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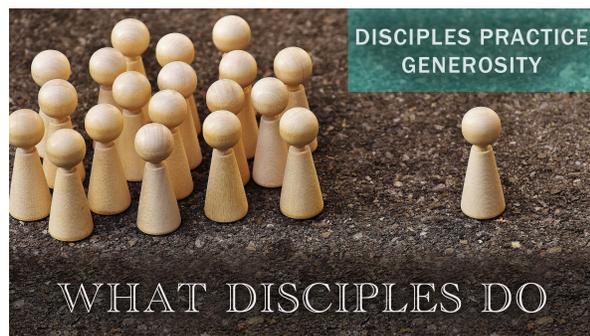
Title: What Disciples Do: Disciples Practice Generosity

Preaching: Ryan Hazen, Lead Pastor, Mud Creek Campus

Text: [1 Timothy 6:6-19](#)

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Today concludes our look at *What Disciples Do*. It's been a series that helped us consider how we might be better, more authentic disciples of Christ. In the past three weeks, we've learned that disciples make following Christ *the* priority in life; disciples seek those who are lost and; disciples are consistent in their faith as they pass their faith from generation to generation. Today, we'll find that disciples practice generosity.

Usually, I start at the beginning of the scripture passage for the day, but today, I'm going to start at the end of our passage and work our way backward. I'm doing that because the very last verse has what I want and I want you to know what we're working toward in the rest of the passage. The last two verses sum it up. Let me read them again:

“They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life” (1 Timothy 6:18-19).

We all want to “take hold of life that really is life.”

What Paul is really telling Timothy is to be content with what you have. That's hard for us, especially in a society where we are bombarded by advertising telling us all the reasons that we should not be content. As some of you know, we are a Subaru family. We even got featured once in the national Subaru magazine with a picture of the four of us standing in front of our four Subarus. When my mom was 89, she decided she needed a new car because she was afraid when she turned 90 she wouldn't be able to understand all the bells and whistles. Instead of talking to me, she sought counsel from my eldest son, who talked her into getting not only a Subaru but with the “Sport Edition” package.

For a number of years after that I wanted to trade my Subaru Outback for a Subaru Crosstrek, but now that I have one, it's okay. However, Subaru just announced that they are introducing their first electric vehicle—the Solterra—in 2023. I check the website occasionally to see when they will hit the showroom floors. I think how great it would be to have this new model, and then I hear Paul telling Timothy what “life that really is life” looks like. Apparently, it does not include a new Solterra.

Maybe it's not a car for you, but it's likely something. If I were younger—like 50 years younger—I may want the \$100 jeans that have holes in them. It may be the new refrigerator that prepares our meals for us, like it did for the Jetsons in the 1960s. Maybe it's the latest trend in paint colors for your house—grays instead of beige. OK, I've now veered into an area that I have no idea what I'm talking about, but you get the idea.

Being dissatisfied seems to be as American as apple pie. But dissatisfaction leads us to places that are hard to get out of. People are looking for contentment in all the wrong places, and it is this feeding frenzy for more and better that has turned Americans into the most discontented people in the world. Somehow, we have to stop trying to find satisfaction and contentment in all this material stuff, even in our relationships, and start finding this "life that really is life" that Paul talks about.

It is clearly easier said than done, but Paul has some counsel for Timothy and for us. It takes us back to the beginning of our passage:

"Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we shall be content with these" (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

Twice in that passage the apostle says that *contentment* is true wealth—not possessions, not new cars or new homes, not the latest paint color or refrigerator—but contentment is where true wealth lies. It is clear in this passage that contentment comes from a whole and balanced life. Godliness means goodness, balance, wholeness. That wholeness produces a contented heart.

The truth is, as Paul goes on to say, that wholeness, balanced realism, richness of soul and spirit—godliness—is in itself gain. That is the true wealth. It brings contented hearts, which is what we are all looking for. We are a restless people. We are always looking for some anesthetic to deaden the pain of an empty life. We look with envy upon people who seem content.

Of course, it all depends upon how you define contentment. Some people think that contentment means getting everything they want as soon as they want it. Most of us know that that is not true. We have lived long enough to know that those who live that way are not content at all. One of the best definitions of contentment that I have heard is, "not having all you want but wanting only what you have." Satisfied with what you have; that is being content. The Greek word used here in this passage means self-sufficiency, having all you need and wanting only that much, not craving for more.

Paul wrote in Philippians 4:

"I have learned to be content with whatever I have" (Philippians 4:11).

Then He goes on:

"I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty..." (Philippians 4:12).

The next verse he tells us his secret:

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).

Godliness, in other words, is contentment. True godliness is understanding that when you have God, that is all you really need to be enriched and fulfilled, satisfied and content. That is the clear teaching of the

scripture. Paul proves the truth of these words by using birth and death as examples. He says we came into the world with nothing, and we can take nothing out of it. What do you have when you are born? Nothing. You come into the world a squally, naked baby. You do not have anything; even your diaper has to be furnished. What do you have when you leave this world? Nothing. You leave it all behind.

I often think of the picture of a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer with the caption, “Well, maybe you really can take it with you,” but we know better. One of the commentators that I read this week told the story of one day, years ago, picking up a hitchhiker. As the hitchhiker was telling his life story as they drove along, the hitchhiker said, “My uncle died a millionaire.” The driver corrected him and said, “No, he didn’t.” “What do you mean?” he said. “You didn’t know my uncle.” The driver said, “Who’s got the million now?” “Oh,” he said, “I see what you mean.” Nobody dies a millionaire. We all die paupers; we leave it all behind.¹

I was looking recently at a book by Kansas City pastor, Adam Hamilton, called *Half Truths*. It considers common sayings that sound like they could come from the Bible but don’t. Things like “God won’t give you more than you can handle” is often meant to encourage someone going through a difficult time, but the Bible verse most people associate with this saying is talking about temptation and not hardship.

As I looked at the table of contents, I didn’t see one that Hamilton could have included from today’s scripture. You’ve probably heard the saying that “Money is the root of all evil,” and maybe you’ve even said it yourself. But that’s not really what the scripture says if we look at it carefully.

Let me read it again:

“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (1 Timothy 6:10).

It isn’t money itself, but the *love* of money that is the problem. Loving money is just another form of idolatry. If money was the issue, that shifts the blame from us to an inanimate object. But the love of money is something we can control and something that can easily get in the way of our love of God and allow us to wander from the faith.

The very next verse instructs Timothy,

“But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Does this list sound familiar? Some of these attributes sound a lot like the list of spiritual gifts found in Galatians that we call the fruit of the spirit:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Paul seems to be saying to Timothy and to the Galatians that if we have these things—these that we can control—we have all we need to be content.

¹ https://www.preceptaustin.org/1_timothy_69_commentary

The story is told about a pilot who always looked down intently on a certain valley in the Appalachians when the plane passed overhead. One day, his co-pilot asked, "What's so interesting about that spot?" The pilot replied, "See that stream? Well, when I was a kid I used to sit down there on a log and fish. Every time an airplane flew over, I would look up and wish I were flying. Now I look down and wish I were fishing."² It is always tempting to think that others have it better than we do, and that if we just had "a little more," everything would be fine. But contentment cannot be achieved by increasing possessions. Nothing will ever be enough.

Today kicks off our annual stewardship drive to support the ministries that happen in this place. Information about what your gifts to the church did last year and what we anticipate for the coming year will drop in the mail tomorrow so you should have it by mid-week. Your pledge will help the Finance Committee and the Board plan for 2023. It supports things deeply important to staff like salaries. It pays for mundane things like utilities and maintenance on our buildings. More importantly, it supports children's and youth programs and partners with other congregations to support ministries literally around the world. I hope you will join Ruth and me in making your pledge.

I've told others that this campaign will define who we will be long into the future. My goal is 100% participation at the level that is an act of worship for you. I invite you to follow the lead of a character in early American history. Marquis de Lafayette was a French officer who provided valuable assistance to George Washington and the struggling American army. After the war was over, he returned to France and resumed his life as a farmer of many estates. In 1783, the harvest was a terrible one, and there were many who suffered as a result. Lafayette's farms were unaffected by the devastating crop failures. One of his workers offered what seemed to be good advice to Lafayette, "The bad harvest has raised the price of wheat. This is the time to sell." After thinking about the hungry peasants in the surrounding villages, Lafayette disagreed and said, "No, this is the time to give."³

God blesses us not just for our own benefit, but also so that we can be a blessing to others in need. The tendency to hoard and try to build up more and more is a dangerous one, and the best antidote to greed is to be a generous giver. There is certainly no shortage of people in need today, and while we cannot meet every need, if we do what we can, God will multiply resources so that it is enough and you will find contentment.

As to that new Subaru Solterra? I've determined that I'm content with my Crosstrek. It will serve me just fine.

² <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/be-content-where-you-are>

³ <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/this-is-the-time-to-give>