

From the Pulpit of Keith Miller  
Meadowbrooke Church  
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## **Money is the Root of All Evil**

### **1 Timothy 6:3-10, 17-19**

#### **Introduction**

In a study published by GoBankingRates on what Americans worry about most in life, it revealed that one in four Americans said money was the thing they thought about most daily; another one in four Americans spent most of their time thinking about work. The study revealed that this was pretty consistent across the age groups with the exception of young adults (18-24yrs) and seniors (65+). Young adults worried about their love life slightly more than they did about money; seniors worried significantly more about health than they did about money. Every age group feared the need of always having to live paycheck to paycheck and never being able to retire.

We all agree that we need money to function on some level. The principle of saving and investing is something we see and read about in the Bible (see Gen. 41 and Prov. 24:27 as an example). Hard work is not something that is frowned upon in the Scriptures but encouraged (Prov. 10:4-5; 21:5; Col. 3:23-24). The statement that money is the root of all evil is a misquote of 1 Timothy 6:10, which states: **“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils.”**

#### **The Gift is not the Giver**

One of our favorite restaurants is about three miles from where we used to live in Colorado; the name of the restaurant is 5280 Burger Bar. It is a special treat when we are able to eat at this restaurant, because it is not cheap and especially because we now live 86 miles away. Everything from their gourmet burgers, their fresh cut French fries, and even their ketchup is absolutely delicious! Ask any one of the members of my family what is the best burger place they have eaten at, and they will tell you: “5280 Burger Bar in Westminster, Colorado.”

What would you think of our 11-year-old son Seth, if he decided that he genuinely loved and valued the burgers of 5280 more than his mother or father? What if he decided that his life was not complete unless he had a steady diet of 5280 burgers? What if he genuinely believed and acted as though there was no equal to the love he had for 5280? At best, you might think that Seth could not possibly be serious. Or even worse, you might conclude that our child had completely lost his mind. Why? Because to confuse the good gift of a burger that his mother and father purchased for him as being better than the one who purchased it makes absolutely no sense. It makes no sense because the reason why Seth has a warm bed to sleep in, three meals a day, snacks he can choose from throughout the day, and clean clothes to wear every new day is because his mother and father provides those things for him. To think that a gourmet burger and some really good French fries will do what only his mother and father can do for him is foolish.

The danger lurking in each of our hearts is that we can make good things into ultimate things. We humans tend to do this with just about every good thing available to us. We do this with relationships, we do this with our children, we do this with work, and we certainly can do this with money. This is what the Bible calls idolatry. When we think of idols, we may think of some statue or image, but most idols, as Tim Keller wrote about in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, are good things that we make ultimate things. We make a good thing into an ultimate thing when we believe and act as though it can ultimately satisfy the deepest longings of our soul.

Money is not inherently evil. In fact, there are many examples in the Bible of wealthy people who really loved God more than their wealth. In the New Testament, there is a little letter written to a wealthy man by the name of Philemon who used his home and resources to bless the Church. In this sermon series, we looked at Job who was one of the most righteous men of his day who was also extremely wealthy. Then, we have the example of Abraham who was also very wealthy. The one thing he did not have for most of his life was an heir who God had promised him, until the day came when his dream of a child was realized with the birth of Isaac. Abraham would have traded all of his affluence for just one child, yet God added to Abraham's wealth by gifting him a child. We will come back to Abraham towards the end of this sermon. The point I want you to see is that there are numerous examples of God blessing some of his people with great wealth.

So, it is not money that is evil, but the love of it that is the root of all kinds of evils according to Paul. The Greek word for love is *philarguria* which literally means, "affection for silver." The kind of affection Paul speaks of here is the kind that chases after money. According to verse nine, it is a type of greed that anyone can experience; it is not just the danger of the wealthy, but also of the poor. It is a desire that does not yield life, but ultimately death: **"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."** This is what all idols do! Idols always promise what they cannot deliver and rob you of the very thing that they promise. This is certainly true with the love of money and the desire to get rich.

Where does the love of money lead the poor and the rich? According to verse 10, it leads to **"all kinds of evils."** Paul states that the love of money led to some who have, **"wondered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."** The Greek word for "pierced" literally means "impaled." The love of money has been responsible for causing the teachers in verses 3-5, as well as countless others, to leave Jesus for that which can never satisfy, and by doing so they have impaled themselves with many griefs. Instead of the life only Jesus can give, they ultimately inherited destruction.

According to verse 7, it was nothing that we brought into this world and it is nothing that we will take with us when we die. This is why Job said after he had lost everything: **"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"** (Job. 1:21). There are no U-Hauls behind hursts and anything you do have is because of the giver of all good things. Think about it, you have what you have because of the life, talents, and circumstances God has allowed under his sovereign reign as the Creator God of all things. Listen to Acts 17:24-25, **"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples**

**made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24–25).**

When we chase after money thinking that it will satisfy, we then trade the one who can satisfy our hearts with that which can never satisfy. In the end it will only lead to death.

Consider something Jesus said about money, and by the way, Jesus had a lot to say about money: **“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt. 6:24).** What he said was that there is no room for multiple lords in God’s economy for the Christian; there can only be one who is calling the shots in your life; this is especially true when it comes to God and money. You can either follow after the Giver or you can try and follow the gift. The Giver gives life; when you try to find your life in the little gifts, such as relationships, work, children, and money, you will try to get life from them when they have no ability to do so. In the end it will only yield death because that is what idols do; they cannot do what only God is capable of doing.

### **The Giver is the Gift**

So, what place do the good things that God has given have in your life? Permit me to take you back to the story of Abraham. Isaac was born to Abraham when he was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old; if anything happened to their child there would be no hope of another being born to the aged couple. Abraham’s lineage and the promise of God was realized in Isaac, and it would be through their child that the nations would one day be blessed just as God had promised. Isaac was not only the answer to God’s promise, he was also a gift to Abraham and Sarah, a gift they had longed and hoped for.

We are not told how many years it was after Isaac’s birth, but at some point God spoke to Abraham and said some of the most horrific words Abraham would ever hear: **“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen. 22:2).** Things were different this time; Abraham was different this time, for he had known God for many years since he was first called out of his homeland. The Bible tells us that Abraham, **“rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac” (v. 3).** Before taking Isaac up the mountain, Abraham told the young men he brought with him: **“Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you” (v. 5).**

We are told that Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son as God commanded him while expecting that God would provide a way for both he and his son to come back down the mountain after he followed through with the sacrifice. As he prepared his son for the sacrifice, we are told that Isaac spoke up: **“Father? The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering” (Genesis 22:7, NIV)?** Abraham answered his son: **“God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering my son” (v. 8).** As we read the story, we discover that Abraham prepared his son for the sacrifice and that it was God who had to stop him from going through with it; listen to what God said to him: **“Do not lay a hand on the boy, do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:12, NIV).**

After God provided a ram in Isaac's place, and he was spared, Abraham named the place, "**The LORD will provide**" (v. 14). It is in these verses that we are given another name for God: Jehovah-Jireh. It is in Abraham's naming of the place where Isaac was spared that we are able to understand how Abraham was willing to obey God even if it meant killing his son. Abraham had learned over the years to trust God because he had already discovered that it was not through his son that his identity was found, but in Yahweh. You see, Abraham was not confused about who the Giver was and who the gift was. Abraham held his son with an open hand, in that he was willing to offer him up to God because he understood that Isaac was the LORD's to take; this my friends is how you can keep yourself from loving the gift more than the Giver. When you hold the gifts God has given you with open hands, it is much easier to let those gifts go.

## **Conclusion**

It is not just a warning Paul gives us in our passage, he also shows us a sure way to guard our hearts from making good things into idols. In verse 6 and in verses 17-19, Paul shows us how we can use the gifts God has given us for His glory and for the good of others. In verse six, we are told, "**But godliness with contentment is great gain.**" In other words, contentment that what you have is enough because what you have is God as your treasure, will produce the kind of quality in your life that not even death can destroy. It is the kind of contentment that puts the stuff of this world in its proper place. Here is what Jesus said about stuff: "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also**" (Matthew 6:19-21).

All of your money and all of your stuff is perishable. What is not perishable is the type of godliness that is produced from a contentment in the Giver instead of a thirst for money that will rob you of the satisfaction only God can give. Money is like the salt water of the ocean, it will only make you more thirsty when you drink it because of the high level of salt in it, and if you keep drinking it in an effort to satisfy your thirst, it will eventually kill you.

The second sure way Paul shows us how to grow in our godliness due to a contentment rooted in the Giver, is to not only hold your wealth with an open hand, but practice the same generosity of the One who has blessed you with your wealth in the first place. Here is what Paul wrote:

**As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.** (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

To be haughty with your wealth is to think it is yours to hold on to, and to hope in your wealth is to keep it for your own security. But contentment in the God who blessed you with your wealth will free you from both of those traps; when you are content in God you are able to see your wealth as a gift to be used for his glory and a tool to aid in the mission of God. Yes, God has gifted you your wealth to enjoy, but he has also gifted it to you to bless others through you. Your wealth has been given to you to invest in eternity, not so that you can coast to the grave.

If your contentment is in God's good gifts instead of God himself, here is what the Bible says about your investment: **"Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days"** (James 5:1–3). So, what is a better way to invest in eternity? How do you guard your heart from the love of money? Paul tells us in verses 18-19, **"They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."**

How do you grow in your contentment? You start by focusing your attention on the one who gave you what you have. What do you have that has been given to you? Everything. You were naked when you were born, and you will be naked when you die; you have what you have because God has been good to you. A principle in the Bible to help guard your heart from the love of money is called tithing. Tithing literally means "a tenth" and it is the setting aside of 10% of your income for the purpose of investing it in the work that God is doing in the world. When you tithe, you are reminding yourself and you are telling God: "All that I have is yours, and this that I am giving back is a percentage from the top of what you have blessed me with for your kingdom work." It is amazing how viewing your stuff as a gift from God will help liberate you from the trappings that come with the love of money. My wife and I practice the principle of the tithe and most of it goes right back to Meadowbrooke Church to be used in the kingdom work that God has called our local church into.

I personally do not think that you must start with 10% in what you give back to God's kingdom work, but I do think you should start with some percentage and commit to it. If you think that you have no room to give anything back to God then you have allowed yourself to be robbed of the contentment God wants you to know and experience. Money is not the root of all evil, it is the lifeblood of mission. It is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil.