

WoW Nation

Scripture:

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, **4** he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions **5** and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. **6** But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. **8** But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. **9** People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. **10** 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.

11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. **12** Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. **13** In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you **14** to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **16** who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. **17** 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. **18** Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. **19** In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. **20** Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, **21** which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you. (1 Tim. 6:3-21 NIV)

For the Love of Money

The O'Jays, a legendary singing group from the 70s, recorded a song which perfectly characterizes the behavior described in Paul's first letter to Timothy. The hit song is called "For the Love of Money" and its lyrics are shown here.

Money money money money, money [x6]

Some people got to have it

Some people really need it

Listen to me y'all, do things, do things, do bad things with it

You wanna do things, do things, do things, good things with it

Talk about cash money, money

Talk about cash money- dollar bills, y'all

For the love of money

People will steal from their mother

For the love of money

People will rob their own brother

For the love of money

People can't even walk the street

Because they never know who in the world they're gonna beat

For that lean, mean, mean green

Almighty dollar, money

For the love of money

People will lie, Lord, they will cheat

For the love of money

People don't care who they hurt or beat

For the love of money

A woman will sell her precious body

For a small piece of paper it carries a lot of weight

Call it lean, mean, mean green

Almighty dollar

I know money is the root of all evil

Do funny things to some people

Give me a nickel, brother can you spare a dime

Money can drive some people out of their minds

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*Got to have it, I really need it
How many things have I heard you say
Some people really need it
How many things have I heard you say
Got to have it, I really need it
How many things have I heard you say
Lay down, lay down, a woman will lay down
For the love of money
All for the love of money
Don't let, don't let, don't let money rule you
For the love of money
Money can change people sometimes
Don't let, don't let, don't let money fool you
Money can fool people sometimes
People! Don't let money, don't let money change you,
it will keep on changing, changing up your mind.*

by Kenneth Gamble, Leon Huff & Anthony Jackson

Like the passage of scripture, the words of that song have never been truer than they are today. As greed and avarice have increased, morals and ethics have decreased. As morals and ethics have decreased, sinful behavior has increased *dramatically*. Over the last decade, we have seen evidence of this process of moral and ethical decline played out repeatedly with the fall of companies like Enron, MCI/Worldcom, Healthsouth, Lehman Brothers and countless financial institutions. We've seen further evidence of this process with the fall of wealthy businessmen like Bernie Madoff, former Tyco executive Dennis Kozlowski, Backstreet Boys and N'Sync Founder Lou Pearlman and a host of lesser-known characters who've bilked millions of dollars from clients and associates all because of their insatiable appetite for money. Even the dictators who've been ousted from power during "Arab Spring" have been exposed as little more than common crooks as they've spent years hoarding wealth and resources while many of their citizens suffer in abject poverty. Surely, this type of behavior is deplorable and despicable to God and it has no place in the lives of decent human beings, particularly Christians.

Human nature being what it is believers are not immune to the lure of lucre. That's why Paul took great care in addressing the matter in his letter to Timothy. From the letter, we can learn several valuable lessons regarding the handling of money. Those lessons will be examined here.

1) Practice Godliness with Contentment

“If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain” (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

- a. According to verse 5, some people believe godliness is a way to financial gain. Sadly, there are some believers who pursue godliness in an effort to “fleece God”; they worship or serve Him to receive the blessings and benefits He provides. Sadder still, there are some ministry leaders who use their position to “fleece the flock” so to speak. And while some have been held accountable for misappropriating funds, ultimately, we have to trust God to expose others and mete out justice as He sees fit. In addition, this passage is a stark reminder that while we do need to be good stewards of our resources, giving to God as an act of worship, we also need to pray fervently and exercise due diligence when electing or selecting leaders particularly deacons, trustees and others who are responsible for managing the resources of a church and/or ministry. Whether by election or selection, all of the leaders should be confirmed by the Holy Spirit to ensure their fitness for leadership. Likewise, all believers should pursue godliness with pure hearts and pure motives—genuine love for God being first and foremost.
- b. Godliness, having the character and reflecting the image of God, is a blessing in and of itself. And according to verse 6, godliness *with* contentment is great gain. Being godly *and* content with what you have is a tremendous blessing particularly since contentment seems to be going the way of chivalry these days. It’s not quite dead, but it’s on life support. Gratitude is the key to contentment. Media mogul, Oprah Winfrey was once quoted as saying, *“Be thankful for what you have; you’ll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don’t have, you will never, ever have enough.”* That’s the key to contentment—gratitude. Godliness with gratitude really is great gain.

- 2) **Beware of the Snare (Seducing Spirits)** – *“People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction” (v.9).* We see evidence of this truth acted out daily by many who crave life in the fast lane. Seducing spirits, those that entice and lead people astray, thrive in areas like Tinseltown and Sin City which are built to satisfy every guilty pleasure known to man. And all too often, people willingly indulge in such decadence and debauchery usually to their detriment. Time and time again we see talented young actors and musicians crash and burn before their stars really have a chance to rise and shine. Unfortunately, this type of reckless behavior isn’t reserved for the young and the restless of Hollywood. Quite the contrary. For every tabloid story about former Mouseketeers gone wild, there are just as many stories about

veteran stars behind bars. Some of them simply can't handle success. Many can't handle the excess and access. Still others can't handle the pressure to be perfect 24 / 7 / 365. Whatever the case may be, this scripture is right and true. So beware of the snare caused by fortune and fame. It'll ruin your witness and dishonor the Name.

- 3) **Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God** – *“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” (v.10).* Verse 10 is sometimes misinterpreted as “money is the root of all evil.” However, study this passage and you'll see that it's “the love of money” that is a root of all kinds of evil. Money itself is not a bad thing. Good people can do a lot of good things with money. However, *the love of money*, the willingness to do anything to get it, that's what tends to cause people to stumble. The song lyrics for the O'Jays' iconic hit describe the depths to which some people will sink to get money. They'll steal from family members, rob strangers, lie, cheat and even engage in prostitution. Though not mentioned in the song, some will even commit cold-blooded murder to get money. In the process of doing these types of things, believers compromise their faith and non-believers distance themselves from the Lord even more. Being far from God is a dangerous place to be. It leaves a person physically and spiritually vulnerable to all forms of attack from the enemy. So make a conscious effort to stay close to the Lord both physically and spiritually. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things, all the things you need and perhaps even some of the things you want, will be added unto you (Matt. 6:33; Psa. 37:4).
- 4) **Pursue Righteousness** – Verses 11 thru 16 instruct men and women of God to flee from the temptations, traps and snares of the enemy. Essentially, we have to invoke the power of the Holy Spirit to help us accomplish this goal. So pray early and often for godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness to avoid the pitfalls and peril that have caused many others to stumble or stray from the Lord.
- 5) **Walk in Humility** – In verse 17, Paul teaches that we should not be arrogant nor should we put our hope in wealth which is so unpredictable. Rather, we should hope in God who provides every good and perfect gift for our use and pleasure. If nothing else, The Great Recession of the past few years has taught us all that fortunes are fleeting. They can be here today and gone tomorrow. As such, we would do well to walk in humility whether in plenty or in want. And we should trust in the *source*, God, rather than the *resource*, money, to provide all of our needs.
- 6) **Share the Wealth** – In verse 18, Paul advises believers to do good and to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and willing to share. That's the gospel in a nutshell. As Christians, we should always be willing to share. This includes sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with non-believers; sharing words of encouragement with fellow believers; sharing our gifts with the body of Christ; sharing our resources with those

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in need and so on. We should give generously as we have received from God. In so doing, we glorify God and we bless others. That's precisely what Jesus would do. Therefore, it's what we must do as His disciples.

- 7) **Lay Up Treasure in Heaven** – By doing good deeds and sharing our gifts with others, we store up treasure in Heaven. And the blessings which we store up there are eternal. They'll last forever. They're not temporary or disposable like the blessings we accumulate here on earth. Our treasure in Heaven is invaluable and indestructible. That's treasure beyond measure. So be rich in good deeds. Do what you can, where you can, while you can and our Father who sees and knows all will reward you handsomely when you get to your heavenly home.

Taken as a whole, these lessons beg one important question. ***Can you stand to be blessed?*** It's a fair question in view of Paul's instructions and the examples referenced throughout this piece. To drive the point home further, carefully consider each of the following questions:

- 1) Could you handle the burdens that come along with additional blessings? Could you handle the *work* and *weight* of being a servant-leader? Could you handle the responsibility of managing more goods and/or resources?
- 2) *It's lonely at the top.* Could you handle the loneliness and isolation of being a leader?
- 3) *Success breeds contempt.* Could you handle the attacks from within the camp as well as those from outside the camp?
- 4) Could you still reflect the image of God if you received an overabundance of blessings?
- 5) Could you be content with what you have or would the increase cause you to want even more?
- 6) Would you, like many others before you, become "drunk with power" if fame and fortune found you? Or would you be able to keep both feet planted firmly on the ground?
- 7) Would you compromise your faith or values to get ahead? Or do you "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" and trust Him to provide all your needs?
- 8) Could you stay on the path of righteousness if you had excess and access—excess resources and access to everything? Or would you fall into the traps that ensnare so many others?
- 9) Could you walk in humility if you had untold wealth and resources? Or would you become puffed up as a result of it? Would you honor God as the source of the blessings or would you accept praise for having "pulled yourself up by your own bootstraps"?
- 10) Would you depend more on the resource or on *the* Source of the blessings to determine your identity, stability and sense of worth?

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- 11) Would you tithe and support Kingdom-building efforts or would you rob God (Mal. 3:8-9)?
- 12) Would you share your wealth and resources with others in need or would you hoard the blessings?
- 13) Would you share your time, talent and treasure in service to the Lord or would you pursue other hobbies/interests instead?
- 14) Would you be rich in good deeds or would you concentrate your efforts on being rich in goods and (property) deeds?
- 15) Would you be as faithful to God in prosperity as you were to Him in (relative) poverty?

Your answers to these very pointed questions may help you determine whether you can or can't stand to be blessed. Certainly God knows the answers to each of these questions for each of His children. And just like He knows whom He can trust with certain trials and tests, He knows whom He can trust with certain blessings. Reflecting on your answers to these questions may help you identify areas for growth or change which, in time, may indicate to Him that it's OK to enlarge your territory (I Chron. 4:10).

A few years back, I heard a story which provides a fitting conclusion to this study. The story involved a praise report from a family that had been blessed to purchase a new home recently. It was a great testimony right up to the point where the person giving the testimony concluded that they weren't going to be able to tithe anymore because of their new mortgage payment. I cringed. At that moment, I literally cringed. The fact that their blessing, their new home, was going to change their worship through giving was an indication that their priorities had gotten out of whack just that quickly. *Prosperity is tricky that way.* It can challenge good people in bad ways. Word to the wise, *don't let it happen to you.* As this story clearly proves, you are in trouble when the things you own begin to own you. That's the point of Paul's instructions and that's the key take away from this study. *Learn to control your blessings. Don't let them control you.*

Be blessed.

Elle Bailey