

Twisted - Money Is the Root of All Evil

This month we have been looking at well-known verses that often get twisted to mean something other than what God intended. When Jesus said we can ask for anything in His name and we will get it, I'm not sure He was talking about the winning Powerball numbers. When Jesus said we are not to judge, He didn't mean that we never judge anyone, anywhere, on anything, but that we are to judge in appropriate, faithful, and loving ways. When God says He has a purpose for us that is filled with prosperity and no harm, it doesn't mean we will never go through pain or problems. When we untwist these verses, we not only have a better understanding of what God is saying to us, but it helps us live out God's word faithfully.

Today we are going to finish our series by looking at what might not be a misunderstood verse but is probably the most misquoted verse in the Bible. When we read the verse properly, it gives us a better understanding of what God's desire is for our lives and how we can be more faithful. My guess is that at some point you have heard that the Bible says: **Money is the root of all evil.**

If that is what God is saying, then the answer to all our problems and to all the evil in the world would be to avoid money or get rid of all we have. But that can't be what God is saying because God is the one who gives us money and wealth in the first place. Scripture is the best means of helping us understand any single verse. When we look at the idea of money being evil, we need to look at what else the Bible says about money. In the Old Testament it says,

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth. Deuteronomy 8:18

So, if God gives us the ability to get wealth and money, then money can't be inherently evil. If God gives us the means to make money, then money can't be the root of all evil. And it's not. Here is what the verse says, ***For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. 1 Timothy 6:10***

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So, it's not money we need to watch out for, it's not money that leads to evil, it is the *love* of money that we need to guard against, and this is in line with what Jesus told us. Jesus said,

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Matthew 6:24

If we love money, Jesus says, then we can't fully love God. If we serve money, if we spend our lives in the pursuit of money, then there is no room left to fully love and serve God. Once again, Jesus isn't saying that money is bad or evil, but if we love money, then we cannot fully love God.

The Bible says that God gives us the means to make money and God is the one who blesses us with wealth so money in itself can't be evil. But if we love money, if we are devoted to it, and serve it, then we cannot fully live for God and that is what leads us into all kinds of evil.

The other thing we have seen that helps us understand what a difficult Bible verse means is to look at its context. Who wrote it or said it? To whom was it said? What is recorded before and after the verse? All this helps us understand the verse more faithfully. The context of this verse is also important for us to consider because this is not a teaching about finances and money, this is a teaching about life and faith.

1 Timothy is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a young man that Paul thought of as his son. Timothy was a companion of Paul's who went on several missionary journeys where they took the gospel of Jesus to people who had not yet heard it. Timothy was devoted to Paul, and Paul to Timothy. The letter to Timothy begins: ***Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy my true son in the faith. 1 Timothy 1:1-2a***

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Paul trusted Timothy above all others to carry on the work that he started in all the churches. Paul eagerly wanted the churches to reflect the life and mission of Jesus, so Paul gave instructions to leaders and advice on how to live and lead faithfully. It is in the context of this teaching that Paul talks about the love of money, but his real message is for Timothy and others to be content.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Contentment is the goal because contentment with godliness, or contentment with faith, is great gain. If we can be content with what we have and if we can be content with God who will give us all we need, then we are rich. If we aren't content with what we have, then we will always be looking for more, wanting more, and telling ourselves that we need more. This is a never-ending cycle.

Studies show that no matter how much someone makes, they always feel like it would be better to make more. More money will always make my life better. More money will make my life more secure. I won't worry about the future if I have more money to put away. The problem with this thinking is that it never stops. Whether someone makes minimum wage or a million dollars a year, they all say that a little bit more is better.

That's the trap Paul is talking about. Once we think money will make life better, there will never be enough. We will never be satisfied, and we will always be looking for more. And it is that pursuit of more that leads to temptation and all kinds of evil.

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The best definition of what it means to love money comes from the man who was once considered the wisest man on earth - Solomon. ***Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. Ecclesiastes 5:10a***

This is the trap of loving money. The more we love it, the emptier we feel. The more we love it, the more we need, because money cannot satisfy us, money can't bring meaning or purpose into our lives, money can't make us feel secure because no matter how much we have, we will always want and feel the need for more. When we love money, the pursuit of money will never end.

The irony is that this verse was written by Solomon, who was known for his wisdom and for his great wealth. Some believe Solomon may have been the richest man who has ever lived, and yet right after this verse on wanting more money and never having enough, Solomon said, ***this too is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 10b***

We will never be content if we think money will make us happy. We will never be content if we think our money will bring us security or make our lives meaningful and full of purpose. Loving money is a trap, and it leads to all kinds of temptations as we plot ways to gain more money and figure out how to hold on to all we have. Loving money this way can cause us to wander away from the faith and that is Paul's primary concern.

In fact, Paul is so concerned about the power of money and wealth to draw people away from God that later on in this letter he makes this strong statement.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 1 Timothy 6:17

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Now before you think that this passage is speaking to someone else because we aren't rich, let's not look at this passage in the context of how we live in our country where we might not see ourselves as rich, let's look at this in the context of all God's people. If you drove here today in your car, you are wealthy. Only 9% of people in the world have a car. By any standard we might want to use, we are rich and so this command is for us.

We cannot be arrogant and think that our money can provide us with the things that God alone provides. Money promises to provide things like happiness, security, significance, and purpose, but these are things God provides. We would be fools to think that our money can provide better than God, and yet we often do.

Paul doesn't just warn Timothy about not loving money and placing his hope and trust in wealth and the things of this world, he shows him, and us, the way out.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

1 Timothy 6:17-18

The antidote to loving money isn't less money, it's more generosity. Money isn't bad. Money isn't the root of all evil, money is what God allows us to make and earn and spend. What keeps us from becoming lovers of money is to be generous with all that we have. Generosity is the key and when Paul talks about generosity, he isn't just talking about giving our money, he also talks about giving our time and energy. I love that Paul commands us to be rich in good deeds, not just in financial giving. Not everyone can give more financially, but everyone can be rich in good deeds. Everyone can share more of their time, their gifts, their talents, and their prayers. This generosity helps keep our hearts from loving money in ways that draw us away from God.

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Pastor David is going to come and lead us in some thoughts on how we can grow in generosity and invite us to think of some specific goals we can set to be rich in good deeds and generous and willing to give and share.

David will come and lead us in the 3 R check in.

Next Steps

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What do the following Bible verses tell us about money?

- **Deuteronomy 8:18**
- **Psalm 50:10-12**
- **Psalm 112:3**
- **Ecclesiastes 5:19**

How do these passages shape our understanding of: *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*. **1 Timothy 6:10**

- Before today's message, how would you have rated your love of money on a scale of 1 to 10?
- What impact did the message have on how you would rate yourself now?
- Have you thought about how much more money you would need to feel secure? What does that say about your heart?

The antidote for the love of money is generosity.

- When has someone's generosity made a difference in your life?
- What are some ways you'd like to be more generous?
- What can you do differently with your money to make a greater difference in the church, community, or world?
- How can you give this week to make that difference?

Pray: God, it's so tempting to fall in love with money and the things that it promises. Help me to seek these provisions only from You. I trust You alone for my contentment and security. Help me to seek significance and fulfillment from You and not my possessions. Forgive me for the ways I've let the love of money grow in my heart and help me to love You more and more each day. AMEN