

Blind Spot

Introduction

As we close out our series on First Timothy, Paul has one more instruction for Timothy. He is going to revisit false teachers but this time he focuses on two traits that identify all false teachers.

False teachers have a few blind spots. Things that they don't see but anyone else who knows what to look for sees clearly. Paul is going to tell Timothy that false teachers crave controversy and they crave money.

It is often that when you study the Bible, the bible actually studies you. You see yourself as you study someone else. While looking at false teachers and their blind spot, sometimes God shows you yours.

False teachers don't worship God they worship themselves and they worship money. True followers of Jesus worship God and pursue godliness.

We live in the United States. Our most desolate places rank in the top 25% of places in the world to live. That is why traffic at the border is one direction.

Everyone in the world knows that we are all rich. Oddly, we don't seem to realize that. If you make more than \$20K per year, you are in the top 10% of worldwide wealth. However, we are some of the most discontented and worried people on the planet. Materialism is our blind spot. We don't realize that we have a love of money and an insatiable desire for more.

Greed and materialism drive almost everything that happens in the US. Look deep enough and you will see it. Paul says the same thing is true of false teachers. Look deeply and you will see greed.

Greed and materialism are topics that I feel uniquely qualified to teach on. Sadly, this was a huge blind spot for me for a large part of my life.

I want to share part of my journey to GOd with you. Many of you know the details, but they are pertinent to Paul's final instruction to Timothy in this series.

A lot of people will tell you, when they witness about what God has done in their lives, how they were stripped of everything and looked up and found God. My story was actually the opposite. God gave me everything that I ever wanted so that I would know that it means nothing without Him.

At the age of 35, I had been away from churches for half of my life. I saw the people there as hypocrites and I wanted no part of Religion. I was a strongly moral person who lived my life with the integrity and character that my parents instilled in me.

Deep down, I didn't think that I needed God because honestly I thought I was my own god. I expected people to worship me...to live for me....to put my priorities as their top priorities. I was the epitome of the arrogant doctor who thought he was god.

By the age of 35 I had accomplished all that I set out to do....I was an awarded Internal Medicine Physician with one of the busiest practices in all of Phoenix. I was the Medical Director of a large physician group and had leadership roles at all 4 of the hospitals where I was on staff.

I had been nominated as physician of the year by each hospital where I was on staff. I was listed in Phoenix Magazines Top Doc edition as one of the top five Internists in Phoenix 3 years in a row. I taught residents and was chosen as their teacher of the year and was awarded teacher of the year by ASU's nurse practitioner program.

I was only 35 years old and yet I was running out of things to accomplish. My practice included the poorest of Phoenix, a large AIDS population, while at the same time including the mayor, the governor, presidents of huge corporations, several professional sports teams and was the physician for the TPC Scottsdale PGA tournament.

Tammy and I, after years of miscarriages, had three wonderful children and we had just moved into an incredible home in Scottsdale on..I am not kidding...Paradise Lane. I was traveling a bit around the country sharing the success story of our medical group.

One of our practices had just been purchased and I was given a good deal of money at the time. My professional life was thriving, my family life was thriving, I owned everything that I could think to own and I only purchased the best. From the outside my life was the example of the American Dream Success Story.

I was at the time, worshipping two god's...Me and MY Money. I had been told my whole life that if I studied hard, worked hard, and made sacrifices that one day I would have IT...

The problem was that they never told me what IT was. I thought money and success would bring me security, happiness, and fulfillment. By the time I was 35 I remember thinking that I had accomplished all that I had ever dreamed of doing or becoming.....My home was incredible, I loved my wife and family dearly, our bank account was flush...cars were new...we had dear friends....we traveled a good deal...my family and my kids were healthy...

And yet...I was miserable. I was so empty inside. I was anxious about everything....losing all of my money...losing my practice...being sued for malpractice...Anxious about my patients....worried about myself...On the outside my life was rocking...on the inside it was rotten. I realized one day that my whole life was a lie.

I remember being really angry...furious that the world had sold me a lie. I had worked hard and made sacrifices and I had accomplished everything that I set out to do...and it was supposed to make me secure and happy...yet I was empty and depressed. I was trapped by my success and had not yet learned to separate my value as a person from my accomplishments.

I put on an arrogant and obnoxious front so that no one would see the deception and struggle that I was going through on the inside.

One day I pulled into my garage in our wonderful home on Paradise Lane and I sat in the car trying to think of something that I could buy that would finally make me happy. I

was so empty inside and so miserable and depressed and anxious and worried....I cried out that this cannot be all that life is about. There has to be more to it...chasing money, power, prestige and the accolades of other people...is a dead end. I had been there and done that, and it almost destroyed me.

It was in that moment that I realized I would give up all that I had if I could just find peace and contentment. Thus began my journey back to God. When I began searching with my heart, desperate to find truth, I was finally ready to truly meet Him.

Jeremiah 29:12–14 (ESV) 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the Lord,

Once my heart was ready....and I surrendered in faith...God changed me into a completely different person. I hate the person that I used to be. I am ashamed and embarrassed to have done to others what I did during those years. I don't know why God stepped into my mess and showed me the way home, but I am thankful every day.

Looking back, I can see now that God gave me everything that I ever wanted....so that I would know that all the world offers in empty....I think He knew that the only way I would stop pursuing myself and my materialism, is to give me all that I thought I desired so that I would never pursue it again. No one needs to convince me that the love of money leads to emptiness and destruction.

I learned that all that the world offers, will never bring true contentment. The words of Jesus penetrated my soul. Matthew 16:26 (ESV) 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

That is exactly what Paul desired to teach Timothy. Ephesus was a very wealthy city...many in the church were pursuing money instead of God. In fact, Paul is going to tell Timothy that money is the primary motivation of false teachers. As he closes out this letter he returns back to the threat of the false teachers...and in the process teaches us about finding contentment.

Paul is going to give Timothy two primary motivations of false teachers...They want to be worshipped as gods....and thus crave controversy...their truth challenging God's truth...and we will learn, that they crave money. I have never seen a false teacher who didn't at some point early on, pursue money from others.

1 Timothy 6:3–4 (ESV) 3 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, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

The measure of the gospel is godliness...for humans to become more like God. Not to become gods but to be so shaped, connected to and influenced by God that we begin to manifest His heart as He works His Spirit through us. We want to be more like God and we want others to see Him in us. The

truth doctrine...the true gospel...produces godliness in His followers. Not something they accomplish...something that God brings through them. As we surrender to God...He transforms us.

The only way that believers obtain and manifest godliness in their lives is by being completely surrendered to what the Holy Spirit wants to do. The Spirit of God always wants to bring honor to Jesus.

As we abide and surrender, He changes us supernaturally...not something we set out to do and accomplish but something we become often in spite of our efforts. False teachers look at our lives and know that we have something that they do not have. Their pride and arrogance prevent them from surrendering to Christ in faith and so they fake it.

They pretend to have godliness...they truly believe that they can make themselves into a follower of Christ...without ever following Christ. They are jealous of those who have the Spirit of God and are sent to churches to attack those that they actually hate...Spirit filled believers who follow the truth and manifest true godliness.

Remember a key difference between true believers and false believers...True believers interact with God and others through their heart.....false believers try to interact with God and others through their mind....because that is all they have.

Satan always tries to attack a believer's minds...because our hearts belong to Jesus. So the false teacher wants godliness and is jealous that you already have it...so he attacks....

1 Timothy 6:3–5 (ESV) 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.

False teachers always want to argue their point...they want to quarrel about the minutest details of words...they leave behind them a trail of division, doubt and friction between people. They crave this...they love controversy and quarreling with people. They are proud of their intellect and want to demonstrate it to all. They slander church leaders and try to sow doubt among the flock.

These are not just misled or uninformed believers....Paul says that they are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth....I have always thought that description was the best. They have depraved minds...and they are deprived..or kept from...prevented from seeing the truth. They find others with similar issues and together they attack the church.

Imagining that godliness is a means of gain. They think that they can work toward and accomplish godliness...as if it is something that they accomplish on their own. The type of godliness that they pursue...the worship of themselves...may fool some and bring some false praise, but they gain nothing. What they really want is for those who do not yet know Jesus to worship them and their altered gospel....they want the godliness that the world offers...

Paul is describing what I discovered when I pursued my own godliness....I was never a false teacher in the church, but I suffered from the same disease...I was depraved in mind and deprived of the truth.

I grew up in church... had a pretty good awareness of the bible and its message...but my mind worshipped me and I was prevented from seeing the truth. I had deceived some into thinking I had it all going on...but it was all a sham.... a facade.

I had obtained and accomplished what others said I should do...but unfortunately I did not know Paul's next verse.

1 Timothy 6:6–8 (ESV) 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

True godliness that comes from faith and abiding in Christ has something no other false teaching can produce.....CONTENTMENT

Contentment...to be at peace with God, at peace with those around you, at peace with your past, your present and your future...Living in a way where you abide with Christ, surrender to all He requires and place all of your trust in Him.

When you experience the contentment that comes from the Holy Spirit, you know you have all that you will ever need. We learn the lesson that every false teacher has failed to learn...true godliness comes from God...not from the things of man....You can never obtain on your own through deception and lies what God freely gives to those who surrender.

The one thing that Satan and false teachers can never offer...is the contentment that comes from abiding with Christ in the Holy Spirit. False teachers want to pretend that they have it....they want to convince you that you don't have it...and they crave controversy. They want you to doubt your faith and believe in them.

Why does a false teacher work so hard to deceive and disrupt? Because they see the church as a vulnerable target for their ultimate goal...the worship of ...not God, but money. They want to use the church to fund themselves.

They crave controversy because they can use controversy to satisfy their craving for money. One of the ways that I distinguish false teachers is to look for their desire to prosper from their actions...getting people to fund their ministry...to buy things for them...to give things to them...I have never seen a false teacher that did not seek money. So Paul continues his warning to Timothy and explains why these things happen.

1 Timothy 6:9–10 (ESV) 9 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. 10 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.

I have literally lived that truth. I spend 35 years of my life...worshiping money and all that it would bring me and do for me. I know very personally what it means to desire to be rich and to have the love of money....

But notice something very critical here that is often misquoted. It is the desire to be rich that is the problem...not being rich. It is the love of money..not money that is the root of all evil.

What I had to address was that in my heart, I was a very greedy person. Until I confessed that sin, nothing would change. You see my problem was not with money...whether I had a lot or a little...my bank account had nothing to do with it because whatever the balance was...it was never enough.

My problem was not money....My problem was the desire and love of money. I had made money my God. I depended upon it for comfort, security, peace, and purpose....my love of money almost destroyed me.

One day God spoke directly to me in the Book of Luke.

Luke 12:13–15 (ESV) 15 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.”

Jesus warns us to watch out! Jesus teaches us that there are all kinds of greed. Many would say that they are not like scrooge and they don't have greed because their heart goes out to those in need, their heart goes out to those who are starving, their heart goes out to those who are homeless, and their heart goes out to those who are victims of crime or natural disasters.

My heart goes out so I have a compassionate heart and thus I don't think I really have a greed issue in my heart. But Jesus says, watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed.

The kind where your heart moves but your wallet doesn't

The kind of greed where your heart moves but your time stays on your agenda.

Jesus is essentially saying, hey for those of you who don't think greed is an issue, your life is not defined or found in the abundance of your possessions. What Jesus is saying that is so powerful.

He teaches us that there is a kind of greed, probably the most common kind of greed, where you live as if the acquisition, the hoarding, the constant upgrading and the storing up of possessions defines your life.

Jesus says that there is a type of greed that we can be totally unaware of....a more subtle type of greed...

Your life is defined by a type of greed where your possessions are placed at the altar of your god...you.

Jesus says that there is a type of greed that we can be totally unaware of where life is all about purchasing, upgrading, hoarding for our desires. Then someone comes along and asks if we would make a \$500 donation for someone else.

Then we look in our immediate checking account and tell them that I don't have an extra \$500 but here is \$20. I will spend all kinds of energy, all kinds of time, and all kinds of money to upgrade my lifestyle but if you want a donation or there is a need, I looked in my checking account and I don't have the cash so I better not.

What is up with that? We will rearrange the world to buy stuff for ourselves, but have short arms when someone else is in need. Do you know what Jesus calls that? Greed.

Many of us live our lives as if they depend upon the latest purchase, the latest upgrade or the latest want. You can call it whatever you want, trendy perhaps, but Jesus says, I am going to call it greed. You will begin to see it when someone asks for a gift or donation. Which by the way, I am going to do later in this sermon

Isn't it amazing how different our attitude is toward spending than it is toward giving?

In other words we will spend money that we don't have for things that we don't need. But will not give what we do have to those who really need it.

Why is it that we can't give \$100 but we will put \$4000 on a credit card if it is for us?

Here is the deception that we all buy into. We say, I feel compassionate, I feel sorry for others, I really want to give, I really love my church, I really want to help meet that need, I really want to help that cause, I really want to be generous, and I have all these great heart feelings but I just can't write the check. I feel like my heart is good because of all these feelings but I can't give you the dollars because they are not immediately accessible.

Then we turn right around and leverage and borrow and make poor financial decisions purely for the sake of me, my lifestyle, what I drive, etc. What is that? Jesus says it is greed.

Here is what God has taught me about greed.....Greed says, "I Worship ME" Greed is using God's resources and treasures for the worship of a false god- us. Greed is not a money issue but rather a heart issue and Jesus wants to deal with it and clean out our hearts,

You will know that you are conquering greed in your heart when you work as hard to reallocate your resources for the needs of someone else as you do for your own wants. Let's unpack this a bit further. Please join me in Matthew 6:19. This passage is so powerful because Jesus gives us a very practical way to allow God to change our hearts.

Matthew 6:19 (ESV) 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,

It is a clear command...don't do it! Now we will see later that He is not talking about don't have a savings account, don't have a retirement account, or don't save for your kids college fund. This is not a verse against being responsible. In fact, in other verses of the Bible we are told to be like the ant and stores up for the winter and life's eventualities.

This is not about go liquidate everything and live on the street and God will bless you. Jesus is not arguing here for irresponsible living. I know many people who are self-righteous, pious, and arrogant about their poverty. Jesus is not teaching us to adopt that sinful attitude. He is addressing those of us who keep swapping out the old for the new and who are on this incessant hoarding mission chasing our wants rather than His needs. Jesus says, Stop it!

Jesus says....release your death grip on the stuff in this world. Stop hoarding things in your heart and in your life on earth. You can own stuff, just don't let it own you. Let me ask you this question...Where do we usually store our stuff?

We are great at filling up homes, garages, attics, storage sheds....we tend to store up all of our stuff near us in our homes.

Jesus says....that is great. You should store up all of your valuables at home...but my disciple...my followers....remember...this place is not your home.

Matthew 6:20 (ESV) 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

The only thing Jesus wants us to store are the spiritual things in our lives that belong at our home...in heaven. Those are the only things worth keeping and they are so valuable they belong in heaven. What are these kinds of treasures?

We are to treasure the Lord Jesus most of all. When Jesus is our treasure, we will commit our resources—our money, our time, our talents—to His work in this world. Our motivation for what we do is important .

When we live sacrificially for Jesus' sake or serve Him by serving the body of Christ, we store up treasure in heaven. Even seemingly small acts of service do not go unnoticed by God. "If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward" (Matthew 10:42).

Jesus says....store up true treasures in heaven....when it comes to the things on earth....He tells us to give that junk away.

Just in case you don't believe me, let's jump back over to Luke where He is teaching the same lesson.

Luke 12:33 (ESV) 33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.

It is Jesus' way of saying I want you to liquidate some of your possessions. Not all of them. Meet the needs of your family and reasonably plan for your future but upgrade someone else's life out of the abundance I have given you.

I want you to quit thinking about your bigger and better and more and I want you to get really creative and give some thought to how you can reallocate things from your kingdom to God's Kingdom, your needs to someone else's needs, your wants to someone else's wants. So Jesus teaches:

Don't be a hoarder of things. Be a giver.

Then he gives us the reason why. I love this about God. Every time God challenges us with a difficult command, He provides the encouragement that we can do it, and He

gives us the blessing that will follow if we obey Him. Now both of our passages in Luke and Matthew end with this promise. What do you think the promise would be?

You would expect Jesus to say, don't store up your treasures because people are hungry and need food, don't store up your treasures because people need clothes and you have 2 closets full, or don't store up your treasures because you have 2 empty bedrooms and others are begging for a tent, or don't store up your treasures because young girls are sold into sex trade and we can purchase their security, or don't store up your treasures because a community without vibrant churches isn't worth living in.

Those would be good reasons to not store up stuff right? But that is not where Jesus goes here. Not that He disagrees, but He is teaching us a huge lesson about greed and our heart. Jesus once again cuts to the core of what drives our decisions. He takes us to this powerful principle that if applied to your life on a daily basis will keep your heart free and clear of greed and will provide for the needs of others.

Luke 12: 34 (ESV) 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:21 (ESV) 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus says I want you to get greed out of your heart because there is a connection between your treasure and your heart. Jesus knows that if we can get our hearts in the right place all those other needs we mentioned will be well funded and others will be cared for.

Greed is not about your money. Greed is not about how much money you have....You may have tons of stuff....or you may just have what is on your back....it doesn't matter....It is not about how much you have, but the condition of your heart and your thoughts regarding what you do have...or more specifically what you think you deserve. Remember Jesus searches the heart but tests the mind.

Jesus looks at what He has given you and checks your heart to see what you think about it. Then He says that where your treasure is....that is where I find your heart.

Said another way. If I watch how you manage my money entrusted to you, I will know very quickly who you really worship.

Show me the investment of your money and I will show you the current condition of your heart.

If you want to know where your heart is right now, follow the money trail. Look through your checkbook, your American Express Bill, your VISA register, go online and look at your bank account. Look at how you spend your disability check, look at how you spend the money that you do come across, look at how you spend the money you earn in day labor.

But wait a minute you say, I know my money doesn't show it but my heart goes out to them...my heart wants to help them...I feel for them....if you want to know where your heart is and not just what your heart feels...watch the money trail.

Your feelings come and go but the condition of your heart and the location of your money reveal the truth about the condition of your heart.

Have you ever watched someone make an investment in a stock? All the sudden they are checking the stock price several times a day. They never checked the stock price before. They may not even know what the company does. But now they are invested in how that stock does. They made an investment. They have to check on it several times a day because where your money goes....your heart goes.

Now if you have checked out because this is a pastor giving a money talk, check back in for the next three minutes. I want to tell you why we are talking about how you spend God's money and let you know that I am a volunteer. I have no dog in this fight except to see God's mission for this church come to fruition. This is so important and this is what Jesus says. The reason that I want you to sell some stuff and give it away, the reason that I want you to begin to reallocate, and the reason that I want you to begin to give generously is this.

Where your money goes today shows where your heart is, but if you make a decision to change where your money goes...your heart will change and go there also. Where you spend your money is an indicator of the current condition of your heart but it can also be used to change your heart.

Jesus teaches us that He wants to move our heart toward what He is doing. But the only way that happens is to move our treasure first.

If you spend your money somewhere else, in a matter of time, your heart will follow. If you move your treasure from your kingdom to God's kingdom...your heart takes a huge step toward God.

Jesus says, I don't want your stuff, I want your heart. I am the one who gave you "your" stuff Jesus knows that if we will make the hard and difficult decision to reallocate our wealth then our hearts will follow where our money went. We can't pursue the things of God with our heart unless we invest in them with our treasures.

Jesus is teaching us the antidote to greed....Greed says "I Worship Me...I invest in me...My treasure goes to me...my heart is all about me"....The antidote? Giving.....endless generosity.

If you end the pursuit of endless acquisition and replace it with endless generosity, you will strip your heart of greed.

Jesus tells us to systematically begin sending our money outside of our kingdom and toward God's kingdom and in time our heart will follow. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV).

Notice that Jesus did not say, where you serve, there your heart will be also. Or where you attend, there your heart will be also. Or where you wish your treasure could go, there your heart will be also. He says that where your treasure actually is there your heart will be also. So when you make a financial investment in a community of believers your investment is much deeper than a financial one. You take your heart there.

Your money and your possessions have the potential to redirect your heart. God wants your heart connected to Him and to your church. When you take God's resources and use them to worship yourself...God calls it greed. Jesus then clears it all up

Matthew 6:22–23 (ESV) 22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Isn't that helpful? That cleared everything right up. Once again the disciples must have been scratching their heads. Jesus we were talking about our heart and giving and generosity and now you go random and begin to talk about eyes, our body, darkness and light. Jesus, what are you talking about?

Everything that Jesus said and did was brilliant. If it doesn't make sense dig deeper until it does. Ask the Holy Spirit who teaches all things to show you what you are missing.

Jesus is doing a word play here. Just as your eye directs your body...where you focus is where you go. It is hard to go somewhere that you are not looking at. Your eyes lead your body just like your treasure leads your heart. Show me what you are looking at and I will show you where you are going. Show me what you treasure and I will show you where your heart is going.

Your treasure is not just an indicator of where your heart is but it can also be an indication of where your heart is going to be.

Jesus says that if your eye is good. The word Luke used for good is used nowhere else in the New Testament. That word can mean good but it is also used to mean generous. So Jesus is saying to them, if your eyes are generous your whole body will be full of light.

Then He goes on and says that if your eyes are bad. The Greek word that Luke uses for bad is used in Matthew 20 and is translated envious. That little Greek word can mean bad or envious. So Jesus teaches us that if your eyes are generous your whole body will be full of light, but if your eyes are envious, hoarding stuff for you, your whole body will be full of darkness.

Your giving eye, generous or envious, impacts your whole body...your whole life. In other words, this issue of the heart, this greed vs. generosity has the potential, not just to impact you financially, but has the potential to impact your whole life. Every facet of your life will be impacted by your perspective of your possessions.

Let me ask you this. Have you ever met an extraordinary generous person that was not happy? Think about the most generous people that you know and I can promise you that your first thought of them brings a smile because they are happy people. Notice that they are not happy because they have money to give away, they are happy because they actually do give it away.

Jesus says that because they have generous eyes, their whole life is full of light. Have you ever met an envious, greedy rich person? They also have lots of money to give away but where they happy? No.

The paradox is that having money does not bring happiness, having money and giving it away to others brings happiness. Having money and giving it to God's purposes brings supernatural joy, true peace, true contentment and true satisfaction.

So you see, this is not a financial issue. It is not a “give to the church so we can accomplish the work that God have given us to do” sermon. Rather, this is about the condition of your heart. I believe that the reason God allows us to steward His resources is that it allows us to know where our hearts are.

God already knows the true condition of our hearts, but He uses our management of His money to reveal that condition to us. He allows us to manage His treasure so we can discover our hearts not as we see them but as He sees them.

Jesus says that you have got to make the tough decision to begin sending your stuff and your money in a new direction. Not because God needs you to move your money somewhere else. He could take all of your money away in a split second. No He wants you to move your money in a new direction because He knows that your heart will follow and you must know the condition of your heart.

Generosity breaks the power of greed in the human heart.

Then Jesus continues

Matthew 6:24 (ESV) 24 “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.

Ok God. You got me and I am convicted. I feel guilty because I know that I owe you. I learned that in week one. But what am I supposed to do? Does this mean that I should never upgrade my stuff? That I should be listening to 8 tracks and eating TV dinners on folding trays and making Jiffy Pop? How long does the 1972 Green Ford Pinto have to last? Does this mean that I have to sell my lake house, or my boat, and I am to never get a new car? Does it mean we never upgrade our clothes? I want to be obedient, but how does this work?

If I know I have greed in my heart...what do I do about it. How do I implement generosity in my life and find the right balance? How do I love Jesus with my money instead of loving my money?

Well first of all notice what Paul did not tell Timothy. He didn't tell Timothy to make all the rich people give up their money and prove their love for God. In fact, God pours out resources so that the gospel can be advanced. God is not against money it is all His anyway. Being poor doesn't make someone more spiritual and being rich is not to be treated as a curse from God. God gives to those who can manage and distribute His resources. If He can get it through you, He will get it to you.

1 Timothy 6:17–19 (ESV) 17 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. 18 They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 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.

Jesus also said that to whom much is given much is expected. Managing God's resources takes enormous responsibility and a constant check of the heart. You and I are not just rich financially (if you make more than 15K you are in the top 10% in the world) we are rich in time, talent and our treasures.

Once you learn to be generous with the money God allows you to have, He stretches you to be generous with your time...and your talent...eventually God wants you to be generous with every aspect of your life.

Generosity is the antidote of Greed. Being generous is the source of contentment...godliness comes from full surrender and Paul says Godliness with contentment is great Gain.

Paul is giving Timothy the best way to identify false teachers. Their heart is all about themselves. They want the center of attention....they want your attention....they have spent years treasuring and investing in themselves and so their heart is all about them at the expense of others.

When you examine them...and you should.... look to see if they have generous hearts....look to see if they have peace and contentment... look to see where they invest their time, talent and treasure. I believe that I have lived on both sides of this equation.

I was a greedy person. I have had to learn to shift where my money goes so that my heart will move there also.

I had to allow Jesus to begin cleaning out this ugliness in my heart. Let me share with you how generosity has begun to stomp out greed in my life. Please understand I am sharing what Jesus has done in me....not praising myself. Much of what has happened in this area has been in spite of me....not because of me. It has taken me years to learn what others probably could have learned in months because I am selfish, greedy and stubborn. In many ways I fought God with every step. Let me share with you just a few ways God has led me to destroy greed in my heart. What God has done in my life to help me overcome the self worship of greed

Years ago I was challenged to look at where I was spending money. To see if I was chasing God or myself. I was a biblical tither...and gave above that to other ministries. But I tripled that amount of money each month spend on playing golf. I think I was hoping one day to join the Senior Tour.

God led me...ok dragged me....to stop playing golf for a while...and to reallocate that money to something that He had planned for me.

I immediately obeyed. I quit playing golf and I took the money and invested it in a new ministry called Saline Souldution. Tammy and I decided to take this money and pay for the medical care of homeless people.

We bought an RV and converted it into a medical unit. We bought medicines, bandages, medical equipment....EKG machines...lab machines...we cared for over 1500 people per

year for over 10 years. We never seemed to be able to raise enough money so over those ten years Tammy and I, never told anyone but we funded about 90% of everything that ministry needed.

While many of my colleagues were investing in stocks, retirement plans and other things...we took those resources and put it into this ministry.

Looking back I can see that God wanted to make sure that I funded that ministry...because the lesson was mine to learn. If others had done it...I would have probably never learned about the blessings that come from reallocating your possessions to the purpose of God.

Little did I know that those steps of obedience....would lead to the Remnant Cafe today.

Looking back now, I can see that I gave up really nothing....to gain everything.

People ask me...why are you and Tammy so invested in caring for the homeless and those others overlook?

Its easy really.....we shifted our treasure and our heart followed. The more we invested..the more our heart moved.

How do you develop a deep love for the things of Jesus? Move your money out of your storehouse and in to His. Stop worshiping you and start worshiping Him. Generosity is the antidote to greed.

Many years ago on my birthday it was my habit of going out and spending money I didn't have on things I didn't need but desperately thought I deserved. It was just a warm up for Christmas.

One year as I was praying and planning to go shopping. I felt God tell me...why don't you give something really valuable to you away to someone who would really appreciate it? Take something that has great value to you and bless someone else with it. Empty part of your storehouse as your birthday present to Me.

Every year on or around my birthday I bless someone with something that has great value to me...always something I cherish. Over the years it has been computers, money, timeshares, cars, bicycles, our RV and even a rare fountain pen. God tells me what to give and who to give it to....and I already know the answer Yes Lord. Over the last few years I no longer wait for my birthday. If God leads me to let go of something...I give it away. I don't sell it....I give it. It is part of my therapy.

I can't tell you the joy I receive seeing someone else being blessed by something.It is easy and feels good to give away what you no longer need.... or have plenty of....but please hear this...giving away leftovers doesn't rid greed from your heart. Start giving away what matters to your heart and see what God does....Generosity is the antidote to greed.

I will share one more with you to bring honor to what God has done in my life...

I have been a pastor for over 20 years. Tammy has been in full time ministry Director of the Cafe.

During those years we have not for the most part been funded by the church. I received a salary at one point for about two years but gave it up in order to keep another pastor from being laid off. Churches are always underfunded.

Tammy and I are volunteers...I can speak today about tithing completely guilt free because I don't receive a salary.....I have nothing against pastors who are funded by the church...in fact, the word says they should be, particularly those who teach.

But for me....a man who struggles with greed....just for me and no one else....God has instructed me not to receive pay for what I do for Him. Not because it is wrong...but because He has called me to generosity to the church in order to help me rid the ugly greed that still remains in my heart.

Tammy has never received a penny from the church to serve and she has always worked more hours than I have. I tell her all the time, that her storehouse in heaven is going to be incredible. I hope that she will let me visit once in a while.

We have learned that Generosity is the antidote to Greed.

If you want to allow Jesus to clean out your heart of greed....Offer everything you have in your earthly storehouse to Him and let Him tell you how to redirect it for His worship instead of yours.

If you have a home, He may lead you to share it with someone in need for a while. He may lead you to sell it, downsize, and free up money for His kingdom.

If you have closets full of clothes..He may tell you to give it all away....not sell it...give it away.

He may ask you to skip a vacation one year and invest that money and time in what He is doing.

Look at your garage and attic. What are you keeping there and who is it helping? Do you have lawn equipment your don't need? Tools that you don't use? Sleeping bags and tents that you don't plan to use again? Bicycles that could really help someone? Umbrellas, tarps, strollers, kids toys, sporting equipment....Generosity is the antidote to greed.

It is incredible that once you move your heart toward giving and generosity instead of spending and greed....God shows you hundreds of ways to give to others.

But then that shouldn't surprise us.He wants our hearts to be truly His. He doesn't need your money....the only reason you have any money is because He allowed it...But He gave you and I money to show us where it would take our heart.

Let me close with this....Greed is subtle. Greed is an ugliness in our heart that we don't think we have. Greed moves our hearts away from God. Greed was rampant in Ephesus and greed is what drives almost everything in our nation. It is a personal and national blind spot for almost all of us.

The heart of our nation no longer worships God. Why? Because we have invested our treasure in ourselves and not in God's Kingdom. We are no longer a nation under God and we are clearly not indivisible. Jesus said where you treasure goes your heart will follow.

Followers of Jesus often lack the intimacy with Him that we desire because we are blind to the greed he wants us to see and confess. God gave you resources to invest in His Kingdom. By watching what you do with what He has given to you....your time, talent and treasures....He reveals your heart. Look at your bank account and calendar....are you giving generously to God?

Are you tipping God or giving Him leftovers? Or are you stealing from God and using His money for yourself? Greed can be subtle until you look for it. Paul wanted Timothy to see it in false teachers and for believers of Jesus to see it in themselves. Generosity is the antidote of Greed and generosity defines those whose hearts are truly His. Let's pray.