

## **1 Timothy 6:3-10 — What Are The Dangers Of Loving Money?**

**June 18, 2017**

Welcome to the CrossWinds Spirit Lake Campus. Happy Father's Day to those of you who are fathers. I hope you have a chance to spend some time with your children. If you are a visitor, welcome to the CrossWinds family. This summer our special emphasis is called, "Don't just attend church, BE the church." Why do we have this emphasis?

Paul described the church as a family. It is a place where we should have close friendships. It is a place where Christians should genuinely care about one another. That is what we are focusing on this summer. We don't want to just attend church but to be the church, to be a family that loves one another.

There are 10 action steps for the summer we are taking to help us increase the warmth of our welcome. The second one is to make sure you talk to someone you don't know when you are in church. I hope you take the chance to do that today after service.

Across both campuses, we are studying 1 Timothy. Today, we are in chapter 6 and getting close to the end of the book. What will the rest of the summer look like? After 1 Timothy, we will do a short four-week series in the book of Ruth. Everyone that loves a good love story will love the book of Ruth. After Ruth, for the rest of the summer, we will be in a series called Afterlife where we will look at what the Bible says about death, heaven, hell, our new bodies, and eternity. It will be a fun summer. That is just around the corner.

This morning in 1 Timothy, we are talking about something very pressing in our culture. That is money and contentment. We all struggle with the desire to

buy bigger things and own more stuff. If we are farmers, we want more fields and bigger tractors while the rest of us want to buy the latest car and the newest gadget. We subconsciously live by the bumper sticker slogan that says, “The one who dies with the most toys wins.” This morning, as we continue in 1 Timothy, Paul is going to talk about our burning desire for more and more money and how if that desire is not brought under the reign of Christ, it can quickly lead us to the pit of hell. Those are strong words on the dangers of coveting and greed but those are appropriate words because greed and coveting are a lethal disease.

As we open the text, Paul is not going to start out talking about contentment and finances. He will start off talking about false teachers. How do false teachers connect with greed? We will see behind every heresy is a greedy covetous man or woman who started it all.

### **The secret to a godly life is always and only found in Jesus.**

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 1 Timothy 6:3 (ESV)

Paul spent a lot of time warning the church in Ephesus about false teachers in the opening chapters of this book. He talked about false teachers in chapter 1 and chapter 4. He talked about them again in chapter 6. In very strong language he said that anyone pulling people away from Jesus and the truth about Jesus is to not have a part in the church. Paul was very concerned that dishonesty about Jesus or false truth about Jesus not be tolerated in the church, because taking people away from the truth of Jesus leads people straight to hell. It is only Jesus, and belief in the truth about Jesus, that can save us for eternity and change our lives today.

While Paul used strong words about the dangers of distorting the message of Jesus in 1 Timothy, he used even stronger words in Galatians 1.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:6–9 (ESV)

The word accursed doesn't connect with many of us. Some other translations use the word anathema. In the vernacular what Paul said is that if anyone tries to give you a distorted gospel of Jesus, they can go to hell. Those are strong words.

I like the way Paul described the truth about Jesus he gave us earlier in this book. He called the truth about Jesus *the sound words of our Lord Jesus*. The word *sound* literally means *healthy*. The truth about Jesus is what leads to spiritual health. Distorting the truth of Jesus leads to spiritual sickness. Not only is the truth about Jesus our only way to spiritual health with God but he says it is the truth about Jesus that accords with godliness — that means leads to godliness in our lives.

If you want to be a godly man or a godly woman, if you want to have a godly family, feed yourself on the truth of Jesus. It is what leads to a godly life. Anything else will take you away. This means read the Bible in your family. Read the Bible on your own. Make sure you are in church on the weekend so we can study the Bible together.

When someone becomes a Christian and he or she begins studying the Bible, his or her life will change. His or her life changes radically. The words of the Bible are literally healthy, and they produce godliness in us. This is why when we stop reading our Bible or stop spending time in church we begin to drift away from a godly life. Can anybody attest to this in your life? Staying away from the Bible and staying away from the church leads to an ungodly life.

So we know the truth about Jesus leads to spiritual health and godliness. What about those who distort the truth of Jesus. What does his or her life look like?

...he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Timothy 6:4–5 (ESV)

People who are leading you away from Christ are puffed up with conceit. Paul literally said they are arrogant and filled with hot air. Paul's point was none of the apostles decided one day to create a new religion. Jesus, the son of God came and lived among them. Jesus chose them. Jesus did countless miracles to prove his claims to be God, like healing the sick and raising the dead. Jesus died in our places for our sin and then rose from the dead to prove his claims to be God. Nobody made that stuff up. The Bible writers simply reported the truth. They didn't make up the truth. All we can do is listen to Christ's words and follow them. When somebody comes along and tells you to move away from your Bible or you need something other than your Bible, he or she is incredibly arrogant. How dare you come along and say Jesus didn't know what he was talking about? How dare you say the apostles who were with Christ got it all wrong? Are you crazy? What

business does anybody have coming hundreds or thousands of years later to try and correct the apostles who were there and tell the apostles what they did was wrong? It is arrogance to try to correct Jesus or correct the apostles. Jesus healed the sick to prove his authority. Jesus raised the dead to prove his authority. Jesus rose from the dead to prove his identity. What can these teachers who want to correct Jesus do to prove their authority? Absolutely nothing!

Now you might wonder, are there people out there who literally claim Jesus and the apostles are wrong, and with arrogance, attempt to correct them? Yes, there are. If you go to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, this is what their leaders say on their website at [elca.org](http://elca.org).

Listening to the living Jesus in the context of the church, we therefore have the task of deciding among these. Having done this listening, we sometimes conclude either that the writer's culture or personal experience (e.g., subordination of women or keeping of slaves) seems to have prompted his missing what God was saying or doing, or that God now is saying or doing something new.

It is arrogance to think they have the right to correct Jesus and the apostles when they come thousands of years after the fact and were not eyewitnesses to what Jesus said and did.

The descendants of the arrogant false teachers in Ephesus who intentionally distorted the message of Jesus are alive and well today. Who are they? Jehovah's Witnesses clearly change the words of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be God many times in the Bible. The Jehovah's Witnesses see that in the Bible God the Father claims to be God, Jesus claims to be God and the Holy Spirit claims to be God but the Bible also says there is one God. They claim this

doesn't make sense. Jesus and the apostles must be wrong so they wrote a completely new Bible called the New World Translation that says God the Father is God, Jesus is the first created being and the Holy Spirit is an impersonal energy force, like in Star Wars. May the force be with you! What incredible arrogance to change the very words of Jesus thousands of years removed from Jesus and the eyewitness of the apostles.

In academic circles another good example of this is the word of The Jesus Seminar. They are scholars that gather to decide what part of the Gospels that claim to be spoken by Jesus were truly spoken by Jesus. They cross out multiple parts of the Gospel accounts because they don't think they are truly Jesus' words. How can they do that? They are arrogant to think they have any authority, coming almost 2,000 years after the fact, to decide what Jesus did and didn't say when the Gospels were written, while the eyewitnesses of Jesus were still alive and the eyewitnesses never claimed anything Jesus said in the Gospels were a lie. Do you see the arrogance and foolishness of attempts to distort the Gospels?

Paul also said these people aren't just arrogant. They are ignorant. They understand nothing. They may have more degrees after their name than Fahrenheit but they are actually really stupid. They understand nothing. They weren't there. They have no authority. By leading people away from the truth of Jesus they are leading people from the one thing in life that can save them and produce godliness in their lives.

What are these arrogant and ignorant false teachers like in person? They have a sick craving for controversy and fight over words. These people are not

interested in godliness. All they want to do is fight. They want to fight over the meaning of particular words and by focusing on the little things they are missing the big “E” on the spiritual eye chart called Jesus.

While the words of Jesus will produce unity in the church, spiritual health and godly living, the result of anyone who pulls people away from Jesus or distorts what the Bible says about Jesus is they leave behind a church filled with envy, dissension — which means division, slander — talking negatively about people behind their backs, evil suspicions — which means you always assume the worst in others, never the best. There is constant friction. There is constantly fighting among these people. No unity. No trust. No peace.

Why are they this way? Paul said it is because they have a depraved mind. That means they have a sick mind because it is deprived of the truth. If you take the truth about Jesus away from people they end up with a sick mind, constant fighting, bickering, friction, and slander. You end up with constant controversy.

When you stick with the Bible and the words of Jesus you have spiritual health and a godly life. This is why we preach the text. This is why I always want you to go back to your Bible. This is why I beg you to read some of your Bible each day. It is the only way to produce godliness and spiritual health.

Now the million dollar question is why do these people leave the truth of Jesus? Why did Joseph Smith reject the Bible and write the book of Mormon? Why did he reject the apostolic accounts that stood the test of time for almost 2,000 years?

**...imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 1 Timothy 6:4-5 (ESV)**

It is just like the government when they are trying to find the source of terrorism. Follow the money. It is the same story here. Why do you get people rejecting the words of Jesus and the apostolic truth of the Bible? Money. They are greedy people looking for gain. Let me show you how a love of money was behind heresy in the ancient church of Ephesus and how it is behind modern day heresy.

In the ancient world they didn't have television. For entertainment, they went to see public speakers talk on a variety of subjects. One sought-after groups of orators was called the sophists. They would give a talk about a topic using big words and sophisticated logic. The bigger the words, the more sophisticated the logic and the more eloquent the speaker, the more money the person gained in speaking fees. This was the ancient equivalent of television. Television thrives on creating something new. Television companies force your favorite programs off the air after three or four seasons to make room for something new even though there was nothing wrong with what was old. In the same way these public speakers, known as sophists, always had to create something new to impress people with their intellect and creativity. This attitude came into the church. There had been three or four seasons of speaking on Jesus and the apostles, now they needed to create something new to keep the crowds. These false teachers felt it was a good idea to begin to distort the words of Jesus and the apostles into something more captivating, into something more people wanted to hear. In so doing, they gained more crowds and made more

money. Do you see how it was greed that spawned heresy in the ancient church of Ephesus?

The same thing happens with modern heresies today. For example, Joseph Smith, who founded the Mormon church, ended up extremely wealthy and multiple times directed his followers to give him money or even to build him a house. His false religion was about the money. Today the Mormon Church is one of the wealthiest financial institutions west of the Mississippi. They are about money. Charles Russell of the Jehovah's Witnesses was also about money. He became very wealthy. Today, when you look at the health, wealth and prosperity preachers, like Creflo Dollar and Joel Osteen, you find they deviate from biblical truth and say things people want to hear so they can grow a crowd because they are in it for the money.

That brings us to our subject of contentment where Paul told us what is great gain in this life is not more money but living a godly life and learning to be content with the resources God provides.

### **What are true riches?**

**But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 1 Timothy 6:6–8 (ESV)**

A godly life that comes from sticking with the words of Jesus and the words of the apostles then learning to be content with the position in life God gives is great gain.

Paul said we need to remember that we brought nothing with us into this world and we will bring nothing with us out of this world. A hearse is never pulling a U-Haul. We leave it all behind. In this life, if we have food and clothing, we can

be content. Incidentally, the word for clothing in the Greek covers shelter so it technically means that if we have food, clothing and shelter we should be content because at the end of the day, nobody takes anything with them. Let me show you some of the things the Bible says about wealth and contentment.

**True wealth is having Christ, not having money.**

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Hebrews 13:5 (ESV)

The writer of Hebrews said don't love money. Be content with what we have. Don't think you need more and more stuff to be happy. The one thing that really matters in this life is having Jesus. Our relationship with Jesus is the one thing that passes with us beyond the grave. Having Jesus is what makes us truly rich.

This doesn't mean it is wrong to have money but what is wrong is loving money and refusing to be content unless you have more and more money. Having Jesus is far more valuable.

And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” Luke 12:15 (ESV)

**Wealth is a gift from God that can lead us to worship or to wander.**

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, “My power and the might of my hand have

gotten me this wealth." You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deuteronomy 8:11–18 (ESV)

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy that after God's people entered the Promised Land they were to make sure they didn't forget about God with their wealth and prosperity. They were to remember where they came from and the adversity God brought them through so their wealth would result in more worship and in thanking God for his goodness. Wealth can lead to great worship of God as you have a heart filled with thankfulness to God for his good gifts. Wealth can also lead you to wander from God if we start to worship our stuff and start to think it was our ingenuity and wisdom that provided our success instead of giving God the credit because he provides us with every good gift. Wealth can lead you to worship or to wander. Wealth is not wrong; it is what we do with it in our hearts.

**A simple life is not more pleasing to God than a wealthy life.**

The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. 1 Samuel 2:7 (ESV)

The Bible does not teach that being wealthy is a sin. Some of the great men of the Old Testament were wealthy men such as Abraham, Job, David and Solomon. *The issue is not having wealth but does a desire for wealth have me?* It is an issue of contentment. Am I living for wealth or am I living to glorify Christ? The goal of the Christian life is not poverty. The goal of the Christian life is not to be rich. The goal is to love, honor and glorify Jesus no matter what place he puts us. He may put us in a place of wealth, in which we need to learn how to use those resources not just for ourselves but for his kingdom. He may put us in a life of simplicity with just food, clothing and shelter. We need to learn to honor him in

that place as well. In either place, the one thing that really matters is having Jesus. It is our relationship with him that makes a difference for eternity. Everything else we leave behind.

**Seek to please God and he will take care of the needs in your life.**

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:25–33 (ESV)

God knows what we need. Focus on living for Jesus and let him take care of providing what we need. He will. He loves you. He knows exactly what you need each day to please him. If he doesn't provide something, it is because we don't need it to please him in that moment of our lives. If God cares about the flowers of the field, we can trust him to know what we need and to meet that need.

The first goal in our lives is knowing and following Jesus. When we put him first, everything else will fall into place.

So if God blesses you with success in your business, remember you didn't do it. It all came from God. Give him more worship because of your wealth. You can enjoy your wealth but also be generous with your wealth.

If God has blessed you with a simple life, that is OK. You have Jesus, which is the one thing that really matters, and our relationship with Jesus is the only thing we take with us into the next life. Know that God knows what we need for daily life. He cares about us and he will provide for us. For the rich man and for the poor man the goal is to seek God and his righteousness more than money.

It is when a rich man or a poor man begins living for money instead of living to please God that things begin to fall apart.

### **What are the dangers of loving money?**

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. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 1 Timothy 6:9–10 (ESV)

If you have a burning desire to be rich, it leads to many temptations and traps. It leads to senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. The word plunge in the Greek carries the idea of throwing something overboard in a boat and seeing it drop to the bottom of the sea. There is no coming back.

Paul said a love for money is the root of all kinds of evil in people's lives. I want you to notice that it doesn't say money is the root of all kinds of evil but the love of money. A rich person can love money or a poor person can love money. Either way it is the love of money that leads to all kinds of temptations and traps for evil. Let me show you two examples of how quickly covetousness and greed can destroy a life. In Joshua 7, Achan loved money. In the battle of Jericho all of the plunder was to be destroyed. Achan loved money. He took a robe, some

silver and some gold and hid it under his tent, figuring nobody would know. In the next battle at the city of Ai, 36 Israelites died because God withdrew his public hand of protection from his people because of Achan's private sin. When Achan's sin was discovered, it led not just to his death but to the death of his entire family. Achan, his family and 36 men were destroyed because of his greed. As Paul said, greed plunges people into ruin and destruction.

In a similar way, it was greed that led Judas to betray Jesus. For three years, Judas was one of the disciples. He had witnessed countless miracles yet greed for 30 pieces of silver transformed him into Jesus' betrayer. As Paul said, greed instead of contentment plunges people into ruin and destruction.

It is a love of money that births false teaching. It is a love of money that causes us to wander from God rather than worship God when he provides financial blessing. It is a love of money that causes worry and panic over our basic needs when if we simply set our hearts on honoring Jesus we know he promises to provide those basic needs, and many times much more.

Loving money is a subtle but deadly disease. The cure to focus on the incredible value of having Christ, which is the one thing that passes beyond the grave and to remember that when we die, no matter what we have amassed for ourselves, we will leave it all behind.

How do I know if the deadly disease of greed is flowing in my veins? As I close, here are a few questions to ask yourself.

### **How do I know if I love money?**

- 1. Am I more concerned about the size of my paycheck or honesty and good work in my job?**

- 2. Do I always want to buy what is novel or new the moment it comes on the market or have I learned to be content with what I have?**
- 3. Am I borrowing myself into bondage?** Most debt is driven by greed.
- 4. Do I tithe?** Most people who don't tithe fail to tithe because they are unwilling to cut back on their lifestyles. At the core, they are motivated by greed.
- 5. Do I flaunt what I wear, drive or own?** If I enjoy showing off the expensive things I wear, drive or own, chances are I flaunt it because I love it and greed may be behind it.
- 6. Do I resent giving it away?** Am I a cheap tipper? If I am a cheap tipper, it may be because at my core I am a greedy, money lover.
- 7. Am I willing to enter morally gray areas to gain money?** Am I honest on my taxes? Am I honest in my farm work? Am I honest in the mileage I track and turn in on my expense reports?



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