

The Problem: We Can Worship Money

~ Part 1

(Suitable for use within a group over approximately one hour, or for an individual's personal Bible reading)

The Bible's claim: We Can Worship Money

The bible is clear that money can be an idol; that is, it can be something we worship instead of God. Consider the following:

- 'greed ... is idolatry' (Colossians 3:5);
- a 'greedy person ... is an idolater' (Ephesians 5:5);
- 'You cannot serve both God and Money' (Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13).

1. Do you identify with the possibility that money can be an idol?
2. Do you think this reality of greed resonates with your classmates?

How do we worship money?

An idolater worships a *false* god instead of the *true* God. Some idolaters worship by literally bowing down before golden or wooden images of false gods. People who worship money don't usually do it this way! Let's try to work out how we might worship money by considering some of the ways we are supposed to worship God, and then thinking how we do that instead with money.

<i>How we are directed to worship God</i>	<i>How we worship God with money</i>	<i>What we do if we redirect what is designed to worship God, to worship money</i>
Love	Jesus said: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' (Matthew 22:37). What might this mean practically?	How might we love (be devoted to) money with our heart, soul and mind?
Trust	Jesus said: 'Trust in God; trust also in me' (John 14:1). What might this mean practically?	How might we trust in money? See Psalm 52:7, Proverbs 18:10-11 and 28:25, 1 Timothy 6:17.
Service and obedience	Jesus said: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only' (Matthew 4:10) and 'Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' (Luke 11:28). What might this mean practically?	How might we serve and obey money?

Does this mean love of money is a 'religion'?

If greed is idolatry, is the love, trust and service of money a religion? Religions usually have an established and organized set of beliefs, rituals, symbols, festivals, etc.

From your observation of those in your profession and wider society, consider the religious organisation of the 'love of money' religion in the table below.

Component of a normal religion	Function	Equivalent in the 'love of money' religion
temple	a place to meet and practice the religion	
rituals, ceremonies	to please or appease the god, and educate the worshiper	
belief system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to answer life's big questions - why are we here? What is our goal? to help people understand how they fit in and what the source of their value is 	
symbols	to remind worshipers of their allegiance and to stimulate worship	
festivals	important days of the year where central aspects of the religion are celebrated	
evangelists	people who spread the belief system and seek converts	
promises of future blessing (e.g. heaven)	to motivate worshipers to be faithful and obedient now	

Are you a worshiper?

The most disturbing thing about the fact that greed is idolatry is that hardly anybody owns up to being a worshiper. Imagine the response of disbelief in the local church if it were revealed that the vast majority of its members were secretly worshiping other gods. Yet if our analysis of the religion of money is right, the unthinkable may not be so far from the truth (see Brian Rosner, *Beyond Greed*, p 52).

1. Which god are you serving: God or money?
Where is your love? Your trust? Your obedience? Would someone watching your life be able to see a difference between you and your approach to money, and that of a professed money worshiper?

'Anything that you and I tend to set up as the big thing, the central thing, in our lives, the thing about which we think and dream, the thing that engages our imagination, the thing that we live for, the thing that gives us the biggest thrill, if it is anything other than God, it is idolatry'. (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Darkness and Light, p 340).

Bible Bites

(Suitable to be completed over approximately 20-25 minutes)

The Problem: We Can Worship Money ~ Part 1

The Bible's claim: We Can Worship Money

The bible is clear that money can be an idol; that is, it can be something we worship instead of God. Consider the following:

- 'greed ... is idolatry' (Colossians 3:5);
 - a 'greedy person ... is an idolater' (Ephesians 5:5);
 - 'You cannot serve both God and Money' (Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13).
1. Do you identify with the possibility that money can be an idol?
 2. Do you think this reality of greed resonates with your classmates?

How do we worship money?

An idolater worships a *false* god instead of the *true* God. Some idolaters worship by literally bowing down before golden or wooden images of false gods. People who worship money don't usually do it this way! Let's try to work out how we might worship money by considering some of the ways we are supposed to worship God, and then thinking how we do that instead with money.

How we are directed to worship God	How we worship God with money	What we do if we redirect what is designed to worship God, to worship money
Love	Jesus said: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' (Matthew 22:37). What might this mean practically?	How might we love (be devoted to) money with our heart, soul and mind?
Trust	Jesus said: 'Trust in God; trust also in me' (John 14:1). What might this mean practically?	How might we trust in money? See Psalm 52:7, Proverbs 18:10-11 and 28:25, 1 Timothy 6:17.
Service and obedience	Jesus said: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only' (Matthew 4:10) and 'Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it.' (Luke 11:28). What might this mean practically?	How might we serve and obey money?

Does this mean love of money is a 'religion'?

If greed is idolatry, is the love, trust and service of money a religion? Religions usually have an established and organized set of beliefs, rituals, symbols, festivals, etc.

From your observation of those in your profession and wider society, consider the religious organisation of the 'love of money' religion in the table below.

<i>Component of a normal religion</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Equivalent in the 'love of money' religion</i>
temple	a place to meet and practice the religion	
rituals, ceremonies	to please or appease the god, and educate the worshiper	
belief system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to answer life's big questions - why are we here? What is our goal? • to help people understand how they fit in and what the source of their value is 	
symbols	to remind worshipers of their allegiance and to stimulate worship	
festivals	important days of the year where central aspects of the religion are celebrated	
evangelists	people who spread the belief system and seek converts	
promises of future blessing (e.g. heaven)	to motivate worshipers to be faithful and obedient now	

Are you a worshiper?

The most disturbing thing about the fact that greed is idolatry is that hardly anybody owns up to being a worshiper. Imagine the response of disbelief in the local church if it were revealed that the vast majority of its members were secretly worshiping other gods. Yet if our analysis of the religion of money is right, the unthinkable may not be so far from the truth (see Brian Rosner, *Beyond Greed*, p 52).

'Anything that you and I tend to set up as the big thing, the central thing, in our lives, the thing about which we think and dream, the thing that engages our imagination, the thing that we live for, the thing that gives us the biggest thrill, if it is anything other than God, it is idolatry'. (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Darkness and Light, p 340).