

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday Feb 28, 2021. "Choosing the better things. Redefining wealth"

I Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message this Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

We're well into 2021 and thankfully, we're still gathering in person. A small but growing group who follow all the safety guidelines joins us at the church. We have also opened our children's and youth area also. We're so encouraged with your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We still are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions you have, please pass them our way. We feel just as isolated as you, and we want to maintain that connection with each of you.

II Recap.

We wrapped up our series about living a better life by landing on one final life defining question. The first week we talked about creating spiritual habits and practices that can grow within us the person we want to be. Then last week we asked four question in Andy Stanley's book "***better decisions, fewer regrets***" that can help us in those moments we don't have a clear specific understanding of what would be the better thing to do. The four questions we covered were a great template to lay over any decision we were facing to help clarify our motives, and potential consequences of our specific choices. Those four questions and both services are available on our app. This final question is from Andy's book also, and is the capstone to anyone who seriously wants to pursue a Christ-centered life.

III Sunday.

We'll throw out the final fifth question first, ask you a couple of questions about it. And then we'll give a scripture to read, and we'll go over some of the specifics of the passage. So, the final question is; "***What does love require of me?***" Kind of a zinger isn't it?

What is your initial reaction to this question?

What difficulties can you picture in using this question as a guide in your everyday life?

The scripture is found in 1 Timothy, and is Paul instructing a young man he is mentoring, Timothy, (that was kind of an obvious one wasn't it?), about how to teach. Read **1 Timothy 6:17-19**, and then we'll unpack some of Paul's specific points.

What jumped out to you about this passage?

Any first thoughts about what this passage says concerning our final question; "*What does love require of me?*"

So, some specific truths Paul taught in this passage.

1. Not to be proud. This takes you out of the center of decision making. Pride is sacrificing others for self. This is giving up our desire for our rights and privileges. And this will be a constant battle. We have a strong survival instinct. There are times we have to make decisions for ourselves. This teaching is; *'what is your motivation?'*. So, it's not; *"is this in your interest?"*, but rather; *"if it is in your interest ...why?"* Not being proud is giving up your own desires, rights, for the betterment of everyone.

LOVE REQUIRES- we don't let our ego be the loudest voice in our life.

2. Not to trust in your own wealth. Money is a weird thing. Because we need things to survive, the line between wants and needs is blurred. Which makes the pursuit of wealth difficult to determine if it's out of necessity or luxury. This is not; *"don't have wealth"*. It's; *"don't trust in it"*. This requires continual self-examination to be honest with ourselves. Again the motivation, (you'll see a pattern), is; *"what do you TRUST in?"* **Do you use your stuff, or are you a slave to it?** And this will be determined by how tightly you tend to hold onto it for your sense of security.

LOVE REQUIRES- that we don't put the weight of our security in what we own.

3. Trust in God. So if we don't trust in our material things, Paul is telling Timothy to teach people what they should place their trust in. Trust is placing **beliefs AND practices**, FULLY in something other than our stuff. And our actions must match our words. If we truly trust in God, we will move towards generosity, have more outwardly focused priorities, and not in our stuff. We may not know exactly HOW God will take care of us, but we KNOW he will.

LOVE REQUIRES- that if we honestly, truly, believe God has our best interest at heart, then that belief will guide what we place our trust in.

4. Use YOUR money to do good. We know money was meant to be used for a purpose. This is not an earth-shattering revelation. The challenge is; what will we use money for? HOW will you use it? You will be investing ... but in what? And the *"use your money to do good"*, is pretty straight forward. **Again, go through your bank statement, see what good is being done with your money.** What you possess can be an investment in things that can make a huge difference.

LOVE REQUIRES- us to take a step of faith, not putting our trust in our stuff, and fully embracing the truth God will take care of us. *"Therefore, I will use my resources to make the world a better place."*

5. Be generous and share. This comes from working the first four questions well ... setting priorities, and continually making wise decisions. Because I have a system, process, to help me make wiser/better decisions in all areas of my life, when the time comes, I have created enough margin, extra, I can be generous and share. Open-handed and putting people before things.

LOVE REQUIRES- me to frame 'doing good' as living open handed, what has been entrusted to me to do good with. And to be moved by the things that move the heart of God.

IV Challenge.

The final truth in this passage will be our closing challenge. This has to be our desire in order for us to prioritize our life wisely. And I believe whether you're a follower of Jesus or not, this is what all people are looking for. A life that means something.

6. So you can experience TRUE life. These instructions are to **set priorities, have a wise process to make decisions, and handle our resources in a specific manner** to lead us towards the life we really want. This "*true life*" is not just believing the right things, holding the right positions on the right issues. The "*true life*" is a life when your priorities are set correctly, you've matched the right practices and objects up in a better way, you can **use all you have in a way to continue the work of God.**

LOVE REQUIRES- me to want to do everything I can, to learn how to live the life I was created to live. The TRUE life.

Which of these truths are a challenge for you? Why?

How could you pray AND establish habits that could grow your abilities in each of these?

So, this week sit down and list or write what a 'true life' would look like for you, and how you could put each of these into practice to pursue that life you desire.