

Money. It can be an uncomfortable topic for some to talk about. Jesus talked about it, and a lot. Found throughout many of his parables and other teachings; here's a list of a few of the parables:

- The Rich Fool in **Luke 12:16–21**
- The Unforgiving Servant in **Matthew 18:23–35**
- The Workers in the Vineyard in **Matthew 20:1–16**
- The Two Debtors in **Luke 7:41–43**
- The Rich Man and Lazarus in **Luke 16:19–31**
- The Talents in **Matthew 25:14–30**
- The Shrewd Manager (Unjust Steward) in **Luke 16:1–13**

and these are just a few. You get my point. Today, we look at the Bible myth, "Money is the Root of All Evil," a famous misquote of the Bible. The passage from Scripture, where this often is misunderstood, comes from 1 Timothy 6:1–10 "Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed. Those who have believing masters must

not be disrespectful to them on the ground that they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these duties. Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 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 will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a 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."

Timothy begins this letter with a greeting and the author, identified as Paul, urging Timothy to curtail those who teach false doctrines and to promote faithful instruction that recognizes the proper role of the law. Continuing into the letter, it issues warnings about false

teachers in chapter 4 and then coming to the passage we read today, the topic of false teaching is brought up again, with specific attention to the corrupting influence of money. The letter concludes, telling Timothy to be faithful and advice for the wealthy, which we hear just beyond what I read in chapter 6 in verses 17-19 (1 Timothy 6:17–19 “As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 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.”)

At the beginning of this passage of Scripture, Paul is warning Timothy about false teachers, which goes well with our series on Bible myths. Paul is telling Timothy to teach the church things they are to avoid. Paul says these false teachers loved to argue, had lost sight of the truth, and were using faith as a way to get rich. Not different than what we can see in our day. He outlined the importance of being content in life.

Are you content in life or are you chasing the next bigger or better thing?

As we heard in 1 Timothy, it doesn't say that money is the root of all evil, but “the love of money is the

root of all evil.” Most English translations read, 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.' Paul is not saying every evil in the world comes from money. He is saying that a love for money can become the source of countless sins and destructive choices. Money itself, is not bad. We need it to live. We need to use it to buy food, shelter, to clothe ourselves. But unfortunately, money can be an evil thing that we face in this world. And if we value it above other things, using it as an idol, in this world, it becomes an evil in our life. For instance, some of the ways money has been used for evil throughout the history of this world are:

- The Atlantic Slave Trade: Millions of Africans were captured, sold, and transported as slaves over several centuries. While racism played a major role, the slave trade was fundamentally driven by enormous profits generated through human exploitation. This showed that when profit becomes more important than people, human dignity is sacrificed.
- The Enron Scandal in 2001: Executives at Enron manipulated financial records to make the company appear successful. Thousands lost jobs, pensions, and savings while executives enriched themselves. This showed that the love of money can lead people to deceive and destroy lives.
- The Opioid Crisis where companies and individuals profit from the aggressive marketing and over-

prescription of opioid painkillers despite growing evidence of addiction risks. The crisis has contributed to hundreds of thousands of deaths. It demonstrated that financial gain can tempt people to ignore the harm being done to others. Or

- Around the world, we hear of government officials accepting bribes or stolen public funds intended for hospitals, schools, infrastructure, or disaster relief. We see greed often hurts the most vulnerable members of society.

But it doesn't have to be a catchy title in a newspaper or on the TV, as we can see it all around us in:

- A parent working endlessly for more money but losing their relationship with their children. Now, I'm not talking about those who are working long hours simply to put food on the table, pay the bills, or provide for their family. Scripture actually commends hard work and providing for those under our care. I'm talking about the person who already has enough, yet continues chasing more and more. The promotion leads to another promotion. The overtime leads to more overtime. The bigger house leads to wanting an even bigger house. And somewhere along the way, the children stop asking if Dad or Mom will be home for supper because they already know the answer.

- A business owner cheating customers to increase profits.
- A student cheating for a scholarship.
- A person staying in an unethical job solely because of the paycheck.
- Family members fighting over an inheritance.

Money, though, has also been used for incredible good. Lydia supported the early church. Joseph of Arimathea used his wealth to provide a tomb for Jesus. The Philippian church generously supported Paul's ministry. Fundraisers for disaster reliefs around the world, or to help those close to home when an unexpected event occurs.

Money itself is morally neutral—it simply magnifies what is already in the heart. When we love it and worship it, more than God itself; when we're always chasing it, it can be the root of so much evil.

There are people who earn money, not liking to spend it and pile it away. On the opposite side, there are people that make money and spend it right away. I always thought this was the wrong way to be, that being a scrooge, was much better. But I've grown to realize that our relationship with money need not be defined by how much we save or how much we spend. The real question is: What place does money hold in our hearts?

A person can worship money by spending every dollar they get, and a person can worship money by refusing to part with a single dollar. In both cases, money is still in control. God's desire is not that money controls us, whether through spending or saving, but that we use it wisely as a tool while keeping Him at the center of our lives.

Money is one of those things when I first really started understanding and following the teachings of Jesus, I felt very uncomfortable with it. There was an unease with having money, where so many people in this world did not. I have appreciated how Rick Warren has often talked about money. As Rick puts it, "Money is a tool to be used for God's purposes. We're not to hoard it. We're not to stockpile it. We're not to worship it. We're to use it! We can use temporary resources—what God has put in our hands—for permanent good."

As I've mentioned. We need money to live. As Paul mentions in this passage, food and clothing, were used as symbols of their necessities. Necessities vary somewhat depending on societies, yet we all face temptation of coveting more than what we need. As Paul continues, we will be content, a future tense, reminding us to be content when we have life's necessities. And so, you need money to have life's necessities. But how much and what constitutes necessity? Well, that's a conversation between you

and God. As it says in Proverbs 14:8 of The Living Bible translation "The wise man looks ahead. The fool attempts to fool himself and won't face facts." Wise stewardship includes planning ahead. Scripture commends wisdom and foresight. The question isn't whether we should save, but whether our trust is in our savings or in God.

A family member was shocked when I decided to give up my full-time career as a teacher. In fact, they didn't agree with it at all. They didn't know why I was giving up a financially stable career for my family, why I was giving up the benefits that supported myself and my family, and wondered how we were going to make ends meet. I didn't know myself, and I struggled with that for awhile, but I eventually knew that God somehow had a plan. While this was a person that I would listen to for advice, this was one time that I had to disagree with their thoughts, not easily at the beginning, I might add. As they grew to see what God placed in our lives as a family, and saw my life transform as I became a full-time pastor, they saw where God was leading me and my family, and realized, I was where I needed to be at that moment and God had provided. God set in motion the finances we needed for the time we needed it.

Sometimes God calls people to use their resources in surprising ways. Jason Brown walked away from a

lucrative football career in the NFL to become a farmer. He felt God calling him to use his farm to help feed people in need. Through a combination of donations, volunteers, and unexpected support, his farm has provided hundreds of thousands of pounds of food to local food banks. His story illustrates how God often provides through communities and shared generosity.

I have watched other times how God has miraculously placed financial means for individuals when they weren't sure how things were going to work. I have seen support show up for my university endeavours in pastoral ministry. I have talked with an individual who told me the story of how they couldn't pay off a bill that they so desperately needed to pay for their vehicle to run to get back and forth, but they trusted in God, and a short time later, an individual approached them with the exact amount they needed, saying that God told them they could use it, for what they didn't know, but here it was. And I'm sure you have heard of other stories: where a family loses a job and anonymously receives groceries or gift cards on their doorstep, or a widow is unable to pay for a necessary repair, and someone in the church volunteers their labor and materials, or a family facing eviction receives assistance from friends, a church, or a local charity just in time. When we talk about God's provision, we're not promising that God will make everyone wealthy. Sometimes God's provision looks like manna from

heaven. More often, it looks like a friend who shows up at the right time, a church that steps in to help, an unexpected opportunity, or just enough for today. God's provision is not always abundance, but it is often enough. And we are to be part of that story, that provision.

Matthew 6:19–21 says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Randy Alcorn wrote a book called, *The Treasure Principle* from this text. The main principle is this: "You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead." We can choose to lay up treasures in heaven. He gives six keys that fit with this principle:

1. God owns everything; I'm His money manager.
2. My heart always goes where I put God's money.
3. Heaven - the new earth, not the present one - is my home.
4. I should live today not for the dot, but for the line. (In other words, not for this moment here on earth, but in light of eternity!)
5. Giving is the only antidote to materialism.

6. God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.

Money is God's tool placed in our hands. It's not about working so hard to make money, so that we can up our standard of living. It's about increasing our standard of giving. It's about seeing money not as something to cling to, but as something to steward. God entrusts resources to us so that we can bless others, support His work, care for our families, and meet needs wherever we find them.

Some of the most faithful people in Scripture were wealthy. Solomon, for example, was given incredible riches by God. Yet when God appeared to him, Solomon didn't ask for wealth—he asked for wisdom. The wealth came as a by-product of seeking God first. At the height of his life, Solomon had more gold, more resources, and more influence than almost anyone around him. His wealth wasn't the problem. In fact, it was a blessing from God. But Solomon's story also shows something important. When his heart slowly turned away from God, his wealth and success couldn't protect him from spiritual decline. What started as a gift became dangerous when it was no longer anchored in obedience and devotion to God. So the lesson isn't that wealth is good or bad. The lesson is that money is powerful—it can be a tool in the hand of someone who walks with God, or it can become a distraction when

the heart drifts away from Him.

Money is not bad, nor is wealth automatically a sign of God's favor. Our relationship with God must always be greater than our relationship with money. Money makes a wonderful servant but a terrible master. When God is first, money becomes a tool for His purposes. When money is first, it becomes an idol that competes for our hearts. The question isn't, "How much money do I have?" but, "What is God asking me to do with what He has entrusted to me?" Maybe for some of us, God is asking us to trust Him more. Maybe for some, He is asking us to loosen our grip on what we've been holding too tightly. Maybe for others, He is calling us to greater generosity. The real issue is not what is in your wallet, but who sits on the throne of your heart. May we be people who hold our money loosely, trust God completely, and use what He has entrusted to us for His glory and the good of others. Amen.