared it in the Parable of the Talents.<sup>4</sup>

In each parable, the fool is blessed with wealth. In each, he just puts it in storage. On his way to a disastrous ending, the fool always thinks he is doing well. He thinks he is being prudent and even wise.

But the fool ignores an unavoidable reality. His wealth holding is temporary. The money might be his for a moment. But it's not his to keep. The master will return. Death will arrive.

### ***Experimental protocols from modern science***

Paul starts his discussion of wealth with a series of death reminders. Today, a branch of experimental psychology focuses on death reminders.<sup>5</sup> It has spawned over 1,000 published experiments.<sup>6</sup> These explore how death reminders affect people's values, preferences, and behaviors.

The main finding is that death reminders produce two stages of response. The immediate, first-stage, "proximal" response is avoidance. People prefer to avoid the topic or deny its relevance for them.

The later, second-stage, "distal" response takes more

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 19:11-27

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 25:14-30

<sup>5</sup> Terror Management Theory

<sup>6</sup> For example, this review analyzes 818 published studies while excluding 578 others: Chen, L., Benjamin, R., Lai, A., & Heine, S. (2022). Managing the terror of publication bias: A comprehensive p-curve analysis of the Terror Management Theory literature. *PsyArXiv Preprints*.

time. It emerges only “after delay and distraction.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, the standard protocol to measure these distal response to death reminders is

1. Induce mortality salience (death reminders).
2. Have participants engage in a brief unrelated topic or task.
3. Measure the distal responses.

A review of hundreds of such experiments explains,

“The vast majority of experiments (92.8%) used a delay or distraction task between the MS [Mortality Salience] manipulation and the administration of the DV [Dependent Variable].”<sup>8</sup>

The intervening non-death topic or task only takes a few minutes.<sup>9</sup> But this step is mandatory. Without it, the experiments won’t work. The distal responses won’t be

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<sup>7</sup> Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., & Solomon, S. (1999). A dual-process model of defense against conscious and unconscious death-related thoughts: An extension of terror management theory. *Psychological Review*, 106(4), 835-845.

<sup>8</sup> [Burke, B. L., Martens, A., & Faucher, E. H. (2010). Two decades of terror management theory: A meta-analysis of mortality salience research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 155-195. p. 179.] The authors explain that after introducing the death topic, “Participants then typically complete one or two distraction questionnaires before finally completing a dependent measure that taps their distal death defenses.” (p. 156).

<sup>9</sup> These distraction questionnaires take only a few minutes to complete. Authors of a meta-analysis explain, “The most common delay task (47.7%) was the Positive and Negative Affective Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) or its expanded form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1992)” [Burke, B. L., Martens, A., & Faucher, E. H. (2010). Two decades of terror management theory: A meta-analysis of mortality salience research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 155-195. p. 179.] Note that even the expanded form typically takes less than 10 minutes. The manual explains, “Most subjects complete the entire 60-item schedule in 10 minutes or less” [Watson, D., & Clark, L. A. (1994). *The PANAS-X: Manual for the positive and negative affect schedule-expanded form*. p. 1]; In practice, researchers have administered the expanded form (PANAS-X) with a 2-minute time limit. [Darrell, A. P. (2018). *Die at the right time: Optimal time delays in terror management theory* (Doctoral dissertation). Texas Christian University.]

observed. A review of such experimental research explains,

“Indeed, removal of this delay or distraction has been shown to eliminate the effects of MS [Mortality Salience] on the dependent measures.”<sup>10</sup>

A temporary delay or distraction is required. It’s how we get to the distal responses following death reminders. And what are these distal responses? Different researchers use different names. Some refer to the pursuit of “symbolic immortality” or “lasting social impact.”<sup>11</sup> However, the three most frequently identified results are these:

- An increased desire to support one’s “in-group” (This includes both its people and values.)<sup>12</sup>
- An increased desire for self-esteem and being viewed positively by others (This includes increased attraction to fame,<sup>13</sup> heroism,<sup>14</sup> a positive life story,<sup>15</sup> and compliance with social

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<sup>10</sup> Burke, B. L., Martens, A., & Faucher, E. H. (2010). Two decades of terror management theory: A meta-analysis of mortality salience research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 155-195. p. 156.

<sup>11</sup> James III, R. N. (2016). An economic model of mortality salience in personal financial decision making: Applications to annuities, life insurance, charitable gifts, estate planning, conspicuous consumption, and healthcare. *Journal of Financial Therapy*, 7(2), 62-82.

<sup>12</sup> For reviews of the experimental literature, see, e.g., Routledge, C., & Vess, M. (2018). *Handbook of terror management theory*. Academic Press; Pyszczynski, T., Solomon, S., & Greenberg, J. (2015). Thirty years of terror management theory: From genesis to revelation. In J. M. Olson & M. P. Zanna, *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 52, pp. 1-70). Academic Press; For an example set of experiments, see, e.g., Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V., Paladino, M. P., & Sacchi, S. (2002). I belong, therefore, I exist: Ingroup identification, ingroup entitativity, and ingroup bias. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(2), 135-143.

<sup>13</sup> Greenberg, J., Kosloff, S., Solomon, S., Cohen, F., & Landau, M. (2010). Toward understanding the fame game: The effect of mortality salience on the appeal of fame. *Self and Identity*, 9(1), 1-18.

<sup>14</sup> McCabe, S., Carpenter, R. W., & Arndt, J. (2016). The role of mortality awareness in hero identification. *Self and Identity*, 15(6), 707-726.

<sup>15</sup> Landau, M. J., Greenberg, J., & Sullivan, D. (2009). Defending a coherent autobiography: When past events appear incoherent, mortality salience prompts

norms.<sup>16)</sup>

- An increased desire for long-term or permanent impact.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Paul's parallel protocol***

How does modern science match Paul's message? Paul starts with a death reminder in verse 7. This is a soft reminder. Then, his death reminders become harsher and more repetitive in verses 9-10. Then he stops. In verses 11-16, he talks about something else. He introduces a death reminder; then he pauses for a detour.<sup>18</sup>

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compensatory bolstering of the past's significance and the future's orderliness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35(8), 1012-1020.

<sup>16</sup> For a review of 61 studies focused on the effects of death reminders on social norm compliance, see Schindler, S., Hilgard, J., Fritsche, I., Burke, B., & Pfattheicher, S. (2022). Do salient social norms moderate mortality salience effects? A (challenging) meta-analysis of terror management studies. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 27(2) 195-225.

<sup>17</sup> Wade-Benzoni, K. A., Tost, L. P., Hernandez, M., & Larrick, R. P. (2012). It's only a matter of time: Death, legacies, and intergenerational decisions. *Psychological Science*, 23(7), 704-709.

<sup>18</sup> This sequencing has disturbed many. Some call it "choppy and somewhat disorganized." [Long, T. G. (2016). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A theological commentary on the Bible*. [Kindle edition]. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 177.]; others describe the return to the topic of wealth as "jarring" or even "brutal." [Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 118; Käseman, E. (1972). *Essias exégétiques*. Delachaux et Niestlé. p. 112.] Some label 1 Timothy 6:17-19 as a "postscript." [Henry, M. (1935). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible* (Vol. 6). Fleming H. Revell Publishers. p. 831.]; others call it "out of place." [Bush, P. G. (1990). A note on the structure of 1 Timothy. *New Testament Studies*, 36(1), 152-156. p. 155.]; some see this sequencing as evidence that it was a later addition. [See, e.g., Easton, B. S. (1948). *The Pastoral Epistles: Introduction, translation, commentary and word studies*. SCM Press. p. 170; Miller, J. D. (1997). *The pastoral letters as composite documents* (Vol. 93). Cambridge University Press. p. 94; Spicq, C. (1969). *Saint Paul: Les épîtres pastorales* (4th ed.). Gabalda. p. 575.].

This pause and return sequencing is not new. It mirrors Solomon's in Ecclesiastes. Solomon discusses wealth contentment and discontentment at length in Ecclesiastes 2. He then leaves the topic only to return to it later in Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:10. But immediately before returning to the topic, Solomon discusses the nature and characteristics of God in Ecclesiastes 5:1-9. He charges the reader to fulfill his responsibilities to God. In 1 Timothy 6:11-16, Paul does exactly the same thing. Paul's message about wealth mirrors Solomon's message. It does so both in content and in structure.



In modern experimental research, this sequence leads to these distal responses:

- An increased support for one's "in-group" and its values
- An increased desire for self-esteem and being viewed positively by others
- An increased desire for permanent, lasting impact

Notice the parallel arguments Paul then makes to encourage wealth sharing. He explains,

- Wealth sharing supports one's "in-group" and its values.
  - Giving is sharing with one's fellowship community: *koinōnikous*.
  - Giving reflect values of not being separated from or "above" the group: not high-minded [*mē hypselophronein*].
  - Giving follows the mutual community norm of sharing whatever God has richly supplied to each of "us."
- Wealth sharing leads to self-esteem and being viewed positively by others.
  - Giving makes the donor the one who accomplishes intrinsically good work [*agathoergein*].
  - Giving results in becoming personally rich in works that are "good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so" [*ergois kalois*]<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Ergois kalois* [good works] from *kalos*, "beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so." [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com).]

- Giving demonstrates not being high-minded or “above” the group.
- Giving modifies one’s identity statement [*einai*] as being a good sharer [*eumetadotous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnikous*].
- Wealth sharing converts disappearing wealth into permanent, lasting impact.
  - Giving is “storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.”
  - Not giving is foolishly setting hope on the “uncertainty of riches” held only briefly “in the now time.”

Paul’s message matches how modern science would increase attraction to these specific arguments.<sup>20</sup> It matches the sequence and timing of modern experimental psychology.

### ***The science of opening obliquely***

Paul begins the conversation by bringing up death. What does modern research tell us about how to do this? Starting too bluntly can result in losing the audience. People often respond to such death reminders with avoidance.

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<sup>20</sup> For studies showing the positive effects of mortality salience on charitable giving using a similar experimental sequence, see, e.g., Jin, S. V., & Ryu, E. (2022). “The greedy I that gives”—The paradox of egocentrism and altruism: Terror management and system justification perspectives on the interrelationship between mortality salience and charitable donations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 56(1), 414-448; Jonas, E., Schimel, J., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (2002). The Scrooge effect: Evidence that mortality salience increases prosocial attitudes and behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(10), 1342-1353; Wade-Benzoni, K. A., Tost, L. P., Hernandez, M., & Larrick, R. P. (2012). It’s only a matter of time: Death, legacies, and intergenerational decisions. *Psychological Science*, 23(7), 704-709.

For example, people are more willing to,

- “Make a gift to charity in my last will & testament,”

than to

- “Make a gift to charity in my last will & testament that will take effect at my death.”<sup>21</sup>

People are more willing to buy an annuity paying,

- “each year you live,”

than to buy one paying,

- “each year you live until you die.”<sup>22</sup>

This isn’t just a matter of word preference. Statistically, this reduced interest comes entirely from a spike in mortality salience.<sup>23</sup>

Starting with death words can trigger avoidance. Beginning less directly softens this avoidance response. This might use non-death or death-adjacent euphemisms, synonyms, pretexts, or lead-in topics.

Leading with a blunt death reference is like a “stop” sign. For most people, this doesn’t work. Approaching more obliquely creates a softer “merge” sign. It tamps down the initial avoidance response. This allows for a continuing

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<sup>21</sup> James, R. N., III. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27, 998-1011.

<sup>22</sup> Salisbury, L. C., & Nenkov, G. Y. (2016). Solving the annuity puzzle: The role of mortality salience in retirement savings decumulation decisions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 26(3), 417-425.

<sup>23</sup> Salisbury, L. C., & Nenkov, G. Y. (2016). Solving the annuity puzzle: The role of mortality salience in retirement savings decumulation decisions. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 26(3), 417-425; See also the increase in mortality salience resulting from this word choice in Williams, J. A., & James, R. N. (2019). Bequest provision preferences in commercial annuities: An experimental test of the role of mortality salience. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, 30(1), 121-131.

conversation. It opens the door for a gradually more direct discussion of mortality.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, using a non-death pretext to introduce mortality reminders is part of standard research protocols. A highly cited review of such research explains,

“In the typical MS [Mortality Salience] study, participants complete a packet of questionnaires **ostensibly for the purpose of assessing personality**. However, embedded within this packet, participants are asked to briefly write either about their own death or about a non-death-related (often negative) control topic.”<sup>25</sup> (Emphasis added.)

The use of non-death pretexts, euphemisms, and synonyms, as well as less blunt language makes the message more attractive. Anything that initially softens the harsh reality, including humor,<sup>26</sup> increases audience engagement.

### ***Paul’s oblique opening***

Does Paul use any of these modern strategies when introducing the topic of death? Actually, he uses all of them. He begins with a non-death topic. He’s talking about financial contentment. (1 Timothy 6:6). To explain financial

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<sup>24</sup> For example, trying to motivate completion of living will documents using more threatening, death-focused presentations didn’t work as well as presenting on the broader topic of “healthy aging.” [Payne, K. L., Prentice-Dunn, S., & Allen, R. S. (2009). A comparison of two interventions to increase completion of advance directives. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 33(1), 49-61.]

<sup>25</sup> Burke, B. L., Martens, A., & Faucher, E. H. (2010). Two decades of terror management theory: A meta-analysis of mortality salience research. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14(2), 155-195. p. 156.

<sup>26</sup> Hackney, C. H. (2011). The effect of mortality salience on the evaluation of humorous material. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 151(1), 51-62.

contentment, he uses a soft death reminder. In 1 Timothy 6:7, he explains,

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.”

This is a death reference. But it’s not harsh. Instead, it’s a quotable catchline.<sup>27</sup> It’s an almost humorous reference to the obvious. It alludes to a well-worn phrase. We’re familiar with the modern phrase,

“You can’t take it with you when you die.”<sup>28</sup>

So was Paul’s audience. They were familiar with it because it comes from the Psalms. Psalm 49:17 describes the rich man with

“he cannot take it with him when he dies.” (Good News Translation).

Or, more literally,

“For when he dies he will carry nothing away;” (ESV).

Paul starts with death. But he introduces the topic as softly as possible. It’s a light and breezy reference. His “soundtrack” matches. It’s even a bit lyrical. His euphonious parallel is:

- ***eisē-nen-kamen*** [we brought in]
- ***exe-nen-kein*** [we carry out]

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<sup>27</sup> Polycarp quotes this line in his letter to the Philippians in the early second century. [See Lookadoo, J. (2017). Polycarp, Paul, and the letters to Timothy. *Novum Testamentum*, 59(4), 366-383.]

<sup>28</sup> A Google search showed over a half million results from this phrase in quotations.

Indeed, the matching sound parallels go even further. The word sequence here is

- ***ouden gar***
  - ***eisē-nen-kamen***
  - ***eis ton kosmon***
    - ***hoti***
- ***oude***
  - ***exe-nen-kein***
    - ***ti***

These are pleasant poetical sounds. They use soft vowel beginnings. It's beautiful. And yet, Paul is referencing death.

### ***Paul's escalating death reminders***

Once introduced, Paul doesn't let it go. After referencing contentment in verse 8, he returns to the theme of death. In verses 9-10, he uses eight death-related words:

“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap [*pagida*], and many foolish and harmful [*blaberas*] desires which plunge [*bythizousin*] people into ruin [*olethron*] and destruction [*apōleian*]. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil [*kakōn*], and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced [*periepeiran*] themselves with many griefs [*odynais*].” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

The death connections appear a bit in the English words. They're more blatant in Greek. These words (emphasis added) are

- *Pagida* “trap”  
 “a. properly, of snares in which birds are entangled and caught.  
 b. [as a trope or figure of speech], a snare, i.e. whatever brings peril, loss, destruction: of a sudden and unexpected **deadly peril**”.<sup>29</sup>
- *Blaberas* “harmful”  
 injurious, hurtful. Mark 16:18a, “they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any **deadly poison**, it will not harm [*blapsē*] them;”.
- *Bythizousin* “plunge”  
 Frequently translated here as “**drown**.”<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., “hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition.” (ASV); “harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them.” (CEV); “which pull them down to ruin and destruction.” (GNT).
- *Olethron* “ruin”  
 ruin, doom, destruction, **death**. “From a primary *ollumi* (to destroy; a prolonged form); ruin, i.e. **Death**, punishment -- destruction.  
 from (Homer), Herodotus down, destructive, **deadly**”.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 472.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., English Revised Version; King James Version; New King James Version; World English Bible; Webster’s Bible Translation; Tyndale Bible of 1526; Coverdale Bible of 1535; Bishops’ Bible of 1568; Geneva Bible of 1587.

<sup>31</sup> Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 443.

- *Apōleian* “destruction”  
destruction, ruin, loss, **perishing**. From *apollymi*, “**to die**, with the implication of ruin and destruction”.<sup>32</sup> In the KJV (from *Textus Receptus*), “It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man **to die** [*apōleian*]” Acts 25:16b. Also, in Acts 8:20b “May your silver **perish** [*apōleian*] with you”.
- *Kakōn* “evil”  
bad, evil. “Don’t **kill** [*kakōn*] yourself” Acts 16:28b (NLT). In other versions, “harm” or “injure.”
- *Periepeiran* “pierced”  
to put on a spit, hence, to pierce. **Impaled**.<sup>33</sup> “he impaled [*periepeiranta*] on his spear and thrust on high the head of an aged man,” (Plutarch, Galba 27.3).
- *Odynais* “griefs”  
Consuming grief, pain, distress, sorrow.

From the Septuagint: “And it came about, as her soul was departing (for she **died**), that she named him Ben-oni [the son of my sorrow: *odynes*];” (Gen 35:19a); “when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will **die**. So your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant, our father, down to **Sheol** in sorrow [*odynes*].” (Gen 44:31); “The snares of **death** encompassed me and the terrors of **Sheol** came upon me; I found distress and sorrow [*odynēn*].” (Psalm 116:3).

Here, we don’t just get a death-adjacent word. We seemingly get all of them! We get a steady drumbeat of eight

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<sup>32</sup> Louw, J. P. & Nida, E. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains*. United Bible Societies. 1, 23.106.

<sup>33</sup> [Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., & Jones, H. S. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon* (9th ed.). Clarendon Press.]; Regarding the use of *periepeiran* in this verse, “The image is arresting, not to say gruesome.” [Yarbrough, R. W. (2018). *The letters to Timothy and Titus*. Eerdmans. p. 320.]



death-related words. These repetitions drive the concept into the listener’s mind. They ramp up the listener’s attention with repeated “p” plosives.<sup>34</sup>

But even here, there is no blunt use of the actual word death [*thanatos*]. That word appears 120 times in the New Testament, but not here. Similarly, dead [*nekros*] appears 130 times, but not here. The verb “to die” [*apothnēskō*] appears 112 times, but not here. Instead, the words are all death adjacent. They are death-flavored, but without using the word itself.

The approach begins softly. It ramps up through escalating repetition. But these references remain oblique. The ultimate effect is to create a strong death reminder without using the word itself. Once again, Paul’s words match modern research and practice.

### ***Paul’s death-reminder sequencing***

Paul introduces the topic of death with a soft, lyrical aphorism. He pauses for a line. Then he returns with a steady drumbeat of harsh, death-related words. And then the death reminders stop.

For six verses, Paul changes the topic. He stops talking about death. He switches from the pursuit of wealth to the pursuit of godliness. As he does so, he shifts the language from death to life. He references

- “take hold of the eternal life”
- “God, who gives life to all things”

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<sup>34</sup> Verse 9 includes four “p” (Π) plosive words: *ploutein*, *peirasmon*, *pagida*, *pollas*, and three vowel-softened “p” plosive words: *epithymias*, *apōleian*, and *empiptousin*. Verse 10 includes *pantōn*, *pisteōs*, *periepeiran*, *pollais*, along with *apeplanēthēsan* and *apo*. In both verses, 30% of the words begin with these types of “p” plosives.

- “who alone possesses immortality”
- “To Him be honor and eternal dominion”

After this long discussion, Paul then returns to the topic of wealth in 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

This sequencing has disturbed many. Some call it “choppy and somewhat disorganized.”<sup>35</sup> Others describe the return to the topic of wealth as “jarring”<sup>36</sup> or even “brutal.”<sup>37</sup> Some label 1 Timothy 6:17-19 as a “postscript.”<sup>38</sup> Others call it “out of place.”<sup>39</sup> Some see this sequencing as evidence that it was a later addition.<sup>40</sup>

And yet, this sequencing matches modern science. It matches current protocols on eliciting distal responses following death reminders. These mandate an intervening delay or distraction task before returning to the subject.

### ***Paul’s message and modern science***

In modern experimental research, the results are clear. Death reminders, after a pause or distraction task, increase attraction to

- Making a lasting impact

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<sup>35</sup> Long, T. G. (2016). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A theological commentary on the Bible*. [Kindle edition]. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 177.

<sup>36</sup> Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 118.

<sup>37</sup> Käseman, E. (1972). *Essias exégétiques*. Delachaux et Niestlé. p. 112.

<sup>38</sup> Henry, M. (1935). *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible* (Vol. 6). Fleming H. Revell Publishers. p. 831.

<sup>39</sup> Bush, P. G. (1990). A note on the structure of 1 Timothy. *New Testament Studies*, 36(1), 152-156. p. 155.

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., Easton, B. S. (1948). *The Pastoral Epistles: Introduction, translation, commentary and word studies*. SCM Press. p. 170; Miller, J. D. (1997). *The pastoral letters as composite documents* (Vol. 93). Cambridge University Press. p. 94; Spicq, C. (1969). *Saint Paul: Les épîtres pastorales* (4th ed.). Gabalda. p. 575.

- Being remembered fondly
- Supporting one's surviving community or "in-group" including following these social norms

These, of course, are precisely the arguments Paul makes in this passage to encourage generosity.

What would the ideal modern protocol to trigger such motivation look like? It would parallel Paul's exact sequence:

- Start with a non-death topic. (1 Timothy 6:6 - contentment).
- Open with a soft, safe, banal, even humorous death reference. (1 Timothy 6:7).
- Briefly return to the non-death topic. (1 Timothy 6:8 - contentment).
- Come back to the death topic, but this time ramp it up. Continue to reference it obliquely, but now do so repeatedly. (1 Timothy 6:9-10).
- Take a long pause to talk about something else. (1 Timothy 6:11-16).
- At this point, the psychological impact of the second-stage, distal defense will be at its strongest. The desire will be highest for items such as
  - supporting one's community or "in-group" (e.g., sharing, *koinōnikous*, with the fellowship community, *koinōnia*)
  - supporting community or "in-group" values (e.g., not being high-minded; following the shared social norm of using whatever God has richly provided in these ways)

- being fondly remembered  
(e.g., being rich in visible, noble, inspirational, good works)
- making an impact with permanence  
(e.g., storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future)

These are the realities of modern experimental research. This is what works. Even from a purely secular, empirical perspective, Paul's message works.

### ***Why put death in fundraising?***

Paul is delivering a fundraising message about wealth sharing. Why does he introduce death at all? This isn't necessary for normal gifts. This isn't an issue for small social compliance gifts. It's not part of regular gifts from income.

But Paul is not discussing those types of gifts here. He is describing the ministry of major gift fundraising. It's the ministry of wealth sharing, not income sharing. Major, life-investment gifts of accumulated wealth are different. These start with the big questions. They start with the realities of life and death. Notice the connections:

1. You have extra.

Why? Because you're going to die.

You have more than your normal spending less your normal earnings in your remaining years. You aren't going to live another hundred years. Your personal needs are limited. They're limited by your death. You have more than enough. You have extra.

2. You need to decide what you will do with this extra.

Why? Because you're going to die.

If you don't do something with it, you'll die with it. You'll end up just burying it in the ground. And then you'll have to explain to the one who richly provided it to you why you did so. That story has a bad ending.

3. You should use it to make a lasting impact for good.

Why? Because you're going to die.

You're going to disappear. Your wealth ownership will end. This is certain. The question is what kind of impact will you have made with your temporary wealth ownership? Nothing? Bingeing and personal consumption? Buried wealth leading to family squabbles over money? Or a legacy of beautiful, good works? A reciprocal partnership with God? Taking hold of that which is life indeed?

The major gift from wealth is a matter of "life and death." Wealth holding is always uncertain. But death adds the certainty that wealth holding will end. Death forces the wealth conversation.

Death forces a decision about wealth. It makes enjoying wealth a "right now" choice. (Enjoying wealth means using it to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.) Not deciding what to do with wealth means just giving it to death. Paul says giving it to death makes no sense. You can't take it with you when you die, so use it. Use it to take hold of that which is life indeed.

Paul's model shows us exactly how to effectively introduce this life-and-death topic. These life-and-death questions lead to major gifts of lifetime accumulation. They

work. They're what worked 2,000 years ago. They're what still works today.



## Chapter 16

### **Message 14: You're grabbing the best life experience!**

- *Biblical fundraising offers ultimate value to the donor: The best life experience.*
- *Ordinary fundraising delivers value only to the charity.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [*. Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, **so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.**"<sup>1</sup>

#### PART I

#### EXTREME DONOR BENEFIT

### ***The extreme ending***

Traditional, small-gift fundraising all sounds alike. It uses the same message. It's a message about the charity. The message is this:

"We're great! We do good things. Can we have some money, please?"

This fundraising is about the charity. The charity is the main character. The important story is the charity's story. The important values are the charity's values. The important

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<sup>1</sup> *Tois plousiois en tō nyn aiōni parangelle mē hypsēlophronein mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs eis apolausin, agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai, koinōnikous, apothēsaurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon, **hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs.*** (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized throughout including quotations.)



history is the charity's history. The charity is the actor. The charity has agency. The charity does the good work. The charity has the good reputation. The charity's actions are inspirational. The purpose of fundraising is to benefit the charity.

Paul's fundraising message is different. It's about the donor. The donor is the main character. The important story is the donor's story.<sup>2</sup> The important values are the donor's values.<sup>3</sup> The important history is the donor's history.<sup>4</sup> The donor is the actor. The donor has agency. The donor does the good work.<sup>5</sup> The donor has the good reputation.<sup>6</sup> The donor's actions are inspirational. The purpose of Paul's fundraising is to benefit the donor.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This story includes

- Establishing a backstory [not high-minded and not having placed their hope in the uncertainty/hiddenness of riches but in God]
- That motivates accepting the call to act [God richly provides all things *for enjoyment* – enjoy wealth, don't bury it!],
- Resulting in a victory [to do intrinsically good work, to be rich in visibly good works],
- And a transformed identity internally [to be generous], externally [and ready to share], and permanently [storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future]
- Resulting in living happily ever after [so that they may take hold of that which is truly life]

<sup>3</sup> They are to continue the already in-progress, ongoing process (present infinitive) of not being high-minded or separated from the fellowship community. [*mē hypsēlophronein*].

<sup>4</sup> They have already in the past, but with continuing effect on the present (perfect infinitive), decided not to trust in uncertain/hidden riches but instead to place their trust in God, who richly provides us with all things. [*mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs*].

<sup>5</sup> They are the ones who do good work. [*agathoergein*].

<sup>6</sup> They are the ones who become rich in visible, noble, inspirational good works. [*ploutein en ergois kalois*].

<sup>7</sup> Instead of just “fundraising,” this is a ministry. It's a ministry to the rich. [*Tois plousiōis*]. The motivation for the giving is so that [*apo-* “the cause on account of which anything is or is done” or “the moving or impelling cause”] they will lay up treasure [*-thēsaurizontas*] for themselves [*heautois*]. One commentary labels verse

Paul's fundraising is different. His message is different. It's a message of donor benefit. It's a message of donor agency. Paul consistently repeats these two themes. In this final phrase, both reach their highest extreme. Donor benefit becomes extreme. Donor agency becomes extreme.

***Extreme donor benefit: Real life [ontōs zōēs]***

Paul's fundraising stacks donor benefit upon donor benefit. He does it here in his instructions to Timothy. He does it in his own fundraising appeal.<sup>8</sup> Donor benefit motivates his request. He explains,

“And in this matter I am giving advice because it is profitable for you” (2 Corinthians 8:10a).<sup>9</sup>

Paul's fundraising is explicitly not a command.<sup>10</sup> The donor decides. The donor has agency. Paul simply gives advice,<sup>11</sup> opinion,<sup>12</sup> or counsel.<sup>13</sup> Why is he doing it?

“Because it is profitable for you” (2 Corinthians 8:10b).<sup>14</sup>

“Because it will be helpful for you” (2 Corinthians 8:10b).<sup>15</sup>

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19, “a dazzling incentive.” [Hughes, R. K. & Chapell, B. (2000). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Crossway Books. p. 163.]

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., 2 Corinthians 8:14, 9:6; 9:8; 9:10; 9:11; 9:13; 9:14.

<sup>9</sup> Christian Standard Bible

<sup>10</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:8

<sup>11</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (New Living Translation; King James Version; Christian Standard Bible; Contemporary English Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; New Revised Standard Version; Webster's Bible Translation; World English Bible).

<sup>12</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (New American Standard Bible; Berean Standard Bible; Legacy Standard Bible; Amplified Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; Good News Translation; International Standard Version; Literal Standard Version; Majority Standard Bible; New English Translation (NET) Bible; Weymouth New Testament; Young's Literal Translation).

<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (New American Bible).

<sup>14</sup> Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible

<sup>15</sup> International Standard Version; GOD'S WORD® Translation

He does it because it is profitable,<sup>16</sup> good,<sup>17</sup> or helpful<sup>18</sup> for the donors. It is to their advantage.<sup>19</sup> It benefits them.<sup>20</sup>

1 Timothy 6:17-19 has a laundry list of donor benefits.<sup>21</sup> Giving is a means of enjoying wealth. Donors get to have an

- Enjoyable impact: “To do good.” They make a meaningful, intrinsically good impact.
- Enjoyable status: “To be rich in good works.” They accumulate a large collection of noble, inspirational, externally visible good works.
- Enjoyable personal identity: “To be generous.” They have an identity as a good (joyful/abounding, ready/willing, and abundant/rich) sharer.
- Enjoyable social identity: “And ready to share.” They connect more deeply with a reciprocal, mutually supportive, fellowship community.
- Enjoyable future security: “Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.” Their benefits continue indefinitely.

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (Berean Literal Bible; Legacy Standard Bible; Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; Douay-Rheims Bible).

<sup>17</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (New Living Translation).

<sup>18</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (Berean Standard Bible; Majority Standard Bible; International Standard Version; GOD’S WORD® Translation).

<sup>19</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (New American Standard Bible; New King James Version; Amplified Bible; New English Translation (NET) Bible).

<sup>20</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:10 (English Standard Version).

<sup>21</sup> This donor-benefit approach to giving is not unique to Paul. Professor Patrick Chastenet explains, “we thus find again here a recurring theme of the Bible, from the Old Testament to the first epistle to Timothy: The gift enriches the one who gives.” [Chastenet, P. (2022). *Giving under God’s gaze: Figures of the gift in the Bible and in the work of Jacques Ellul*. In J. M. Rollison (Eds.), *Jacques Ellul and the Bible: Towards a hermeneutic of freedom* (pp. 168-188). The Lutterworth Press. p. 171.]

And finally, in this last section, Paul lists the greatest donor benefit of all. What is it? It's "*ontōs zōēs.*" *Zōēs* is life. Donors get life. They get *ontōs* life.

What is *ontōs* life? It's translated in various ways. Some versions use "true":

- "true life"<sup>22</sup>
- "life that is true life"<sup>23</sup>
- "the life which is true life"<sup>24</sup>

Others use "truly":

- "the life that is truly life"<sup>25</sup>
- "that which is truly life"<sup>26</sup>
- "what is truly life"<sup>27</sup>

Some use life "indeed":

- "life which is life indeed"<sup>28</sup>
- "that which is life indeed"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> New Living Translation; Aramaic Bible in Plain English; Contemporary English Version; Douay-Rheims Bible; Catholic Public Domain Version; Lamsa Bible.

Professor Linda Belleville explains, "The dividends received are "experiencing true life" (v. 19). A Scrooge-like mentality may facilitate our continued earthly existence, but it does not lead to life as God intended — abundant, eternal life." [Belleville, L. (2017). Investments for abundant life. In J. S. Duvall & V. Verbrugge (Eds.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to inspire and instruct*. Zondervan Academic. p. 110.]

<sup>23</sup> New American Bible

<sup>24</sup> Good News Translation

<sup>25</sup> New International Version; Amplified Bible.

<sup>26</sup> New American Standard Bible; English Standard Version; Berean Standard Bible; Literal Standard Version; New Heart English Bible.

<sup>27</sup> Christian Standard Bible; New English Translation (NET) Bible.

<sup>28</sup> American Standard Version; English Revised Version; Weymouth New Testament; Godbey New Testament.

<sup>29</sup> NASB 1995; NASB 1977; Legacy Standard Bible.

- “that which is indeed life”<sup>30</sup>

Still others use “really” life:

- “the life that really is life”<sup>31</sup>
- “what life really is”<sup>32</sup>
- “that which is really life”<sup>33</sup>
- “what is really life”<sup>34</sup>
- “life that is real”<sup>35</sup>
- “the real life”<sup>36</sup>

Another uses “genuine life”.<sup>37</sup>

It’s an amazing outcome. It’s the outcome.<sup>38</sup> It’s life. What benefit could be better? Only one thing is better. *Ontōs* life is better. True life, real life, life that is life indeed is better.

*Ontōs* intensifies. It affirms. It confirms amazing, good news. We see this elsewhere in the New Testament. For example,

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<sup>30</sup> Berean Literal Bible

<sup>31</sup> New Revised Standard Version

<sup>32</sup> GOD’S WORD® Translation

<sup>33</sup> Worrell New Testament

<sup>34</sup> Darby Bible Translation

<sup>35</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible; International Standard Version.

<sup>36</sup> Complete Jewish Bible

<sup>37</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1946). *Interpretation of St Paul’s epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Augsburg Fortress. p. 727.

<sup>38</sup> For example, Professor Miroslav Volf and Dr. Matthew Croasmun explain, “Christian faith in its entirety is about flourishing life – good life, true life, or, in biblical terms, ‘abundant life’ (John 10:10) or ‘the life that really is life’ (1 Tim. 6:19). Christian theology should follow suit. Flourishing life should be the encompassing purpose that all theologians’ endeavors serve.” [Volf, M., & Croasmun, M. (2019). *For the life of the world: Theology that makes a difference*. Brazos Press. p. 185]

“So if the Son sets you free, you really [*ontōs*] will be free.” (John 8:36).

“The Lord has really [*ontōs*] risen and has appeared to Simon!” (Luke 24:34).

“God is certainly [*ontōs*] among you.” (1 Corinthians 14:25b).

*Ontōs* separates reality from mere appearance. It’s the real thing. In 1 Timothy, only *ontōs* widows are put on the list for support.<sup>39</sup> The people considered John to be an *ontōs* prophet.<sup>40</sup> *Ontōs* is surely or certainly the real thing. The centurion at the cross declared that Jesus was surely or certainly [*ontōs*] righteous.<sup>41</sup>

Paul ends his list of donor benefits with the most amazing of all. This final benefit is the most extreme. We’ve heard the expression. A person reaches a pinnacle moment. He stops to really enjoy it. And he says, “This is the life!” Or, “This is really living!” There’s a Bible word for that. That’s *ontōs* life.

Except the donor’s *ontōs* life is even more. It’s more because it isn’t just a passing moment. It’s an ongoing, lasting life experience. The donor doesn’t just act once. It’s a continuing lifestyle.<sup>42</sup> It’s an enduring identity.<sup>43</sup> It’s a full

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<sup>39</sup> 1 Timothy 5:3, 5, 16

<sup>40</sup> Mark 11:32

<sup>41</sup> Luke 23:47

<sup>42</sup> “The rich (who by definition have much) are *to be rich in good deeds*. They are to have a large quantity of them, just as they have a large quantity of money or property. In other words, they are to keep on doing good. This has been implied already in the present infinitive but it is here brought out into the open. They are to keep on doing good – many times.” [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 123.]

<sup>43</sup> The adjectives “generous,” from *eumetadotous*, and “ready to share,” from *koinōnikous*, both modify the donor’s “I am” verb, *einai*. This word translated “to

life.<sup>44</sup>

This passage gives a long list of donor benefits. *Ontōs* life not only surpasses them, it also encompasses them. *Ontōs* life includes having

- An enjoyable impact
- An enjoyable status
- An enjoyable personal identity
- An enjoyable social identity
- A secure future

Now that’s really life! That’s truly life. That’s life indeed. That’s *ontōs* life.

### ***Extreme donor benefit: Life now and later***

Paul here uses “truly” [*ontōs*] life. He could have used “eternal” [*aiōniou*] life. In fact, he uses that phrase just a few sentences earlier in 1 Timothy 6:12.<sup>45</sup> But not here. In verse 12,

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be,” *einai*, is the present infinitive active of *eimi* – I exist, I am. These are identity statements. They describe who the donor is being.

<sup>44</sup> Gary Inrig writes, “Generous people also ‘take hold of the life that is truly life.’ *Wise stewardship lays hold of life*. We hear people say, ‘This is the good life. This is really living!’ Often that describes a time of special self-indulgence. There is such as thing as real life, and it refers to living life at its fullest here and now in a way that is consistent with God’s promises for eternity. As Paul wrote earlier in this letter, ‘Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come’ (1 Timothy 4:8). There is a richness to life when we use the abilities and resources that God has made available to us to make a difference in the lives of other people. And there is a huge difference between living with a thirst for pleasure and living with a sense of purpose. The richest times in life come when we use our money to further God’s kingdom. That is real living, and its value extends far beyond the present world into eternity.” Inrig, G. (2015). *True North: Discovering God’s way in a changing world*. Our Daily Bread Publishing.

<sup>45</sup> 1 Timothy 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life [*aiōniou zōēs*] to which you were called, and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Paul tells Timothy to

*Epilabou tēs aiōniou zōēs*  
“take hold of the eternal life”

But in verse 19, he tells Timothy to instruct the rich to

*Epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs*  
“take hold of that which is truly life”

*Ontōs* life is both now and later. It starts right now. It continues into the future. It can include heaven. But it’s not only heaven. It’s also tomorrow. It’s also next week.

Jesus taught the same thing. He, too, combined both immediate and later rewards. One researcher explains,

“Jesus promised the rich man a hundredfold provision now (Mark 10:30) as well as treasure in heaven and eternal life (Mark 10:21, 30). Likewise, those who obey the command to the wealthy in 1 Timothy 6:19 grasp life now and are promised a treasure of a sure foundation for the future.”<sup>46</sup>

Does “that which is truly life” include “eternal life?”  
Yes.<sup>47</sup> It’s heaven, but it’s also here. It’s later, but it’s also right now.

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<sup>46</sup> Hoag, G. G. (2013). *The teachings on riches in 1 Timothy in light of Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Bristol. p. 255.

<sup>47</sup> The four common interpretation approaches to this ending section of the passage are, (1) It is not referring to heavenly rewards at all; (2) It is referring to heavenly rewards, but not to salvation; (3) It is referring to salvation, however it is not about earning salvation but rather demonstrating one’s salvation; (4) It is referring to salvation as a result of giving. Approach 4 is inconsistent with the other teachings on salvation in the New Testament. Rejecting this approach removes the validity of such critical comments as, “For the Pastor, the rich have within their bank accounts a pathway towards salvation,” or “it appears from the text that there will always be rich within the assemblies whose best path of salvation is charitable donations.” [Reinhardt, J. (2021). “God, who giveth us richly”: Wealth, authorship, and audience in 1 Timothy 6. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*, 2(1), 101-114. p. 109, 112.]



Describing “life indeed,” Professor Ronald Ward explains,

“The *indeed* calls attention to the life which is real. It is not coming into existence, for it exists already.”<sup>48</sup>

Professor I. Howard Marshall explains,

“Clearly heavenly life is meant, but the phrase includes spiritual life here and now.”<sup>49</sup>

Oxford Professor Walter Lock explains,

“This true life would be laid hold of here and now, as they enter into the true life of love.”<sup>50</sup>

Professor Ken Cukrowski notes,

“In other words, as the rich exercise their generosity in this life, they get a foretaste of eternal life.”<sup>51</sup>

A dissertation on 1 Timothy explains,

“In so doing, the rich will store up future heavenly treasures for themselves. Yet, they will also experience

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<sup>48</sup> Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 124.

<sup>49</sup> Marshal, I. H. (1999). *A critical and exegetical commentary on The Pastoral Epistles*. T & T Clark. p. 674.

<sup>50</sup> Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 75.

<sup>51</sup> [Cukrowski, K. (2005). Women and wealth in 1 Timothy, *Leaven*, 13(1), Article 8. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol13/iss1/8>];

See also, “The final phrase of v. 19, which corresponds closely to ‘take hold of the eternal life’ of v. 12, might well express a present blessing enjoyed by those who follow these injunctions.” [Nute, A. G. (1986). *The Pastoral Epistles*. In F. F. Bruce (Eds.), *The international Bible commentary* (pp. 1472-1497). Zondervan. p. 1484];

“these generous rich people find true life, both on earth and in eternity.” [Barton, B. B., Veerman, D. R., & Wilson, N. (1993). *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 139.]

the joy of generosity in this present age as they ‘take hold of that which is truly life’ (1 Timothy 6:19).”<sup>52</sup>

Finally, Chip Ingram suggests this application:

“That’s what it means to ‘take hold of life that is truly life.’ ... instead of feeling guilty about what God has provided, you can simply be grateful for it, appreciating every opportunity to enjoy His gifts and share them generously with others.”<sup>53</sup>

### ***Extreme donor benefit: A matter of life and death***

Paul’s wealth discussion begins with death. It starts with the use of wealth at death. (1 Timothy 6:7). It continues with the use of wealth causing death and suffering even while we live. (1 Timothy 6:10-11).<sup>54</sup> But it ends with the use of wealth leading to real life.

For Paul, wealth management is a matter of life and death. This is also true for Jesus. Stacking up wealth just to die with it is foolish. Jesus explained this in the Parable of the Rich Fool.

That story ends in death. But it also begins in death. Jesus told the parable because someone had buried his wealth and died with it. This divided a family. Inheritances often do. This family fight over death money prompted Jesus’s story.

The story has a death beginning. It has a death ending. It also has a death middle. Why? Because just holding wealth

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<sup>52</sup> Caldwell, J. W. (2017). *The place of God’s presence: A Biblical theology of 1 Timothy* (Doctoral dissertation). The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 132.

<sup>53</sup> Ingram, C. (2021). *I choose peace: How to quiet your heart in an anxious world*. Baker Books.

<sup>54</sup> The unit sequence is death reminder [6:7] – pause [6:8] – death reminder [6:9-10] – pause [6:11-16]. See Chapter 15-III, “Paul’s death reminders trigger permanence desires.”

can't give life. Jesus explains of the parable,

“one's life [*zōē*] does not consist in the abundance [*perisseuein*] of the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15b NKJV).

Different translations put it differently, but the idea is the same. Holding abundant wealth is not what life is “about.”<sup>55</sup> It's not what life “consists in.” It's not what life is “made up of.”<sup>56</sup> It's not how life “is measured.”<sup>57</sup>

Holding wealth does not lead to a life. It doesn't lead to satisfaction.<sup>58</sup> In fact, it's stressful. Moths and rust destroy.<sup>59</sup> Thieves break in and steal.<sup>60</sup> Wealth is often held to the detriment of its owner.<sup>61</sup>

Holding things doesn't make a life. The right goal is not to hold abundant things. It's to have abundant life.<sup>62</sup> Abundant things can be useful. They can be used to pursue real life. But not if we simply possess them. If we just hold them, they don't help.

We can stack up as much as we want. We can build as many barns to store it as we want. No matter how much it is, one thing won't be there when we sort through it all. There's one thing we won't find. We won't find life [*zōē*].

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<sup>55</sup> GOD'S WORD® Translation

<sup>56</sup> Good News Translation

<sup>57</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>58</sup> Ecclesiastes 2:11, 17; 1 Timothy 6:5-8.

<sup>59</sup> Matthew 6:19

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 6:19

<sup>61</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:13

<sup>62</sup> John 10:10, “I came so that they would have life [*zōēn*], and have it abundantly [*perisson*].”

Real life doesn't come from possessing abundance. That's just saving it up to give to death. Instead, it comes from using abundance. It comes from using it,

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.” (1 Timothy 6:18).

***Extreme donor benefit: Choose your epitaph***

Wealth conversations are an essential part of this ministry to the rich. For Paul, they're a matter of life and death. They're a matter of the owner's life and death. He opens his wealth discussion with death. He ends it with life.

The right use of wealth becomes obvious if we start at the end. We start where Paul started. We start at the owner's death. What's it worth to the owner then? Nothing. We can't take it with us.

Leaving it to the next generation often ends poorly. It creates family fights. It funds harmful choices. Unearned death money isn't the path to family harmony or family happiness.

But, set that aside. Put yourself in the place of the rich person. Now, start at the end. What's the best ending summary of your earthly story? What rightly belongs on your gravestone? What epitaph would you want to leave behind? How about this one:

“He made a lot of money. The end.”

Not very inspirational, right? How about this one instead:

“He never really lived. He never experienced real life. But he did die with a lot of unused money!”

That's just sad. Often, it's also true. It's reality. It's the real-world result. That's what Paul is trying to help people avoid. He wants a different outcome for them. Paul is selling a different epitaph. Here's the alternative:

“He really grabbed hold of that which is truly life! He did a lot of meaningfully good work! He was so rich in beautiful, noble, inspirational good works! He was always generous and ready to share! He was deeply connected to those in his fellowship community! He stored up for himself the treasure of a good foundation for the future!”

Isn't that a better epitaph? Who wouldn't want to trade this one for the others? We all would. Yet, those really are the options. Those are the real-world outcomes.

These wealth conversations are important. They're not just a matter of “fund-raising.” They're a matter of life and death.

### ***Extreme donor benefit: That's the purpose***

We can't find life [zōē] by holding an abundance of wealth. But abundance does have a purpose. Paul explains,

“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that [*hina*] in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV).

We can't get to life by holding wealth. But we can get there by using it for its purpose [*hina*]. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, the purpose [*hina*] of abundant wealth is abundant good works. In 1 Timothy 6:19, the purpose [*hina*] of abundant good works is to grab hold [*epilabōntai*] of real life [*tēs ontōs zōēs*].

The ultimate outcome is extreme donor benefit. The treasure they are storing up is “for themselves.” So, too, the grabbing hold [*epilabōntai*] of real life is for themselves.<sup>63</sup> This verb for grabbing hold means,

“to take hold of [something] in order to make it one’s own.”<sup>64</sup>

The result is real life. It’s also the motivation. It’s the reason why. Professor Bill Mounce explains of 1 Timothy 6:17-19,

“*hina*, ‘in order that,’ goes back to *parangelle*, ‘urge,’ explaining why the rich should follow these six imperatives.”<sup>65</sup>

Grabbing hold of that which is truly life is the reason for following the instructions.

The most extreme possible donor benefit is “life indeed.” This donor benefit isn’t just one more in a long list. It’s not just a cherry on top. It’s the point of the whole ministry. It’s the reason why. It’s the purpose. It’s the reason for all of it.

### ***Paul’s conversion of Greek philosophy***

Paul’s message connects to the culture of Timothy’s audience. This was an audience in the Greek world. They had

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<sup>63</sup> Thus, one could translate this section using “for themselves” twice. For example, “He commands God’s people to pursue ‘storing up for themselves’ the treasure of a ‘good foundation’ for the future.... In doing so, ‘they will be able to take hold for themselves [*epilabōntai*] of that which is life indeed’ (6:19b).” [Verbrugge, V., & Krell, K. R. (2015). *Paul and money: A Biblical and theological analysis of the Apostle’s teachings and practices*. [Kindle]. Zondervan Academic. p. 245.]

<sup>64</sup> Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., Arndt W. F., Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press. p. 374, *epilambanomai*, meaning 4. (emphasis added).

<sup>65</sup> Mounce, W. D. (2000). *Word Biblical commentary (Vol. 46): Pastoral Epistles*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. p. 368. (emphasis added).

grown up with Greek philosophy. It surrounded them. It permeated their understanding.

Greek philosophy was different. It wasn't just about having the right set of rules.<sup>66</sup> It wasn't just about functional practicality.<sup>67</sup> Instead, it focused on virtue based upon a goal for living. This goal was *eudaimonia* – a life of happiness or flourishing. A thing was good [*agathos* or *kalos*] if it led to the ultimate good of a flourishing [*eudaimonia*] life. Virtue was pursuing the good [*agathos* or *kalos*] in order to live the good life [*eudaimonia*].<sup>68</sup>

Our passage mirrors this idea. One change is a rephrasing of *eudaimonia*. This Greek word is *eu-*, “good,” and *-daimonia*, “spirit” or “demon.” Paul replaces “good demon” [*eu-daimonia*] with a new word, “good sharer” [*eu-metadotous*]. He then describes the outcome of a flourishing life using “real life” [*ontōs zōēs*].

Greek philosophy promoted

- Choosing the good [*agathos* or *kalos*]
- In order to experience a flourishing life [*eu-daimonia*]

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<sup>66</sup> I.e., Deontological ethical theory

<sup>67</sup> I.e., Consequentialist ethical theory

<sup>68</sup> “While *agathos* and *kalos* terminology plays an important role in Jewish thought, its significance is magnified many times over in Greek philosophical literature ... In contrast to modern ethical theory that usually focuses on either deontological (rule based) or consequentialist theories, ... Greek philosophy took it for granted that human beings had a *telos*, a goal for living that corresponded to human nature. This goal, in specific terms, was ‘happiness’ or ‘flourishing’ (*eudaimonia*) but it could also be expressed more generally as ‘the good.’ *Eudaimonia* was the ‘final good’ (*teleion agathon*), the end ‘at which all things aim.’ Thus, there was an overarching concept of goodness conceived as human flourishing that was guiding the entire Greek ethical project. The objective of the Greek ethical life was to choose ‘the good’ (especially the ethical ‘good’) in such a way that one moved towards the ultimate ‘good’ of human flourishing.” [Post, T. L. (2019). *Doing “the good” in the Apostle Paul’s ethical vision* (Doctoral dissertation). Asbury Theological Seminary]. p. 49-50.]

1 Timothy 6:17-19 promotes

- Choosing to do good work [*agatho-ergein* and *ergois kalois*]
- And become a good sharer [*eu-metadotous*]
- In order to experience a flourishing life [*ontōs zōēs*]

So, what's the point? The point is to understand the point. In Greek philosophy, the point was a flourishing life [*eudaimonia*]. That happens by choosing the good [*agathos* and *kalos*].

In this passage, the point is donor enjoyment [*apolausin*]. That happens by choosing good works [*agatho-ergein* and *ergois kalois*] leading to a flourishing life [*ontōs zōēs*]. Donor benefit isn't an extra piece. It's not a sweetener for the deal. It's the point.

How does this affect our work as fundraisers? It leads to important questions. Are we working to create joyful donors? Or are we just trying to get donors? There's a difference. If we're just trying to get donors, we're missing the point.

What's our goal?

- Is it “party-time” – *apolausin* <sup>69</sup> – donor enjoyment?
- Is it to produce hilariously cheerful – *hilaron* <sup>70</sup> – donors?
- Is it to build a donor experience that is even happier – *makarion* <sup>71</sup> – than receiving a gift?

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<sup>69</sup> 1 Timothy 6:17

<sup>70</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7

<sup>71</sup> Acts 20:35



- Is it to embrace donors in real community – *koinōnikous*?<sup>72</sup>
- Is it to create opportunities that help donors to feel,<sup>73</sup> express,<sup>74</sup> and receive<sup>75</sup> real love?
- Is it, ultimately, to help donors experience the best life ever?<sup>76</sup>

These are the goals of Biblical fundraising. If they're not our goals as fundraisers, we might be missing the point.

***Extreme donor benefit: This is the best life experience!***

In our ministry to the rich, we are offering the best deal ever. We are offering the best investment, the best purchase, the best use of wealth. We are offering wealth enjoyment. We are offering personal impact, personal status, personal identity, and social identity. We are offering that which is life indeed. We are offering it right now. We are offering it for the future.

This reality should affect our mindset. It should affect how we approach our work. We are offering the best deal ever. How confident should we be to come alongside the rich person to make such an offer?

Having wealth conversations is important. This ministry is important. This ministry to the rich is important. If we fail in our ministry, they will not enjoy their wealth. They will bury it, and they will die with it. They will miss experiencing real life. These are the real-world outcomes.

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<sup>72</sup> 1 Timothy 6:18

<sup>73</sup> 1 Corinthians 13

<sup>74</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:24

<sup>75</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:14

<sup>76</sup> 1 Timothy 6:19

Having a ministry to the rich isn't easy. Having a ministry focused on wealth conversations isn't easy. But it is important. It's important because the results are so extreme.

The results can be life and enjoyment. They're life and enjoyment right now. They're life and enjoyment for the future. Or the results can be death and pain. They're death and pain right now. They're death and pain for the future.

This isn't just "fund-raising." It's not just "money-getting." It's a ministry. It's a ministry to the rich. The downside of failing is as bad as it gets. The upside of success is as good as it gets. It's not just donor benefit. It's extreme donor benefit. This shows just how important this message is. It shows just how important this ministry is.



PART II  
EXTREME DONOR AGENCY

(Message 14: You're grabbing the best life experience!)

***Donor agency: Technical definitions***

In research, it's called donor agency. Having agency means being the actor, the decider, or the doer. It means being the one who makes it happen. It's being in control. It's being the

“person that acts to produce a particular result.”<sup>1</sup>

Increasing donor agency increases giving. It works. It works in experiments.<sup>2</sup> It works in real-world practice.<sup>3</sup> It works especially well for one group: the wealthy.<sup>4</sup> It works for “those who are rich.” It works for a ministry to the rich.

Other research in sociology sometimes uses different terms. Instead of agency, it might use “locus of control.” An internal locus of control means you affect or control the environment. Feeling that you control the situation leads to life satisfaction in nearly every domain.<sup>5</sup> An external locus of

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford online dictionaries. (2012). *Agency*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Xu, Q., Kwan, C. M., & Zhou, X. (2020). Helping yourself before helping others: How sense of control promotes charitable behaviors. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 30*(3), 486-505.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Heist, H. D., & Cnaan, R. A. (2018). Price and agency effects on charitable giving behavior. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics, 77*, 129-138.

<sup>4</sup> Kessler, J. B., Milkman, K. L., & Zhang, C. Y. (2019). Getting the rich and powerful to give. *Management Science, 65*(9), 4049-4062; Whillans, A. V., Caruso, E. M., & Dunn, E. W. (2017). Both selfishness and selflessness start with the self: How wealth shapes responses to charitable appeals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 70*, 242-250.

<sup>5</sup> A greater sense of control over one's environment has been found to predict satisfaction in such diverse areas as job satisfaction [Spector, P. E. (1986)].

control means the environment affects or controls you. Feeling that the situation controls you leads to dissatisfaction.

In research, donor agency is key. It's key to bigger gifts. It's key to donor satisfaction. What does this mean in practical terms? If we want bigger gifts, agency matters. If we want joyful donors, agency matters.

### ***Donor agency: Level 1 – Your money, your decision***

Donor agency starts simple. Giving is an option. You can choose to give. Or you can choose not to give. This freedom separates a gift from a tax or a fee.

You probably send money to the government each year. It's not an option. The alternative is jail. That's not a gift. That's a tax.

You might join a group with membership dues. Paying the money is not an option. The alternative is leaving the group. That's not a gift. That's a fee.

In Biblical fundraising, donor agency isn't just a strategy. It's essential. It's essential because the goal isn't just a gift. The

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Perceived control by employees: A meta-analysis of studies concerning autonomy and participation at work. *Human Relations*, 39(11), 1005-1016., satisfaction with government [Frey, B. S., & Stutzer, A. (2000). Happiness prospers in democracy. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7(1), 79-102.], financial satisfaction [Sumarwan, U., & Hira, T. K. (1993). The effects of perceived locus of control and perceived income adequacy on satisfaction with financial status of rural households. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 14(4). 343-364.], satisfaction with one's body shape [Fumham, A., & Greaves, N. (1994). Gender and locus of control correlates of body image dissatisfaction. *European Journal of Personality*, 5(3), 183-200.], and the satisfaction with one's home [James III, R. N. (2008). Residential satisfaction of elderly tenants in apartment housing. *Social Indicators Research*, 89, 421-437; James III, R. N. (2008). Investing in housing characteristics that count: A cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of bathrooms, bathroom additions, and residential satisfaction. *Housing and Society*, 35(2), 67-82; James III, R. N., Carswell, A. T., & Sweaney, A. L. (2009). Sources of discontent: Residential satisfaction of tenants from an internet ratings site. *Environment and Behavior*, 41(1), 43-59.]

goal is a gift with the right emotion. It's a gift from the donor's heart.<sup>6</sup>

Ananias made a large gift. But it did not reflect his heart. It gave a false appearance. Peter revealed this deceit. He said,

“Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.” (Acts 5:4b).

This was stupid. It was stupid in part because the gift wasn't mandatory. Peter emphasized Ananias's freedom. He emphasized Ananias's donor agency. He explained,

“The property was yours before you sold it, and even after you sold it, the money was still yours.” (Acts 5:4a CEV).

The property belonged to Ananias. He didn't have to give any of it. This wasn't a tax. It wasn't an obligation. It was a free choice.

So, too, in Paul's fundraising, giving is not a mandatory tax. It is not an obligatory fee. It's just an option. He made this explicit. In his fundraising appeal letter, Paul writes:

“I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.” (2 Corinthians 8:8 NIV).

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Exodus 25:2, “Tell the sons of Israel to take a contribution for Me; from everyone whose heart moves him you shall take My contribution.”; Exodus 35:5, “Take from among you a contribution to the Lord; whoever is of a willing heart is to bring it as the Lord's contribution.”; Deuteronomy 15:10a, referencing “your poor brother,” explains, “You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him”; David celebrates the giving to build the temple in 1 Chronicles 29:17-18 saying, “Since I know, my God, that You put the heart to the test and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to You. Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intentions of the hearts of Your people, and direct their hearts to You;”

It's not a command. The donor is in control. He can give or not. It's a choice. It's a choice that reflects the heart. It's a test of love. It expresses the heart in love actions, not just love words. It demonstrates the sincerity of love.

This giving is optional because God doesn't want just a gift. He doesn't want it, even if it's big. He wants a gift with the heart. Paul writes,

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

A big gift without the right emotion is not a win. It's not an acceptable sacrifice. No matter how big it is, such a gift amounts to nothing. Paul explains,

“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:3 ESV).

A big gift without the right emotion isn't a win. At best, it's nothing. At worst, it's a capital offense!

For a gift to express love, it must be a free choice. It can't be a grudging fulfillment of a mandatory obligation. It requires freedom. It requires donor agency.

***Donor agency: Level 2 – Your instructions (restricted giving)***

In Paul's fundraising, donor agency goes even further. The donors' options are not limited to:

1. Give to the church.

Or,

2. Don't give to the church.

The donors have even more control. The donors get to decide what specific work they will support.

Paul's biggest fundraising campaign was not for "unrestricted" funds. It was not for the general church budget. This was "restricted" giving. It was a campaign for a special project. This project was far outside the local church.

Restricted giving increases the donors' agency. Instead of just giving, donors get to pick from a menu. They can give to this project, or they can pick something else.

In research, providing such options increases giving.<sup>7</sup> And here is the strange thing. It works even if the donors choose to make their gift unrestricted.<sup>8</sup> It's an unrestricted gift, but that was the donors' decision. They got to decide. They got to be in control of that choice. The donors' agency still increases. Increasing donor agency still increases giving.

### ***Donor agency: Level 3 – Your story***

The story of 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is a story about the donor. The donor is the main character. The donor decides. The donor's decision is motivated by the donor's backstory and values. The donor does the work. The donor makes the impact. The donor's identity is transformed. The donor receives the benefits.

The donor is not just a bit player in the story. The donor

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<sup>7</sup> Fuchs, C., de Jong, M. G., & Schreier, M. (2020). Earmarking donations to charity: Cross-cultural evidence on its appeal to donors across 25 countries. *Management Science*, 66(10), 4820-4842.

<sup>8</sup> Eckel, C. C., Herberich, D. H., & Meer, J. (2017). A field experiment on directed giving at a public university. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, 66, 66-71; Helms, S., Scott, B., & Thornton, J. (2013). New experimental evidence on charitable gift restrictions and donor behaviour. *Applied Economics Letters*, 20(17), 1521-1526. p. 1521.



does not simply enter briefly to lay money at the feet of the heroic ministers who do the good work. The donor does not just put gas in the tank for the heroic ministers' grand adventures. This is a story about the donors.

This is not the church's story. It's not the minister's story. It's not the charity's story. It's the donor's story.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Donor agency: Level 4 – Your work***

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul instructs Timothy about major gift fundraising. This includes many messages for the high-capacity donors. But one message is missing. Paul never tells Timothy to say, "Give your money."

Just saying, "Give!" is not an interesting story. Or, even if it is, it's still a story about what someone else does with the money. But Paul's story is different. It's a donor story. It's a story about the donor's actions.

Logically, we might say that the only thing a donor does is give money. But not in Paul's language. The donors do not give money. Instead, the donors do good. They become rich in good works.

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<sup>9</sup> Notice also Paul's fundraising appeal in 2 Corinthians 8-9 (New American Standard Bible) uses "you" and "your" 41 times. In comparison, "we" and "our" appear 16 times while, "I," "me," and "my" appear only 13 times.

In one experiment, an email using the phrase, "The fashion industry has let these women down, but you and [the charity] won't," improved response rates by 40% among women compared to the same phrase without "you and". [Shang, J., Reed, A., Sargeant, A., & Carpenter, K. (2020). Marketplace donations: The role of moral identity discrepancy and gender. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 57(2), 375-393. p. 382.] Other experiments also find that second-person pronouns rather than first-person plural pronouns work better in charitable appeals. [See, e.g., Yilmaz, G., & Blackburn, K. G. (2022). How to ask for donations: A language perspective on online fundraising success. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 30, 32-47.]

The donors “do” the work. The good works are theirs. They become rich in these good works. They make it happen. They hire the workers. They build the buildings. They send the missionaries. It’s their work.

This language emphasizes donor agency. This story is about the donors. It’s about their actions and their impact. They are the main characters. They are in charge. They make it happen.

***Extreme donor agency: Grab life by the horns!***  
**[*epilabōntai tēs*]**

Now, we come to the end of the passage. Here, donor agency gets extreme. Having agency means being the one who makes it happen. It means being the

“person that acts to produce a particular result.”<sup>10</sup>

What is the most extreme version of this? What is the most extreme agency? It’s the word from our final phrase. It’s *epilabōntai*.

This word is a form of *epilambanomai*. A lexicon explains that it’s from

“*Lambanō*, ‘aggressively take’ – properly, lay hold of something, showing personal initiative (‘focused resolve’) that ‘matches’ the seizing (i.e., laying hold of what is ‘apt, meet’).”<sup>11</sup>

*Lambanō* is aggressive and intense. It’s extreme. Our word is even more extreme. It adds an intensifier on top of *lambanō*. A

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<sup>10</sup> The Oxford online dictionaries. (2012). *Agency*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com)

lexicon explains,

“*epilambanomai* (from *epi*, ‘on, fitting’ intensifying *lambanō* ‘aggressively take’).”<sup>12</sup>

The word is an intensified aggression. It’s forceful. It’s like the cheerleading chant:

“Be aggressive! Be, be aggressive!”

Indeed, the word is often violent. It can be,

“to seize (for help, injury, attainment, or any other purpose; literally or figuratively).”<sup>13</sup>

The soldiers “seized” [*epilabomenoi*] Simon of Cyrene, forcing him to carry the cross. (Luke 23:26). Also, the crowd

“took hold of [*epilabomenoi*] Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat.” (Acts 18:17).

Just before 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul explicitly connects the word to fighting. He instructs Timothy to

“Fight the good fight of faith; take hold [*epilabou*] of the eternal life to which you were called” (1 Timothy 6:12a).

In 6:17, the instruction is to *epilabōntai*. Timothy Dieppe explains,

“even there a connotation of violence may be intended.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon* [Software]. HELPS Ministries Inc. [www.thediscoverybible.com](http://www.thediscoverybible.com)

<sup>13</sup> Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson.

<sup>14</sup> Referencing *epilambanomai*, “all uses with a plural agent (especially crowds) are negative in Luke-Acts, and also for the rest of the New Testament with the exception of 1 Timothy 6:19, though even there a connotation of violence may be

Dr. Flavien Pardigon explains that this word in 6:17,

“seems to also carry the connotation of force or violence.”<sup>15</sup>

This instruction has the intensity of a real fight. It directs aggressively grabbing hold of real life. This is variously translated as

- “take hold”<sup>16</sup>
- “lay hold”<sup>17</sup>
- “keep their hold”<sup>18</sup>
- “win”<sup>19</sup>
- “experience”<sup>20</sup>
- “obtain”<sup>21</sup>
- “grasp”<sup>22</sup>
- “seize upon”<sup>23</sup>

To “*epilabōntai*” real life does not mean to passively receive it. It’s to go out and “win” real life by intense action.

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intended.” [Dieppe, T. (2016). *Paul vs. the pagans: The apologetic approach of the Areopagus address* [University of Chester, Master’s thesis]. p. 18.].

<sup>15</sup> Pardigon, F. O. C. (2008). *Paul against the idols: The Areopagus speech and religious inclusivism* (Doctoral dissertation). Westminster Theological Seminary. pp. 230, n. 161.

<sup>16</sup> New International Version; English Standard Version; New American Standard Bible; Amplified Bible; Christian Standard Bible.

<sup>17</sup> King James Version; New King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; New English Translation (NET) Bible; Douay-Rheims Bible.

<sup>18</sup> International Standard Version

<sup>19</sup> Good News Translation; New American Bible (Revised Edition).

<sup>20</sup> New Living Translation

<sup>21</sup> Catholic Public Domain Version; Worsley New Testament.

<sup>22</sup> New English Bible; New Catholic Bible.

<sup>23</sup> Aramaic Bible in Plain English

It's to "Grab life by the horns!" It's aggressive fighting imagery. This matches with "Grab life by the throat!"<sup>24</sup> One commentary notes of verse 19,

"Believers already have life, but a generous, giving Christian is one who has taken hold of eternal life now and is riding life for all it is worth."<sup>25</sup>

### ***Not just agency, donor agency [hina]***

The rich are to aggressively grab hold of real life. And how do they do this? How do they grab real life? They do this as donors. Paul isn't just describing extreme agency. He's describing extreme donor agency.

This is the final phrase in the passage. It starts with "*hina epilabōntai*". *Hina* explains the purpose of a thing. Here, it explains the purpose of the previous actions. The donors enjoy their wealth by

- Doing good
- Being rich in good works
- Being generous
- Being ready to share
- Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future

Why do they do all of these things? What is the motivation? What is the reason? The reason is this:

"So that [*hina*] they can aggressively take hold

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<sup>24</sup> The more profane version of this sentiment, "Grab life by the balls!" also matches. This, too, conveys the sense of an aggressive fight.

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, R. K. & Chapell, B. (2000). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Crossway Books. p. 163.

[*epilabōntai*] of that which is truly life [*ontōs zōēs*].”

That’s the purpose of the giving. *Hina* expresses purpose. It’s most commonly translated here as “so that.” The few alternatives are “so,” “that,” “so as to,” or “in this way.”

This is not just agency. This is donor agency. This grabbing hold of real life results from the giving. It’s the result. It’s the consequence. This result is also the motivation for the giving. It’s the purpose.

This is not just donor agency. This is extreme donor agency. This active donor

- Acts right now (at this opportune moment, not waiting for his temporary wealth to disappear)
- By actively enjoying his wealth (rather than passively hiding it)
- Through actively doing good work
- And actively being a person who is generous and ready to share
- And he does all this for the purpose of aggressively grabbing hold of real life

This is donor action, action, action! This repeated sequence of donor action ends at a peak. It ends with super-intense, extreme, aggressive donor agency. This is not just agency, it is hyper-agency.

### ***Hyper-agency and the sociology of wealth***

Paul describes a ministry to a specific group: the rich. To minister to any people group, it helps to learn about them. It helps to understand the group’s culture or sociology.

So, what do we know about this people group? Modern research has explored the sociological characteristics of this people group. One sociology professor summarized his

“research on wealth and philanthropy over the past twenty years.”

He explains,

“Our finding is that at least in the material realm, the class trait of wealth holders is hyperagency, which I define as the array of dispositions and capacities that enable individuals to relatively singlehandedly produce the social outcomes they desire... If agency is the capacity to make choices largely within the rules and resources that are socially given, hyperagency is the capacity to be a creator or producer of those rules and resources.”<sup>26</sup>

The central distinguishing characteristic of this people group is hyper-agency. It not only distinguishes the group; it also distinguishes their giving. He continues,

“In common parlance we regularly speak of donors and major donors. Distinguishing between supporters and producers of philanthropy is a more functional distinction.”

The difference is this:

“Most individuals respond to appeals for contributions in a manner similar to the way a consumer responds to

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<sup>26</sup> The quote continues, “If agents are finders of the most desirable or fitting place for themselves within a limited range of possibilities, hyperagents are founders of those possibilities for themselves, as well as for others. What takes the aid of a social, political, religious, or philanthropic movement for agents to achieve, can be achieved by hyperagents pretty much single-handedly.” [Schervish, P. G. (2003, November). *Hyperagency and high-tech donors: A new theory of the new philanthropists* [Paper presentation]. Annual Conference of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. p. 2.] <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:104107/datastream/PDF/download/citation.pdf> ]

the products or services of a business. They are just one person among a far larger pool of actors. They do not individually have enough buying power to have a firm create a product for them; nor do they single-handedly have enough giving power to create or redirect the charitable enterprise to which they contribute... It is a different story altogether when high-tech donors contribute a sizable enough gift to actually shape the agenda of a charity or nonprofit institution. In this instance, the contributor may be termed a direct producer or architect.”

Paul’s major gifts fundraising from the wealthy emphasizes this kind of donor agency. The donors don’t just give to a doer. The donors are the doers. They don’t just give to one who does good work. They do the good work. The good works are their good works. They personally become rich in them.

These donors don’t just sit back and hope for a better life. They go out and aggressively grab real life. They are the actors. They are the protagonists. They have agency. Paul motivates in a way that resonates with this specific people group. He motivates with extreme donor agency.

### ***Agency in sociology and scripture***

The message parallels with the modern sociology of agency go deeper still. A foundational work from the American Journal of Sociology is titled “What is agency?”<sup>27</sup> It explains

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<sup>27</sup> Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962-1023.



that complete agency relates to the actor's past, present, and future:

- The past  
“refers to the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities.”<sup>28</sup>
- The present  
refers to a “practical-evaluative” “iteration” process connecting the past and the future “to make practical and normative judgments.”<sup>29</sup>
- The future  
refers to “the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action ... in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future.”<sup>30</sup>

This foundational description matches the past, present, and future agency description in our passage. The passage begins with the donor's past decision. They have, in the past, with continuing effect on the present (perfect tense infinitive),

“not ... set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God who richly supplies us with all things” (1 Timothy 6:17).

They are in the already in-progress, continuing process (present tense infinitive) of being not high-minded. They are not separated from the fellowship community.

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<sup>28</sup> Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962-1023. p. 971.

<sup>29</sup> Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962-1023. p. 971.

<sup>30</sup> Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962-1023. p. 971.

In sociological terms, Paul's instruction "selectively reactivates" these "past patterns of thought and action." It does so to help "sustain identities." These identities are the two "I am" [*einai*] descriptors: *eumetadotous* and *koinōnikous*

These rich are *eu*-sharers or abundance-sharers [*eu-metadotous*]. This identity connects to the past decision. They have not set their hope in some disappearing, fixed pool of wealth. Instead, they have set their hope in the ongoing rich supply from the unlimited God. This past action sustains their present identity as abundance-sharers.

They are also fellowship-community sharers [*koinōnikous*]. This identity [*einai*] matches their in-progress, continuing process of being not above or separated from the fellowship community. They are not high-minded [*mē hypsēlophronein*].

The passage then turns to the future. In sociological terms, this is

"the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action."<sup>31</sup>

Again, the donor remains active. They are "storing up for themselves." They are doing so "for the future." Their giving is done "so that they may take hold" of the current and future "life that is truly life."

The present immediate action connects the past and future. Making the "practical and normative judgment" to enjoy wealth by using it to do good is immediate action. It's immediate action that iteratively connects past action and future action. It springs from the donors' past action. It

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<sup>31</sup> Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962-1023. p. 971.

springs from where they have set their hope. It is done to store up “for the future.” It is done for the purpose of [*hina*] taking hold of the now and future real life.

Complete agency comes from the actor’s past, present, and future. Paul’s message delivers this complete agency. It delivers hyper-agency. It matches the sociology of this people group. It’s the ideal motivational message for the rich.

***Ministering to the rich: Donor agency and donor benefit***

In this passage, Paul describes a ministry to the rich. In practical terms, this group has two central traits: Possessiveness and hyper-agency.

The rich are possessive. They like to hold wealth. That’s why they became or stayed wealthy. That’s why they haven’t spent it. Paul spends no time warning them against excess bingeing. That’s not the concern with this group. The concern is with the intense desire to hold, protect, bury, and accumulate wealth.

Instead of condemning this trait, Paul taps into it. As elsewhere, he emphasizes donor benefits. But here, he does it differently. He describes charitable giving as investment diversification. It’s a form of becoming rich. It’s building up an endowment or foundation for the future.

The message isn’t, “Stop being rich.” The message is, “Be rich in even more ways!” The message isn’t, “Stop storing up for yourselves.” The message is, “Store up for yourselves in even better investments.”

The rich are hyper-agents. They're used to getting things done. They are the movers, the shakers, the actors. Instead of condemning this trait, Paul taps into it.

He frames his message as a story. It's a story starring them. It's about their past, their present, and their future. They are the protagonists. They are the main characters. They do not simply give money to the actors. They are the actors. They are the doers.

This is a story of their hyper-agency. Their past is an action past. They have not set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God.

Their present is an action present. They do good. They become rich in their good works.

Their identity is an action identity. They are abundance-sharers. They are fellowship-community sharers.

Their future is an action future. They don't just passively receive future benefits. They actively store up for themselves these future benefits. They aren't just passively granted the good life. They violently take hold of it! They act right now. They act for the purpose of aggressively grabbing real life!



## Chapter 17

### **Overview: The greatest donor story ever told**

- *Biblical fundraising focuses on the donor's story.*
- *Ordinary fundraising focuses only on the charity's story.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy [ *Instruct them*] to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

### PART I

#### IT'S A STORY

#### ***The elements of story***

Paul presents a long list of motivational messages. It's an effective list. Except it's not a list. It's a story.

Paul's message has a protagonist. It has a backstory and setting. It has a supporting character. It has a call to adventure. It has a climax and resolution. It promises a meaningful victory. It has a happily ever after. It's a story.

An archetypal story has specific elements:

- The setting establishes expectations and behavioral norms.
- The backstory introduces the main character's life story, people, and values. These define his original identity.
- He then receives a "call to adventure" (challenge) promising the hope of a victory. This promised victory

will be personally meaningful because of his backstory (original identity).

- Often, a guiding sage will come alongside to deliver the “call to adventure.” After first refusing, the main character will accept the challenge because of who he is. His identity will compel him to accept the challenge.
- The ensuing adventure leads to a climax (victory) and personal transformation (enhanced identity).
- Both are confirmed at the resolution, often with a “happily ever after” ending.

### ***The connected steps of story***

The story archetype goes through specific steps. These steps move through:

**Original Identity** → **Challenge** → **Victory** → **Enhanced Identity**

Each step is connected. The backstory and setting are not just random details. They establish the main character’s identity from his values, his people, and his life story.

He then receives a call to adventure. This is the challenge. He’ll accept this challenge because of his identity. He’ll accept it because of his values, his people, and his life story.

This challenge will promise the hope of a victory. That victory is compelling because it links back to the main character’s identity. It supports his values, his people, and his life story.

Accepting the challenge then leads to a journey. This journey results in a victory. It also transforms the main

character's identity. He won't be the same person at the end of the story that he was at the beginning. He returns as an externally honored and internally transformed victor. At the end, the resolution confirms this victory and identity transformation.

### ***The connected steps of Paul's story***

These are the steps of a compelling story. They're also the steps of Paul's message. The story of 1 Timothy 6:17-19 progresses through the elements of

**Original Identity** → **Challenge** → **Victory** → **Enhanced Identity**

This isn't just literary theory. It's a practical outline for effective fundraising.

### ***Story step 1: Original Identity***

Practical fundraising message 1: "You are the kind of person who makes gifts like this!"

Why will the rich Christian share wealth? He will do so

- Because of his spiritual origin story  
He has, already in the past, not set his hope in the uncertainty or hiddenness of wealth, but on God.
- Because of his wealth origin story  
God is the one who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment.
- Because of his social origin story  
He is continuing in the ongoing process of being not "high-minded." He is not above or separated from the fellowship community. Others in his mutual fellowship-



community also share God's rich provision in this same way. (People like him make gifts like these.)

### ***Story step 2: Challenge***

Practical fundraising message 2: "Enjoy your wealth! Don't bury it and die with it."

Why will the rich Christian share wealth? He will do so

- Because his identity compels him to do so. (See above.)
- Because the promised results compel him to do so. (See below.)
- Because this is urgent. This is the opportune moment. Wealth holding is uncertain. It's temporary.

### ***Story step 3: Victory***

Practical fundraising message 3: "I don't ask people for money. I ask people to do things – good things – that happen to cost money."

Why will the rich Christian share wealth? He will do so

- Because of the intrinsic impact. He gets to do intrinsically good work.
- Because of the artistic impact. He gets to create beautiful-good works.
- Because of the future benefits. He gets to store up for himself the treasure of a good foundation for the future.

### ***Story step 4: Enhanced identity***

Practical fundraising message 4: "This is how to live your best life!"

Why will the rich Christian share wealth? He will do so

- Because he gets a great external identity. He gets to be rich in a new way! He gets to be rich in inspirational, beautiful, visible good works.
- Because he gets a great internal identity. His “I am” [*einai*] grows. He becomes a person who is a good ready-joyful-abounding sharer [*eumetadotous*].
- Because he gets a great social identity. He becomes [*einai*] a connected fellowship-community sharer [*koinōnikous*].
- Because he gets to live a great life. He gets to violently grab hold of the life that is really life.

### ***An expanded translation***

This story progresses through the backstory, call to adventure, climax, and resolution. It follows the story cycle of

**Original Identity** → **Challenge** → **Victory** → **Enhanced Identity**

It progresses through

- The donor’s Original Identity [“not to be conceited or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things”] →
- The donor’s Challenge [“for enjoyment:”] →
- The donor’s Victory/Enhanced Identity [“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life”]

These story steps appear even in a standard translation. But understanding each word in more detail helps. It helps to illuminate the story.

Words can hold a lot of meaning. This can come from the words themselves. It can come from their definitions, tense, voice, mood, aspect, case, number, and so forth. It can also come from their context. This might be from their immediately surrounding words. It might be from their allusions to other famous works. Often, words have – and are intended to have – multiple meanings.

Translating in a way that communicates all this is difficult. Even when it's possible, it's usually not practical. It would be too long. It would be too clunky. It wouldn't read easily. But it can still provide some insight.

What would 1 Timothy 6:17-19 look like if we spelled out more of these meanings? This single sentence would expand. It might read:

**As for those in the church who are wealth holders right now at this opportune moment, continually come alongside them as an authorized messenger to instruct and advise them that they are to continue in the ongoing process of being not high-minded (not above the fellowship community), that they have already in the past (with continuing effects on the present) placed their hope not on hidden, uncertain, and disappearing riches but on God,**

**the one who has and is and will continuously and personally supply every one of us richly with each and every thing**

**for the purpose of ENJOYMENT:**

- **to do intrinsically good work (imitating the way that God provides everyone with material blessings),**
- **to be rich in many visible, inspiring, noble, beautiful, good works,**
- **to be a person who lives the good life of a ready-willing sharer, a joyful-abounding sharer, and an abundant-rich sharer,**
- **to be a person who shares as a connected member of a reciprocal fellowship community (just as if they were closely bonded family members),**
- **thereby storing up for themselves the treasure of a visible, inspirational, beautiful, good foundation fund for their future,**

**all so that they may aggressively grab hold of the experience of living a life that is really and truly life indeed (both now and later).**

Now that's a sentence! Yes, it's way too long. It doesn't read easily. But it can provide insight. It gives more detailed instructions. It gives instructions for major gift fundraising. These are also instructions for storytelling.

***The story in an expanded translation***

This expanded translation more precisely reveals the story steps:

**As for those in the church who are wealth holders**

This story begins by introducing the main character. This is a story about the Christian with accumulated wealth.

**right now, at this opportune moment,**

This is a story set in the land of temporary, disappearing wealth. The main character will have a temporary opportunity to do something wonderful. This setting will motivate accepting the forthcoming call to adventure.

**continually come alongside them as an authorized messenger to instruct and advise them**

This is a story with a supporting character. The guiding sage will come alongside the main character to deliver the call to adventure. Timothy is to come alongside [*para-*] to deliver this authorized message [*-angelle*]. He is not to do it just once. He is to keep on doing it. He does so even if the main character at first refuses the call.

**that they are to continue in the ongoing process of being not high-minded (not above the fellowship community),**

Next in this story, we learn about the main character's backstory. We learn about his social values. Continuing these values will motivate accepting the forthcoming call to adventure.

**that they have already in the past (with continuing effects on the present) placed their hope not on**

**hidden, uncertain, and disappearing riches but on God,**

Next in this story, we learn more about the main character's backstory. We learn about his spiritual values. We learn about his life history of placing his trust in God. We learn about his life history of not placing his trust in hidden, buried wealth. These will motivate accepting the call to adventure.

We're reminded again of the setting. This is the land of temporary, disappearing wealth. Accumulated wealth is referenced seven times in this one sentence. This is not an income-sharing setting. It's a wealth-sharing setting. This setting will motivate accepting the call to adventure.

**the one who has and is and will continuously and personally supply every one of us richly with each and every thing**

Next in this story, we learn about the main characters' wealth origin story. It was and is richly and personally supplied to him by God. This wealth backstory will motivate accepting the forthcoming call to adventure.

We also learn more about the main character's backstory. We're introduced to his people – his fellowship community. This is a mutual sharing community. Each of them has also been richly blessed in some way. Each faces the same challenge of what to do with those blessings. The shared social norm of enjoying those blessings through generous sharing will motivate accepting the forthcoming call to adventure.

**for the purpose of ENJOYMENT:**

Here, we reach the story's "call to adventure." The rich Christian is called to enjoy his wealth. The message is this: Don't bury it just to die with it. Enjoy it! That's

why God gave it to you in the first place. That was His purpose in giving it to you.

How can the rich Christian enjoy it? First, he recognizes his abundance. Once he has enough for food, clothing, and shelter, he already has enough for contentment. (1 Timothy 6:8). Next, he rejects the bad alternatives. Bingeing with the excess leads to addiction, depression, and feeling dead inside. (1 Timothy 5:6; Ecclesiastes 2). Burying it just to die with it is foolish. (1 Timothy 6:7; Luke 12:20). Finally, he follows the instructions for enjoying wealth. Next are the steps – and the results – of accepting this call to adventure.

- **to do intrinsically good work (imitating the way that God provides everyone with material blessings),**

He enjoys wealth by using it to accomplish something. He does intrinsically good work. The main character achieves a victory. He acts as a good partner in a great partnership.

- **to be rich in many visible, inspiring, noble, beautiful, good works,**

He enjoys wealth by using it to bring beauty into the world. He not only accomplishes a beautiful good work, he does it again and again. He accumulates a great collection of these beautiful, good works. He becomes rich in them. The main character achieves many victories.

- **to be a person who lives the good life of a ready-willing sharer, a joyful-abounding sharer, and an abundant-rich sharer,**

He enjoys wealth by using it to gain personal growth. His personal “I am” statement changes. He becomes a good, joyful, abundance sharer.

- **to be a person who shares as a connected member of a reciprocal fellowship community (just as if they were closely bonded family members),**

He enjoys wealth by using it to gain social growth. His social “I am” statement changes. He becomes a deeply connected, valuable member of a mutually supportive community family.

- **thereby storing up for themselves the treasure of a visible, inspirational, beautiful, good foundation fund for their future,**

He enjoys his temporary wealth by converting it into a permanent accumulation. His “happily ever after” ending will be an enduring one.

- **all so that they may aggressively grab hold of the experience of living a life that is really and truly life indeed (both now and later)**

His story is intensely active. His victorious living, inspiring identity, and “happily ever after” are the stuff of an ideal life. This ending resolution confirms that the generous sharer has indeed chosen the best life story ever – both now and forever.



This is the story. It's the rich Christians' story. It centers on their call to adventure. That call to adventure is:

“Enjoy your wealth!

Everything before this challenge explains why they will do it. Everything after explains how they will do it.

At first, Paul's persuasive arguments to encourage generosity might seem like a long list. But it's not just a list. It's a story. It's the donor's story. Telling this donor's story – and helping them to tell it for themselves – works. It worked 2,000 years ago. It still works today.

PART II  
IT'S A HERO'S JOURNEY STORY

(Overview: The greatest donor story ever told)

***The attractive story arc***

In a story, things happen. Things change. Otherwise, there's no plot. There's no story. This process of change is the story's arc. Almost all stories follow one of six story arcs:

1. Tragedy (riches to rags). Emotional trajectory: Fall.
2. Tragedy (Icarus). Emotional trajectory: Rise then fall.
3. Tragedy (Oedipus). Emotional trajectory: Fall then rise then fall.
4. Happy ending (rags to riches). Emotional trajectory: Rise.
5. Happy ending (Cinderella). Emotional trajectory: Rise then fall then rise.
6. Happy ending (man in a hole). Emotional trajectory: Fall then rise.

In 1 Timothy 6, which story arc does Paul use to encourage wealth sharing? He uses a personally attractive story. So, it's not a tragedy. We might read a tragedy, but we would never want to live one. Some stories have no victory or happy ending. But those aren't attractive roles to play in real life. No one wants to live those stories.

Paul's story is attractive. It's attractive to the donor. It

has the ultimate happy ending. It ends with,

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” (1 Timothy 6:19).

Paul’s wealth-sharing story ends happily. But it doesn’t start there. Before this passage, Paul starts with death and suffering.

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either ... But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:7, 9-10).

Paul uses a negative-then-positive story. He uses the fall-then-rise or “man-in-a-hole” story arc. Modern research shows the power of this approach.

### ***The attractive story arc in research***

In fundraising experiments, a negative-then-positive story works. It works better than a negative-negative, positive-positive, or positive-negative message.<sup>1</sup>

This story arc also works better at the box office. A statistical analysis of 6,174 movie scripts grouped them into the

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<sup>1</sup> In one experiment, of the four possible fundraising message combinations of negative-negative, negative-positive, positive-negative, and positive-positive, the most effective started negative but ended positive. [Bae, M. (2021). The effect of sequential structure in charity advertising on message elaboration and donation intention: The mediating role of empathy. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 27(1), 177-209.]

six story arcs described above. It found,

“The highest box offices are associated with the ‘Man in a Hole’ [negative-then-positive] shape which is characterized by an emotional fall followed by an emotional rise.”<sup>2</sup>

It works better in books, too. Another “big data” study looked at 4,803 novels from Project Gutenberg’s fiction collection. It grouped the novels into the same six story arcs. The stories with the highest median downloads used sequential “man in a hole” fall-then-rise arcs.<sup>3</sup> The negative-then-positive story arc works. It works in novels and movies. And it works in fundraising.

### ***The attractive story arc in practice***

Paul’s message starts negative. He interrupts the life of endless accumulation. His message starts with

You are going to die! Your wealth holding is temporary! Don’t suffer and strive to just keep stacking up even more. This leads to evil, pain, and death. (*See 1 Timothy 6:7, 10-11.*)

Paul interrupts. His message is noisy – even rude.<sup>4</sup> It’s OK for us to interrupt, too. We interrupt because we care. We care about the other person. We see the end of their path. And we don’t want that for them.

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<sup>2</sup> Del Vecchio, M., Kharlamov, A., Parry, G., & Pogrebna, G. (2018). *The Data science of Hollywood: Using emotional arcs of movies to drive business model innovation in entertainment industries*. arXiv. preprint. <https://arxiv.org/abs/1807.02221>

<sup>3</sup> Reagan, A. J. (2017). *Towards a science of human stories: using sentiment analysis and emotional arcs to understand the building blocks of complex social systems* (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Vermont. p. 88. Figure 3.7. Referencing row SV 4.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Biblical Fundraiser in Modern Practice*, Chapter 8-II, “Paul’s interruptive fundraising sounds”

They've been richly blessed. We don't want them to just bury it in the ground. We don't want them to just hide it away in a napkin. We don't want them to explain this to the master, saying,

“for I was afraid” (Luke 19:21).

“and I was afraid” (Matthew 25:25).

They've been richly blessed. We don't want them to just lose it to misfortune or death. We want them to enjoy it.

Paul interrupts. He starts negative. But then he turns positive. He tells them,

Now is the time! You have a window of opportunity!  
You can do beautiful, wonderful things! You can grab  
hold of the life that is really life! (See 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Paul uses a negative-then-positive story arc. He uses a negative-then-positive fundraising message. Modern experiments and massive data analysis validate this approach.

### ***The hero's journey***

This passage includes every story element. It's telling a story. It's telling a negative-then-positive story. It's telling a story about the donor.

So, what story genre is this? Is it Fantasy? Horror? Comedy? Science fiction? Mystery? Detective? No. It's a hero story. It's a donor hero story.

This description can sometimes cause confusion. A hero story is not about someone who is already a hero. It's a story about someone who is on a “hero's journey.” The hero's journey protagonist doesn't consider himself a hero – because

he's not. Not yet. He's not yet a hero, but he is on a heroic journey.

Through this journey, he grows. He overcomes challenges. Ultimately, he wins a victory. Only when the story ends does he emerge as a hero. Only at the resolution is this new status confirmed. Only then does he become the externally honored and internally transformed hero.

This “hero’s journey” story has specific elements:

- [Backstory and setting] The hero’s journey begins in his ordinary, small, self-focused world.
- [Call to adventure] The potential hero receives a challenge to go beyond his ordinary world in order to make an impact on the larger world. The potential hero at first rejects this call to adventure. Only later does he accept the challenge. The hero’s identity – his history, people, and values – compels him to accept the challenge.
- Often, this is explained by a guiding sage who makes the call to adventure. Afterward, the guiding sage will help the potential hero to complete the journey. He may supply magical instruments, introduce friends and allies, and provide advice, planning, and guidance along the journey.
- [Climax] The potential hero leaves the ordinary world to enter the new world. There, he will overcome challenges and ultimately win a heroic victory.
- [Resolution] Finally, he returns to a place of beginning with a gift to improve that world. He returns as an externally honored and internally transformed person. He ends as a hero.

## ***The hero's journey repetition***

We've all seen this story before. In fact, it's found across cultures and ages.<sup>5</sup> But it's not just a historical artifact. The highest-grossing movie franchises all use this same story. Humans are drawn to this story. Consider the original Star Wars, the Matrix, the Hobbit, Harry Potter, or even The Lion King.

- The hero's journey begins in the ordinary (small, self-focused) world:
  - Luke is a Tatooine farm boy.
  - Neo is a dissatisfied corporate drone.
  - Bilbo is a Hobbit in the shire.
  - Harry is living under the stairs in his uncle's house.
  - Simba is living in the self-focused world of "hakuna matata."
- The hero is faced with a call to adventure. He must leave his small, self-focused world to make an impact on the larger world:
  - Save Princess Leia.
  - Take the red pill.
  - Join the expedition.
  - Become a wizard.
  - Claim the throne.
- Often, this call to adventure comes from a guiding sage who will help the hero complete the journey:
  - Obi-Wan Kenobi
  - Morpheus

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<sup>5</sup> Campbell, J. (1949/2004). *The hero with a thousand faces* (commemorative ed.). Princeton University Press.

- Gandalf
- Hagrid (with Albus Dumbledore and Minerva McGonagall)
- Rafiki the baboon (with the spirit of Mufasa the father lion)
- The guiding sage may supply the hero with magical instruments to help complete the journey:
  - A light saber
  - Instant Kung-Fu
  - A map to the ring
  - An invisibility cloak
  - A magic cloud allowing a conversation with a dead father
- The hero at first rejects the call:
  - LUKE: Alderaan? I'm not going to Alderaan. I've got to go home.
  - NEO: This is insane! I can't do this! Forget it!
  - BILBO: An adventure? No, I don't imagine anyone west of Bree would have much interest in adventures. Nasty, disturbing, uncomfortable things.
  - HARRY: No, you've made a mistake. I can't be a wizard; I'm just Harry.
  - SIMBA: No, I'm not the king! Maybe I was going to be, but that was a long time ago.
- Often, the guiding sage shows how the hero's life story and identity compel him to accept the challenge:
  - Obi-Wan explains that Luke's father was a Jedi Knight. Darth Vader killed him. The journey will fight against Darth Vader's Empire.



- Morpheus explains that Neo is a slave. Without taking the red pill, he will stay in prison.
- Gandalf explains that Bilbo is a Took (his mother's family name). His ancestor defeated the Goblin king. He explains that Bilbo's nature as a child was to go on adventures like this.
- Hagrid explains that Harry's parents were wizards. They fought against Voldemort who murdered them. Harry's journey will fight against Voldemort.
- The Lion King uses this scene:

MUFASA: You have forgotten who you are and so forgotten me. Look inside yourself, Simba. You are more than what you have become. You must take your place in the Circle of Life.

SIMBA: How can I go back? I'm not who I used to be.

MUFASA: Remember who you are. You are my son, and the one true king.
- The hero then accepts the call. He enters the new world, undergoes ordeals, and overcomes an enemy. He wins a victory benefiting his original world and experiences an identity transformation. The hero's story ends with a "happily ever after" scene:
  - Luke destroys the Death Star. He becomes a Jedi Warrior who defends against the empire.
  - Neo defeats Agent Smith. He becomes "the one" with the power to set the prisoners free.
  - Bilbo helps defeat the Goblins. He becomes the keeper of the ring with peace restored.
  - Harry stops Voldemort from gaining eternal life and attacking the magical and muggles worlds.

- Simba defeats Scar and the hyenas, restoring balance to the kingdom.

### ***The Biblical hero's journey***

Movies are interesting. For some reason, most people seem to like the same story. Whether they know it or not, they seem to be hard-wired to connect with this story sequence.<sup>6</sup> But what does all that have to do with the Bible?

This story is also a Bible story. It's the single most important story of the Old Testament. It's not just the hero's journey. It's the Moses journey. Let's pick up this story in Exodus 3.

- The hero's journey begins in his ordinary (small, self-focused) world:
  - "Now Moses was pasturing the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness" (Exodus 3:1).
- The prospective hero is faced with a call to adventure to make an impact on the larger world:
  - God speaks to Moses, "And now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:10).
- Often, this call to adventure comes from a guiding sage who will help the hero to complete the journey:
  - Moses's "guiding sage" is God.

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<sup>6</sup> "The hero's journey is like an operating system (or software in an operating system) that each of us receives at birth, hard-wired into our psyches, to help us navigate our passage through life." [Pressfield, S. (2016). *Nobody wants to read your sh\*t and other tough-love truths to make you a better writer*. Black Irish Entertainment LLC. p. 68.]

- The guiding sage may supply the prospective hero with magical instruments to help complete the journey:
  - A staff that turns into a snake and back to a staff. (Exodus 4:2-4).
  - A hand that becomes leprous and returns to normal. (Exodus 4:6-7).
  - The ability to turn Nile river water into blood. (Exodus 4:9).
- The prospective hero at first rejects the call:
  - Moses refuses God’s call to adventure three times. (Exodus 3:11; 4:10, 13). God persists.
- Often, the guiding sage shows how the prospective hero’s life story and identity compel him to accept the challenge:
  - Moses’s ancestry is from those who served as God’s instruments. He is now being asked to serve in this same role.

“I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ... Assuredly I will be with you,” (Exodus 3:6, 12b).
  - Moses’s identity is as God’s instrument. God created him to fulfill this role and God knows what He’s doing.

“‘I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.’ But the LORD said to him, ‘Who has made the human mouth? ... Is it not I, the LORD? Now then go, and I Myself will be with your mouth, and instruct you in what you are to say.’” (Exodus 4:10b-11a, 11c-12).
- The prospective hero then accepts the call. He enters the new world, undergoes ordeals, and overcomes an enemy. Ultimately, he wins a victory benefiting his original world. Through this journey, his identity transforms. It becomes

heroic. The hero's journey ends with a "happily ever after" scene.

- Moses does all these things. He ends as the beloved leader of a freed people about to enter the Promised Land.

The hero's journey is a story model. Here, it's a Biblical story model. It's the story of Moses. It's the story of his call to adventure. It's the story of his hero's journey.

But wait, isn't God supposed to be the hero of every Bible story? No. God the Father cannot be on a hero's journey. He's not on a path of self-improvement or identity transformation.<sup>7</sup> He's not the hero in the story; He's the author of the story. He's the author who occasionally inserts himself directly into the story.

Shouldn't we avoid the hero story because it's vain and egotistical? No. Remember, the main character doesn't start as a hero. Would Moses, tending his father-in-law's sheep, have considered himself a hero? No. Because he wasn't. Not yet. He wasn't yet a hero. But he was about to go on a hero's journey.

Even then, he resists the call to adventure. Like all prospective heroes, he refuses. He has to be persuaded to begin the journey. He doesn't start out as an inspirational character. As with each of our lives, the person at the end of the story is different from the person at the beginning. The story is about the journey.

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<sup>7</sup> The reference here is to God the Father. In his earthly life, Jesus did grow, both in wisdom and stature. He did go through a journey that resulted in his fulfilled identity as savior. See, e.g., Mwai, W., Gimode, E., & Kebaya, C. (2015). *Reading the story of Jesus Christ as an epic*. Kenyatta University.

***It helps to know the character roles***

1 Timothy 6:17-19 shares a story. It's a story about the donor. It's a story about the donor's journey. That journey starts with a call to adventure.

An authorized messenger – a guiding sage – delivers this heroic call to adventure. It's a call to leave behind the ordinary, small, self-focused world. It's a call to leave behind the ordinary world of personal consumption and endless hoarding.

It's a call to go on an adventure. It's a call to enjoy wealth by using it to do good. This adventure promises great victories. It promises intrinsically meaningful victories. It promises a collection of publicly visible victories. It promises an enhanced identity. It promises a "happily ever after" ending. It's a heroic call to adventure. It's a heroic journey. It's the donor hero story.

Understanding this story helps in the work of fundraising. It gives us the right story. It gives us the right role. Once we know these, we know how to act. We know what to do.

Having the right story character works better than a list of tips and tricks. Suppose a person had never seen Elvis perform a song. What list of written instructions would it take to get them to do a credible Elvis impersonation? The list would be long. And it probably still wouldn't work.

But once we've seen the character, we know what to do. Once we know the role, the behavior is easy. We don't even need a list of instructions.

***The fundraiser plays a critical story role***

The hero's journey can be the donor's philanthropic journey. In this journey, the fundraiser is not just a salesperson. The fundraiser is a central, archetypal character. The fundraiser is essential to the donor's story.

Without Obi-Wan Kenobi, Luke never leaves Tatooine. Without Morpheus, Neo never takes the red pill. Without Gandalf, Bilbo never leaves the shire. The fundraiser is the guiding sage who challenges with a choice.

We challenge the donor to leave behind their small, self-focused world. They are busy with their career or their business (or their father-in-law's sheep). We interrupt them. We challenge them to go on a journey to make an impact on the larger world. We challenge them to free those who are in bondage. We show them how their identity (their faith, values, people, and life story) compels them to accept this challenge. We get turned down. We persist. We know that it's all part of the story.

We supply the donor with magical instruments to complete the journey. The charity itself is the donor's instrument of impact. This magical tool allows them to accomplish what they could never do alone. We show them how to use the charity to accomplish their philanthropic goals.

We show them how to use giving opportunities, gift agreements, or gift structures. This might include endowments, virtual endowments, gift agreements, multi-year pledges, or planned giving instruments.

We can point the donor to friends and allies who can help. These might be other donors who have made similar commitments. These might be professional advisors or

technical experts. We provide donors with advice, guidance, and planning to help them complete that journey.

We help them accomplish good work. We help them succeed in making an impact. We help them benefit their original world – their people and their values. We help them take another step in their hero's journey.

Over time, they will not simply do a good work; they will become rich in good works. They will become a new person – a ready, happy, abundance sharer with the fellowship community. They will grab hold of that which is really life.

That's a great story. It's a great donor story. It's the greatest donor story ever told! As fundraisers, we have an essential role to play in that story. We can be the guiding sage. We can help donors to live their heroic life journey.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Russell James III, J.D., Ph.D., CFP® is a professor at Texas Tech University where he directs the graduate program in Charitable Financial Planning (planned giving).

His Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Missouri was titled “Sects, rationality, and human capital in religious charitable giving.” He also earned a J.D., *cum laude* from the University of Missouri School of Law, where he was a member of the Missouri Law Review and received the United Missouri Bank Award for Most Outstanding Work in Gift and Estate Taxation and Planning.

At Central Christian College of the Bible, he studied Greek and Hebrew under Professor Larry Pechawer, and Bible under Professors Gareth Reese, Lloyd Pelfrey, Bob Stacy, Michael Curtice, and Richard Koffarnus. He was ordained into the ministry by the Union Avenue Christian Church, Moberly, Missouri.

Dr. James was a faculty member at Central Christian College of the Bible from 1994-2005. He also served as a planned giving fundraiser for 5 years and later as president of the college for more than 5 years. During his presidency, the college successfully completed two major capital campaigns, built several new debt-free buildings, and more than tripled on-campus enrollment.

Dr. James has published over 80 peer-reviewed articles in academic journals in fields including religion, economics, sociology, nonprofit management, community development, neuroscience, and law. His Ph.D. student advisees have accepted faculty positions at the U. of Missouri, U. of Alabama, U. of Utah, Kansas State U., Eastern New Mexico State U.,



Campbellsville U., Shepherd U., St. Joseph's U., and others. He has been quoted on charitable and financial issues in a variety of news sources including *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *CNBC*, *ABC News*, *US News & World Report*, *USA Today*, *the Associated Press*, *Bloomberg News*, and *the Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

His other books include

*The Biblical Fundraiser in Modern Practice: Helping Christians Enjoy Their Wealth*

*Joyful Wealth Management: A Bible Study Discussion Guide*

*The Socratic Fundraiser: Using Questions to Advance the Donor's Story*

*The Storytelling Fundraiser: The Brain, Behavioral Economics, and Fundraising Story*

*The Epic Fundraiser: Myth, Psychology, and the Universal Hero Story in Fundraising*

*The Primal Fundraiser: Game Theory and the Natural Origins of Effective Fundraising*

*Visual Planned Giving: An Introduction to the Law & Taxation of Charitable Gift Planning*

*Inside the Mind of the Bequest Donor: A Visual Presentation of the Neuroscience and Psychology of Effective Planned Giving Communication*

Website: [www.EncourageGenerosity.com](http://www.EncourageGenerosity.com)

LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com/in/encouragegenerosity/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/encouragegenerosity/)

Email: [EncourageGenerosity@gmail.com](mailto:EncourageGenerosity@gmail.com)

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