

Lust of the Eyes

29 Dec 2020



Scripture warns us about three primary areas that will rob us of our joy and damage our relationship with God and people. That is, "... the *lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life ...*" (1 John 2:16, NIV). These three I call '**Pennies, Petticoats and Power**', addressing the idol of money, sexual purity, and godly, Christian leadership, respectively.

The Idol of Money

Through the ages, the love of money has been the downfall of many. Men steal for it, lie for it, sell their souls for it, and some even die for it. All because of the short-lived pleasure it promises, or the false sense of security it offers through investments, savings and hidden offshore bonds. As important as money is, it was always meant to be a means to an end and never the end in itself.

Scrooge or Sower?

In the Charles Dickens' novella 'A Christmas Story', a man named Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by his past, present and future self. We read how horrified Scrooge is when he sees the selfish, narcissistic, 'money-hoarding life' he'd left as his legacy. Most significantly, realising how he could have blessed God's Kingdom and the many desperately poor families that had been brought across his path.

Paul the Apostle addresses this very sad truth in Galatians 6:7-8 when he says, "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*" (NKJV)

Debt-Free Peace

Although Pam and I have purposed to live our life 'debt-free', it has had its challenges. But on the flip side of the coin, there has always been the joy and benefit of knowing God's peace in life and being able to sleep well at night. This has always far outweighed any financial challenges that confronted us. From the outset of our marriage, we tithed faithfully into the life of the local church

and also purposed to give 'offerings' to help missions or widows when we could. We did this not out of legalism or compulsion, but because we saw it practiced in the early Church and as a New Testament principle blessed by God, which brought a return to the giver in so many different ways.

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The 'Test' of the Tithe

One of the New Testament teachings on this truth was recorded in Hebrews 7:8, where one reads of the men (deacons) who received and administered the tithes on behalf of the church on earth. When they did, Christ received them personally in heaven, making a declaration that "He lives". But I was also amazed when I saw that with the tithe being a tenth, it became one of the many 'tests' given by God in Scripture involving the figure ten:

- the ten plagues in Egypt,
- the ten tests in the wilderness,
- the ten times Laban tested Jacob,
- the ten days Daniel was tested,
- the ten virgins with their oil,
- the ten days the church in Smyrna was tested (Revelation 2:10)

Time and again, I saw the number ten as a 'test'. Still, when it comes to "*the lust of the eyes*" I believe the tithe represents the ultimate heart-test for every believer who needs to sow into the life of their local church.

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Our Tithing Test

From the day we married, Pam and I spoke about our convictions around giving the Lord His tithe (a tenth of our income) as well as helping whomever we could, whenever we could, with personal offerings. We were both full-time Bible School students and I was working two jobs to try and help 'make ends meet'. However, after living for months on cocktail sausages from Checkers mixed with free condiments from a local 'road-house', and stewed tomatoes from Pick 'n Pay for 10 cents a kilogram, we eventually ran out of all our income. We were broke but determined to keep being faithful with our finances and trusting in God to provide for us.

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Pam was pregnant with our firstborn, Lara, at the time and we had one weekly train ticket left that expired that very day, a Sunday. I was due to preach that morning, so I put her on the train, along with my jacket, Bible and tie, and proceeded to run from station to station, waving at my sweetheart when I could. When we finally arrived at Wynberg station, I collected Pam and my

belongings and we headed off in the direction of the church building. As we neared the building, a man crossed the street and handed me a brown paper packet that had a considerable amount of cash inside. He said he felt the Lord had told him to do so. We were able to purchase new train tickets for us both, and we were able to give the Lord His tithe on what we had been given at church that day.

From that day till the present (around 41 years), we have never again been tested to that degree (in the area of finance) and have stayed faithful in giving the Lord His tithe.

Is Tithing Just Old Testament Law?

Over the years, many have told me that the tithe was 'Old Testament law' and we are now under 'New Testament grace' and are thus exempt from tithing. Well, if we have to apply this kind of reasoning, would you be happy with someone else being intimate with your husband or wife? Seeing as adultery was forbidden under the law, it surely must be acceptable now that we are under 'New Testament grace'? I'm not sure any spouse would be happy with this! I believe the problem is that many folks have given their affection and trust to 'pennies' and what they think it can do for them, instead of to God as their Source.

May God our Father help each of us keep our hearts and minds focussed on Him, and Him alone, in this area. No, it is not God's will that we stay '*poor to be pure*'. It is God's will that we have enough to meet our needs and to help with the needs of others. This is why it is '*good to have those things money can buy, but never at the expense of losing those things that money can't buy*'.

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