

STRENGTHENING YOUR GRIP

Strengthening Your Grip on Money

1 Timothy 6:3–19



LET'S BEGIN HERE

As we consider strengthening our grip on various things in this life, we certainly cannot overlook the issue of money. It can be difficult to bring up the subject of money. People get tense and clutch their wallets a little tighter. When the words *tithing* and *stewardship* come from the lips of a pastor, many people run. And we have the prosperity gospel preachers to thank for that. These false teachers have broken trust between the people and the pulpit. They teach that God's blessings can be bought for the right price, and that God's highest blessing on His people is monetary.

But in reality, God's blessings are not for sale. He showers His gracious gifts—monetary and otherwise—on whomever He pleases. In fact, Paul wrote about this subject in the last chapter of his first letter to Timothy, explaining that God expects contentment and stewardship from His children. The Lord calls Christians to manage His gifts in order to accomplish His purposes and bring Him glory.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. A Reminder to Those Who Are Not Rich (Philippians 4:11–13; 1 Timothy 6:6–8)

From a biblical point of view, money itself is neither good nor bad. It's our attitude toward money and how we use it that determines the issue of morality or immorality. True wealth begins as a matter of the heart. In 1 Timothy 6:6, Paul defined a rich life as one that results from godliness and contentment. The world sends us quite a different message. But Christians must remember that even if our bank accounts don't reflect the value our culture places on wealth, we must consistently live two principles to find true treasure:

- First, *we should look at life with an eternal perspective*, and remember that we can't take our wealth with us when we die (1 Timothy 6:7).
- Second, *we should enjoy the essentials with simple acceptance*. The essentials include the food and covering that God so generously provides (Philippians 4:11–13; 1 Timothy 6:8).



Quotable

“Don't just pretend to love each other; really love people.”

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. A Warning to Those Who Want to Get Rich (1 Timothy 6:9–16)

Paul shifted his attention from the non-rich to those who want to get rich, who want to find the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But according to 1 Timothy 6:9, people who crave and passionately pursue monetary wealth will:

1. Fall into temptation and be ensnared by riches
2. Fall into many foolish and harmful desires
3. Fall into ruin and destruction

3. Instructions for Those Who Are Rich (1 Timothy 6:17–19)

So much for those who want wealth. What about those who have it? Paul instructed Timothy how to shepherd those with more than enough money. In 1 Timothy 6:17, the apostle gave three straightforward commands to the rich.

- 1) *Don't be conceited.* Along with money comes the temptation to look down on those who have less. The rich must remember that everything they have comes from God, and He can increase it or remove it at His discretion.
- 2) *Don't trust in your wealth for security.* As Proverbs 23:4–5 explains, riches come and go as they please. Like a mighty eagle, they will fly away to the heavens. Our only real security comes through Jesus Christ. He will never fail us or leave us.
- 3) *Don't hoard your wealth.* Become a generous person knowing that God blesses some of us with riches, not so we can live in luxury, but so we can share it with others who don't have enough (1 Timothy 6:18–19).



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GETTING TO THE ROOT

Contentment

In 1 Timothy 6:6, Paul gave us the formula for true wealth:

Godliness + Contentment = Great Gain

You won't find this formula in *Forbes* magazine! But at the end of our lives when we reflect on all we have accomplished, we won't wish we had more money, or spent more time at work, or had more toys. We will cherish the time we spent in fellowship with the Lord and with the precious people He placed in our lives.

The greatest key to living life with an eternal perspective is contentment. The Greek word *autarkeias*, which means “contentment,” refers not only to one's acceptance of his or her circumstances and lot in life but also to self-sufficiency.¹ While self-sufficiency might seem unbiblical—and it is if we are trusting in ourselves instead of God—the idea behind self-sufficiency can help us understand contentment. In order for Christians to live with self-sufficiency, we must live with contentment and within our means—our income must sufficiently cover our expenses. It's hard to live with contentment if each month introduces a new set of worries as we struggle to stretch our paycheck to cover an ever-increasing set of expenses. And we won't have the wisdom to cut expenses to a reasonable level if we don't live with contentment. So, self-sufficiency paves the way for a satisfied life, and contentment helps us to live within our means.



LET'S LIVE IT

Clearly, Christians shouldn't spend their lives running toward money. So, is the answer to just run away from money? According to 1 Timothy 6:11, it's not enough to flee materialism. We must also pursue godliness. We can't just grit our teeth and mumble, “I will not love money!” We must transfer that love from money to God, because we can't serve both at the same time (Matthew 6:24). Just as it takes time, commitment, and work to become rich, spiritual growth also requires time with God, consistent Bible study, and actively sharing our treasures with others.

Are you running toward wealth or toward the Lord? How much time and effort do you put into getting to know God and allowing His Word to transform your mind?

ENDNOTE

1. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 152.



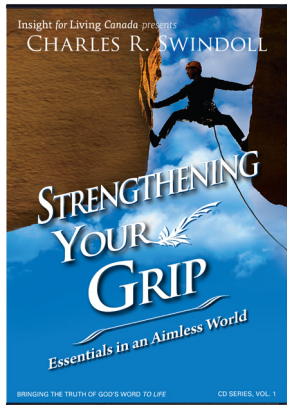
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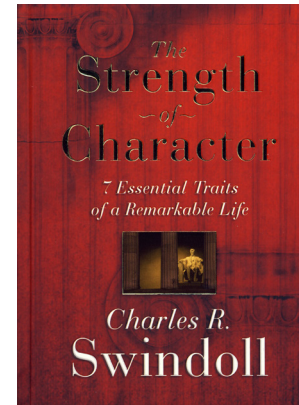
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