

Opening Words

How can we be men who are above reproach in the private areas of life? Today we will learn about addictions, loving money, and ordering our private world in such a way that God is glorified in our behavior when no one else is watching.

08 Living Above Reproach – Respectable, Not Addicted, Not Loving Money

We've been looking at the qualities that God wishes for us men to develop. I know as you look at these qualities with me, you may be discouraged, but don't be that way. Christ is gracious to develop these qualities within us patiently. Remember, it is *his* goal that we be like him. And what he plans for us, he will give us grace to achieve if we walk with him in faith and in humility. Remember, also, these are life-long projects. These are not quick fixes, but these are qualities that we will ask God to work into our lives throughout life. Be encouraged, and walk with him daily and with confidence that he who has begun a good work in you will develop that good work. He doesn't just make demands and leave you helpless. He provides daily grace.

We are looking at living above reproach in the private arena of life. God wants us to be above reproach at home with our family, in public in our relationships, and in private when no one is watching. We looked at the qualities of temperance and prudence. Today we move forward with the areas of respectability, not being addicted, and not loving money.

At first glance, when we see the word respectable, we may think, "that sounds like a public area. That sounds like something that is observable to others rather than a private area." But upon closer examination, I will show you why I put this in the private area. The word respectable comes from the Greek word, *kosmion*, which is related to the word we normally translate "world." The idea is that God has created a well-ordered world or planet. One only must observe the seasons and the systems by which this planet functions to see that it is indeed a well-ordered world and galaxy and universe. Lee Strobel in his book, *A Case for the Creator* said, "Earth's location, its size, its composition, its structure, its atmosphere, its temperature, its internal dynamics, and its many intricate cycles that are essential to life – the carbon cycle, the oxygen cycle, the nitrogen cycle, the phosphorous cycle, the sulfur cycle, the calcium cycle, the sodium cycle, and so on – testify to the degree to which our planet is exquisitely and precariously balanced." In other words, we live in a well-ordered world. God made everything with perfection and not even our sin could dismantle it.

In the same way, in the little world in which each of us lives, our private lives, we are to order things well and reflect our creator. This is why I place this word in the private arena of life because if we are going to be respectable with others, we must first organize our private world in such a way ahead of time when no one is watching. I remember looking at a cartoon when I was a child that I thought was quite humorous. A couple are spending a lazy Sunday afternoon at home. Their clothes are a mess. The man is unshaven. The woman is in curlers. The house is a mess. They look out their front window and to their horror they see some friends unexpectedly drive up. The next frame is a

whirlwind of activity as they straighten up the house, change clothes and make themselves look elegant. In the third frame, they answer the door with great composure and elegance and greet their friends with the words, “What a surprise to see you!” They give the impression that their fine clothes and orderly house were normal, when it really wasn’t that way.

Matthew 12:44 speaks of a man who has his house in order, and in most places in the New Testament this word has the idea of adorning ourselves with Christ like qualities and good works. 1 Timothy 2:9 speaks of women adorning themselves with proper clothing that is modest and discreet and 1 Peter 3:4 speaks of women adorning themselves with the qualities of gentleness and a quiet spirit. In passages where the apostles speak to servants, they tell them to adorn themselves by being subject to authority, to be well-pleasing, not to argue, not to pilfer, and to show all good faith. The picture we get is of people who have ordered their private world of dress, their home, and their heart so that when they do appear before others they are respectable.

And so, when Paul talks about the need for men to be respectable, he is speaking about men taking care to order their private world – their heart, their home, their qualities in life so that when they leave their private world and enter public, they will find respect. To become this way men, we must learn to be faithful always and in all situations, when people are watching and when people are not watching. We must realize the value and worth of all things and of our time. We must take care of our homes, our yard, all our possessions and not draw attention to ourselves or try to be flashy. We must learn to be faithful, as Jesus said, in small things for as we are, we will really be faithful with big things. It was because the young boy David was faithful and took care of his family’s sheep that God exalted him to take care of his sheep, the nation of Israel.

Let’s ask ourselves these questions –

1. Are my life and surroundings well-ordered and therefore respectable? How about my finances? Are they in order?
2. Is my life well-behaved? Do I adorn the character of Christ? Am I subject to authority? Well-pleasing? Not argumentative? Believing the best?
3. Do I dress in a way that honors Christ and that does not draw undue attention to me?

The next area Paul talks about for men deals with addiction. He says specifically, “Not addicted to wine” but I don’t think we would be wrong to expand this to other areas. We should be careful not to let anything other than the Lord control us. One of the great plagues of our day is internet pornography. It used to be that if a man wanted to look at such material he would have to buy something in public and take it home. But now, with internet pornography, everything is just a few clicks away in the privacy of our homes.

Please keep in mind that failure in such areas does not mean addiction, but in any area whether it be alcohol, or spending time on Facebook, or being a workaholic, or texting other people, or playing video games, we can lose control and become enslaved to a certain type of behavior. 2 Peter 2:19 says “by whatever a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” Paul tells us in Romans 6:12, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies that you should obey it!” How do we know if sin is reigning in our

lives? We know it when temptation comes and we immediately yield to it. We have no resistance, and we are subservient to it.

God wants to make us fighters, warriors. In the battle with any kind of substance or activity that threatens to enslave us, we will have victories and setbacks, but we must fight and regain ground we have lost. We must make it our goal to say, “I am controlled by one thing and one thing alone, Jesus Christ.”

Paul said in Ephesians 5:18 – “Don’t get drunk with wine for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” In 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 he said, “Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.”

Here is one penetrating question all of us can ask regarding addiction – “Do I give myself habitually to anything which does not glorify Christ?” If so, we must get free to become men of character.

Let’s look at one more quality today. Men, we must be free from the love of money. This six-word phrase is only one word in the Greek. That one word means “not loving money”. How easy it is to fall in love with money. We all need money, but we become lovers of money when we think that money is what gives us security. Or, we become lovers of money when we become attached to the things money can buy – fancy cars, lush homes, frequent exotic vacations.

The writer of Hebrews warns us, “Don’t love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, ‘I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.’” This verse identifies the root problem – security. We are afraid that we will be abandoned, that we will not be cared for. Because of that fear, our love for Christ cools while our love for money heats up and that leads to all sorts of other problems. Paul told Timothy, “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.” This can happen to leaders! Luke 16:14 tells us that the Pharisees dearly loved their money. No wonder they could not recognize their Messiah. Their eyes were fixed on money rather than God.

Titus gives a similar phrase when it comes to this area. He says men of character must not be fond of sordid gain. Paul uses the word “fond” and he attaches the word “sordid” which means dirty, filthy, or dishonest. It’s not gain that is the problem. Every economic system must have gain, but it is sordid gain, gain at the expense of others.

How can we know if we are free from the love of money?

1. What do I value the most – spiritual things or material things?
2. Am I honest in all my business transactions? Do I cheat the government on my taxes?
3. Do I have a good record of paying my bills on time?
4. Am I generous in giving to the work of God? And am I consistently generous?
5. Am I generous to share my personal possessions with others?
6. Am I responsible with my work?
7. Do I create and live by a budget?

It is important that we live this way. The love of money leads to ruin. The love of money leads to a lifestyle that is pleasure oriented and full of distractions that choke us and make us unfruitful.

And so today we have covered three more areas of our private lives. God wants us to be men who are well-ordered, that is, respectable. He wants us to be men who are not addicted to anything that would enslave us, and he wants us to be free from the love of money. May God give us grace in each of these areas. May we be men who are above reproach in the private areas of life.