

A DANGEROUS PATH TO FOLLOW

By Rick Boxx

While I was speaking with Drayton, a highly successful Christian businessman, we began reflecting on the importance of having the right motives in business. As we talked, Drayton told me about a meeting he had the previous day with a young man.

When Drayton asked this individual about what his dreams and aspirations were, the young man quickly replied, "I want to make as much money as possible, quickly." Immediately Drayton replied, "I've heard that answer before – and it usually doesn't work out well. You would be better off finding something that customers need and focus on that."

As Drayton commented on this encounter, it reminded me of an admonition the apostle Paul wrote to his younger follower, Timothy. In 1 Timothy 6:10 the apostle presents this warning: *"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."*

This passage does not state money is inherently evil, or that it is wrong to strive to earn money to provide for one's needs or even additional things that fit more into the category of desires rather than a critical need. However, money can become an idol, consuming our affections. It turns into a snare when it becomes the dominating goal of our lives, rather than considering how best to use our innate gifts, talents, skills and experience to perform work we enjoy, and to serve other people in the process.

Both Drayton and the apostle Paul realized the pursuit of money can be dangerous, making us vulnerable to temptation of many kinds. We all can think of prominent business and professional leaders that have succumbed to greed, bribery, deception, making false promises, and various forms of unethical behavior. The quest for wealth also could lead us to associate with questionable individuals who promise to "help" us to achieve our financial objectives.

As Drayton suggested to the young man, it would be far better to pursue one's passion. If you do something well and find great enjoyment in doing it, chances are financial rewards will follow. But even if they do not, you will still find satisfaction in a job well done. Here are some other things the Bible says about money and making it the focus of our work:

Divided allegiances do not work. Some business and professional people might claim that in their pursuit of riches, God's work will be a beneficiary. Jesus said, however, *"No one can serve two masters. 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 both God and Money"* (Matthew 6:24).

How we handle money reflects spiritual values. If someone entrusted you with a small responsibility and you failed, would you expect to be trusted with greater responsibilities? The same holds true with our use of money. *"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much."*

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?" (Luke 16:11).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What would be your first reaction to a person you met that said, "I want to make as much money as possible, quickly"?
2. Why do you think the pursuit of money for its own sake is often so problematic? Do you agree that it is? Do you think a person could make the acquisition of wealth the primary focus of his or her life and still avoid being seduced into undesirable behavior?
3. Do you think that "the love of money" necessarily results in people wandering from their spiritual faith and "piercing themselves with many griefs"? Explain your answer.
4. Jesus also said, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24)? What is your understanding of why He said this?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalm 112:1-3; Proverbs 8:12-21, 10:2, 13:11, 15:16, 22:7, 30:8-9; Luke 16:9