

Wounding Waters, Part I: Love of Money

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September 28, 2013



Welcome to the first teaching in this five-part series. It has to do with the love of money, as part I, and I want to begin with the Scriptures of Luke 16:13:

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will be devoted to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

The Scriptures say that the love of money is the root of all evil. When we talk about the love of money, we are talking about a preoccupation with money, and the things that money can help us to attain.

The repercussions of this sin are really far-reaching and difficult to calculate, on the surface. You really have to delve into it, in order to see how much your life is impacted by chasing after things of the world that money can buy.

I speak this with an open heart; the Lord has so many graces for us, but as I said before, the spots on our wedding garment have to do with our entanglements in the world; and we don't want to have these anymore, because it won't be long before the Lord comes for His Bride, and we're not ready! We need to be ready! These are teachings to help us prepare to *be* His Bride, *without* spot, wrinkle or blemish.

I want to begin with some examples. The simplest example that I can think of involves an unknown person, who is seen driving up to the church in an old, beater car. His Bible is ragged, and his clothing is plain and simple, with wear and tear at the cuffs and around the neckline. The jeans bear some noticeable holes here and there, and nothing about them says 'designer jeans!' This is a plain, simple person, who is coming to worship the Lord on Sunday.

He enters the church and immediately draws a barrage of judgments from people, ranging from "Okay, is he going to want money for gas or utilities?" to 'Obviously, he's not important, so we'll just ignore him and look away.'

We move on to socialize with our friends - the stratum that we're a part of, or at least, that's what some people think. We may greet him in the name of the Lord, and do the usual things that we do when we greet people at church, but there are hidden judgments there about the person in question. Are they going to cause trouble? Are they going to ask for money? What's going to be *their* issue? Are they here to get something from us?

The kneejerk reaction that we have to people who appear poor can be like that, and we need to be *very* honest with ourselves. I'm talking about me, and I'm talking about you; I'm talking about everyone. We really need to be honest, and if this attitude of the heart is in you at all, then you need to take a look at it. Try not to get too upset with me, for picking at these things, because these are things I've had to overcome, too, and I could "fall" in a *heartbeat*! The Lord is constantly giving me the grace to be His emissary, to be His "lover of souls."

Some of us have actually sat next to Angels and not known it and had judgments about the way they were dressed or what kind of car they drove. And they weren't even earthly beings!

How does God look upon that man? Well, God may see someone who is a prophet, who spends a lot of time in prayer; who doesn't consider working in this world worthy of his time. Rather, he helps people. He's always there when the drunk staggers home at night; he's there for the little boy who doesn't have a father anymore. He's there for the single mother who has holes in her roof, and water leaking in. He's there for the elderly and the sick. He could be a person who visits shut-ins. This could very well be who this man is!

But he's so "plain wrapper" and teetering on the edge of looking poor, that he elicits a knee-jerk reaction from those of us

who are used to the finer things in life and are looking to other people who are well-heeled or well-dressed.

Perhaps the Lord sees him as a prophet sent into the church with a Word for the pastor or a Word for you, and because you shied away from him – or because I shied away from him – I may not get that Word or that healing that he brought to the church.

Now that's the potential. I'm not saying that this applies to everyone obviously, but God looks at him differently.

If he is a Christian, then Christ dwells in him, and it's a great honor to sit next to someone that Christ dwells in. If he's *not* a Christian, Christ died on the cross for him and the Lord wants him in Heaven with Him for an eternity – in either case! This person has *tremendous* value beyond what our superficial judgments would automatically react to.

Now, I'm going to be a little stereotypical here, but I promise to ease up as we go on. Let us now say that a well-dressed man, stepping out of a late-model car sporting a large gold ring with diamonds and carrying his brand-new, leather-bound Bible, walks in the door...and heads turn. "Wow, he must be someone important." "Maybe he's a prophet?" It's certainly difficult to say. He might be. He's well-to-do; he's a success in life. He was noticed the moment he pulled into the parking lot, because he had a really nice car.

He sits close to the front and his just being there commands attention. Heads turn, and voices whisper, "Who *is* that man?"

Now, how does God see that man? First of all, the Lord died on the Cross for him, and if he is a Christian, of course the Lord lives in him. But the Lord may see things that are not apparent to us; hidden things.

He may be a landowner with sub-standard housing. He may be involved in business deals which are a little 'shady;' there may be tenants in his houses who don't have running water. He buys *more* property, instead of repairing the property that he already has, that he's renting to the poor. That is a *real* possibility! We don't know!

On the other hand, he could be a family man who works day and night to make a living for his family; he could be very faithful and devoted - he tithes, he gives to missions. Perhaps he's on a sales trip and he's visiting this church, and he's a *good*, upstanding citizen! *And* a good Christian! He does what he can to help.

In any case, he is someone that we want to get to know. He is someone that we're attracted to and drawn to, because he is a success.

The Lord warned us about preferential treatment in James 2:

My brothers and sisters, believers in our Lord, Jesus Christ, must **not** show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting, wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy, old clothes comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes, and say, "Here, here! Here's a good seat for you, right up in front," but you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or you can sit on the floor or here by my feet." Have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Those are difficult words! *Evil thoughts*. Showing judgment because of economic status.

I had a friend once who had been in publishing, and we were talking about this very same issue. And he said, "Well, I don't see anything wrong with that. After all, we *should* associate with people who are on our own level; in our *own* stratum."

I was really quite scandalized by that, because I know that there are many wonderful Christians who make wonderful friends, and who are *very* deep - and economically, they don't measure up. But isn't it about anointing? And relationships with the Lord? Devotion to the Lord and brotherly love? Isn't *that* our standard? Why are we looking at rings and clothes and cars, and making judgments based on that?

I'm going to move on to another example now, and I want to say this much:

In Proverbs, it says to scorn the poor is a slap in the face of Jesus and casts mud upon the cross, for it is written, “He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their maker.”

Money has very deep roots in our consciousness, and people *with* money have a certain meaning, and people *without* money have another meaning. We need to take a very close look at our attitudes and our preferences for people, based upon their economic status.

I’m going to give you another example: We’re going to go from very small examples of how it corrupts our Christian walk to some very big ways that it has an effect on the Church.

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Now for our second example: there was a time in our lives when we went from being fairly well off, in the historic district of Annapolis, Maryland, living in a nice, historic, 3-story building to poor - quite literally overnight. (Snaps her fingers) Just like that! We ended up in a tar-paper shack on the side of a mountain, in the Poconos in Pennsylvania. Previously, we’d attended an affluent Washington D.C. church, and we’d been drawn into the social circle of the pastor and the pastor’s wife. They were fond of us, and they were very good people and very, very good to us. He was educated at Oxford. They were very Spirit-filled, special, good people.

When we went from that social status or that income bracket to being poor, and we moved away to a different area - when we walked into church with our four children, we drew some *amazing* stares. The coldness, the rejection, and the suspicion of people toward us was amazing! I was totally floored!

I look back on that period now, and doing without the niceties of life – like hot water and having to shop at thrift stores and so on – was no big deal. However, the social stigma *attached* to that change and to the way that people treated you, as well as the opportunities to minister that they closed the door on, and the ways that they judged you was a whole different matter!

It was as if, all of a sudden, you had gone from someone who could do something in the church; make a contribution and be helpful... to someone who is utterly worthless. After all, you *couldn’t* be a success. Because *if* you were a *success*, then you would be dressed *successfully*. If you are not a success, then we shouldn’t hand over the ministry-type jobs to you, because you obviously don’t measure up. This is universal. We can deny it. We can say that it doesn’t exist; but we know that it does. And it’s very painful! It’s so terribly painful! Not only are we discriminated against in those situations, but our children are discriminated against. We just aren’t worthy of the opportunities that the wealthier class and the Church get.

This makes me think of Proverbs 13:7

One man pretends to be rich, yet has nothing. Another pretends to be poor that has great wealth.’

I have to tell you that when we made this move, our spiritual life exploded in depth: in comprehension, in unity with the Lord, in His priorities, in our love for Him, in teaching our children. Overnight our lives went from being superficially engaged in all the trappings of a well-heeled, middle-class family, to focusing almost exclusively on the Lord. On His integrity and virtue, on loving Him, on worshiping Him, on learning about Him. Our lives changed overnight!

This particular Scripture reminds me so much of our life at that time! We had to borrow a chainsaw in order to have enough wood to stay warm throughout the winter. That’s the kind of situation we were in. When we were in Annapolis, we pretended to be rich. We had all of these things that kept us so busy – getting the house properly manicured, getting it properly decorated, getting the ‘right’ clothing and the ‘correct’ accessories for this clothing, making certain that we had all of the right trappings for living. We were just going around on a merry-go-round.

This reminds me of a very specific magazine cover done by Keith Greene. It's very hard to forget. It was of a woman standing in a classy, yellow kitchen, and she looked like a swirl of water that was getting flushed down the toilet drain. She was spinning and swirling around like she was being swallowed up and flushed down this drain. That is how we felt when we pretended to be rich!

Then we come to the second portion of this saying: "Another has nothing and pretends to be poor; yet has great wealth."

How beautiful our life was at that time! How rich in the Lord it was. I'm convinced that this fear of rejection, and of not being given opportunities in Ministry or in the Church haunts a lot of Christians, and even pastors. They really feel obligated to keep up with what they look like. The kinds of things that they have, the kind of house that they have, what types of cars they drive. They feel that an important aspect of being a shepherd - and being a leader - is to present a prosperous image. This thought brings us to our next example.

I don't think that the Lord has anything against people who are wealthy and well-groomed. In fact, these are the people that He has chosen to manage the funding of missions and other endeavors for the Church, for the spread of the gospel. They are people with great integrity that He loves very much; that He can trust to do His will. Many of the wealthy are, and that's a beautiful thing! We're not going to criticize wealth or being well-groomed. However, what I know the Lord doesn't like is to judge people by these standards of the world. That's what we're talking about here - judging people's worth based upon their economic status. He hates that!

What about pastors that have an eye toward expansion of their churches, big prosperous ministries and luxurious homes? Let's take a look at that for a moment. I've heard pastors talk about other pastors who were very wealthy and had a lot of money and incredibly beautiful, extraordinary mansions. I've heard them hold these people up as examples of how they want to be and how they want their Christian Body - their church - to be. I think that this is terrible! What are we talking about here? We're talking about all of the trappings of the world; we're not talking about anointing, Church holiness, or personal holiness. We're not talking about these examples. We're talking about examples of money. That has to do with the world, and that can get us into a lot of trouble!

Let's say, for instance, that there's a pastor of a small church. And he is very conscious about how he looks, how he dresses and his appearance at church. At the same time, there is a single mother there who doesn't have a car. The pastor has saved money; he has a job on the side. He's saved money, so that he can go spend \$300, \$400, or \$500 on clothing one weekend, because the things that he has are getting a little old. And a woman comes to the church, who is a single mother and a regular church-goer, whose husband has deserted her - and she has no car. No way to take the kids to the doctor, no way to go shopping, no way to take them on outings. She's in a really rough position, not having a car! She finds a car for sale, for a \$500 down payment - that's out of the question for her. She doesn't have that kind of money. So, she goes to the pastor.

Now, the pastor is going to be confronted with a choice: Do I keep up with how I'm supposed to look - this successful, prosperous image? Or do I give this money to her, and go on wearing frayed shirt collars and the same old suits to church? What am I going to do in that situation?

Folks, we should never have to make that kind of a decision! That should be a non-existent threat in our lives as Christians. That should be totally *irrelevant* to us - having to influence other people with our appearance, to the point where we can't be charitable toward other people, because we need that money to look good.

Here is another example of a single mother at a conference. She's wanted to go to this conference for months, because she heard about this wonderful teacher who is coming. She finds a babysitter among her friends for her children; she has a friend who pays for her ticket and they go together to this conference.

She absolutely adores the teacher, and she would love to have some of the tapes and books that this teacher has written! During the intermission, she goes out into the lobby and she looks at all of the things that are being offered for sale, and everything is just *so* expensive. It seems like the price of each next item is more expensive than the last! This woman is thinking about cough syrup for her children. She can't go to Walgreen's and buy cough syrup, *and* have one of these

teachings on CD... She walks away frustrated, hurt, and disappointed.

Perhaps she writes to the teacher/evangelist, and asks if they would donate some materials to her. She gets a polite letter back that says, "I'm sorry but we only do that for people who are in the mission field, overseas." The really difficult thing is that the teacher here likes clothing, loves to go shopping, and talks about that pretty liberally, along with her teachings. This is sad! This is just tragic! That a woman should go without teachings like that. Where are our priorities, where we have such a need to appear in different clothes every time we go out to teach, that we have to spend large amounts of money on clothing? What about those women who come to the conference who can't leave with the materials they need to extricate themselves from a life of despair and poverty and depression? She doesn't have a computer, so she can't go on-line to purchase some of these teachings. She's lucky if she has a CD player that works. This is another way that this whole culture of prosperity affects the little people and their children; and it can continue on for generations.

I want to quote First John 2:15

Do not love the world or anything *in* the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father *is not* in that. For everything in the world -- the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life -- comes *not* from the Father, but from the world. And the world, and its desires, pass away. But whoever does the will of God lives forever.

I'm going to talk about someone like that in just a few moments, so don't get discouraged by negative examples. I'm just trying to draw attention to the ways that we really have cheated ourselves out of grace, and cheated others out of grace, by putting such a high priority on these superficial things.

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I was once called into travail in intercession for a very famous TV minister. After about the third hour in prayer, the Lord stopped me, and He made me to understand that this man, and men like him – evangelists and teachers like him who lead a very wealthy lifestyle with villas, private planes, expensive cars, chauffeurs, and bodyguards -- bring this mentality with them when they visit poor, innocent, developing countries and their people. Their first introduction to Christianity is "Become a Christian, become rich! Look at this! I get an anointing for healing, or teaching, and I can be rich! I can fly around the world and teach. I can have villas! I can have houses! I can have expensive clothing!"

The Lord stopped me after about the third hour, and I felt so nauseated that I *knew* that I had to go to the bathroom to throw up. I felt so grieved over how the Holy Spirit felt over this situation; presenting Christianity in this light, as an affluent, prosperous, money-making, financial gain, status-building **thing!** What kind of example are we giving? Hollywood actors or holy Christians? Goodness! The **Lord** was born in a **stable** and buried in a **borrowed tomb!**

This man, and many like him, have been surrounded by scandals and divorce, and the Scriptures say, Better a little, with a fear of the Lord, than great wealth with turmoil.

Very often, people who have a lot of money don't get any rest or peace from it. Their children fight over it. It *doesn't* make life better in a lot of ways; it stresses a life out. Paul talks about the evil effects of focusing on money and gain. He says, in First Timothy, ...People who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

This is what I'm talking about. That's abhorrent to the Lord!

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil; and some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all of this and pursue righteousness, Godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. I Tim. 6:10

Pursue these things. That is the life the Lord came to give us. That's the abundant life. Not a life filled with things!

I want to give you my final example of how this kind of corruption can affect the Body on a large scale. Let's consider the

situation of a wealthy man who joins a church. He really likes the pastor, the teachings; he likes everything about it. So, he becomes an established member of this church. He starts telling his friends about it, and they join, and he gets a little group together after, perhaps, three, four, or five years.

There are now several very wealthy people in the church that have formed a little group. They're all friends, and they hang out together, and they form an elite but powerful clique in this church. Their tithes have enabled the pastor to live a more prosperous life – to have a nice house, a nice car – because they are big tithers. The pastor is even able to make plans for his children to have a better education.

Now the church has become so popular that they want to have a building project, so they begin that and break ground for a new sanctuary. One morning the pastor is in prayer before service, and the Lord convicts him of something; so he sets aside the sermon he was going to preach, and he teaches on what he was convicted of. He shares this story with the congregation, and there's an altar call and a lot of repentance and people come forward. But the small, elite group didn't like that message.

They invite the pastor out to lunch afterward, and they have a little talk with him. They tell him, "You know, I don't think that's really something that you should be dwelling on and preaching about. That's really not that important, and it's just not a good idea to be preaching on that topic. I think you should be focused more on other things, like missions, and so on and so forth."

So, what are the options that this pastor has? Toe the party line, or watch the tithes walk out the door! No one should be put under this kind of pressure. The repercussions of this issue are that *if* he loses this wealthy group of men, he can forget the building project, the nice house, the nice car, etc., because he'll be going back to a much more modest living as a pastor. This is how we get entangled in the world. We spot our garments, we develop blemishes; we wrinkle our garments with these entanglements. They put us in precarious situations where our integrity is on the line. We should not have to worry about taking care of our family and *not* offending a certain group of tithers in the church! There should not be that kind of a struggle going on. How do you avoid something like that?

Here is where I want to bring up the good example. I want to talk about Heidi and Roland Baker. I may not have all of the facts exactly in line, but I do want to share what I do know about them. Heidi went to Ontario, to the Airport Church, and got slain in the Spirit and knocked off her horse for three days. She was so heavy that they had trouble picking her up and moving her out of the church and taking her to the hotel. She just couldn't move!

Now, they are both highly educated. She has several degrees. And she'd been laboring with Roland in Africa for about a decade, working *very* hard, and she has only a handful of churches to show for all the hard work that she has done. Well, when she was knocked out, the Spirit of the Lord took over and started doing some things with her. She comes back up out of that, and she starts sharing with people about all of the wonderful things that happened there and about the Toronto blessing.

The people who were backing her were ultra-conservative. They heard about this, and they were very unhappy about it. They gave her an ultimatum: "You go there, and you talk about that - and we're not going to support you." Well, Heidi had plans for orphanages and all kinds of things back in Africa. She was coming to the States, but she was planning to return to Africa and get these orphanages built and help a lot of people. And, all of a sudden, the people supporting her said, "We're not going to back you anymore, if you endorse the Toronto blessing, because we don't believe it's of God."

That didn't bother Heidi! She knows who her Maker is; she knows who she serves. She completely ignores them, at the risk of returning to Africa and abject poverty and not being able to do anything. She *knows* her God will provide for her! She ignores them, and she endorses the Toronto blessing; many other people are later blessed, because of this. She returns to Africa, and the Lord uses her to spearhead the *greatest* ministry that has *ever* been on this Earth, as far as how many souls have been saved! In the history of the world, no one has had as much of an effect on saving souls as Heidi and Roland Baker have! Without the backing of the wealthy people that didn't approve of the Toronto blessing.

That is how we need to handle these things! There is absolutely *no* comparison between God and the wealthy. We have

to stand up for what's right and not compromise; and it means that if we don't have an airplane ticket back to Africa – that He has to bi-locate us or put us on the “slow boat” – it doesn't matter. God is going to bring great fruit out of that, *because you were faithful.*

I love First Timothy 6:17

Commend those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant; nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain; but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Our enjoyment doesn't come from expensive meals, fine dining, traveling, and seeing the sights, going to shows or concerts, or anything of that nature. Heidi's enjoyment comes from seeing the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruit of her labors; from seeing all of these children being born into the Kingdom of God. *That's* where her enjoyment comes from! And if that's where *our* enjoyment comes from, then we won't be swayed by these compromises. We won't give in to them. We'll be able to keep right on going and say, “Bye, bye!”

Now, I'd like to talk about the standards and the qualifications of Christian ministers. What do the Scriptures say a pastor is supposed to be like? In First Timothy 3:1 Paul says,

Here is a trustworthy saying: whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now, the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money.

Do you realize what Paul has just said here? Paul has just said that being quarrelsome, being given to drunkenness, being unfaithful to his wife, is being equal with being a lover of money. That's how important this is! I've discussed with you four or five examples of how this corruption affects the Body of Christ. It prevents people from coming into their full anointings, because they're not of the “right” social status. It cuts off prophetic movements. It cuts off all kinds of things because of appearances; because of social status and money. We'll talk more about social status in our next teaching.

This is really revealing! Paul is saying that being unfaithful to your wife is a *major* thing. And he is putting a “lover of money” on equal footing with that! He is categorizing that as a *serious* sin. He is saying that an overseer that loves money should *not* be an overseer! How stark are the words of Paul, wherein he says,

But godliness with contentment is great gain. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. I Tim. 6:6

My goodness!

Those who want to get rich, fall into temptation, and into a trap, and into many, many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. You cannot serve both money and the Lord. Sooner or later He will put you to the test. I Tim. 6:9

He'll put you to the test to see where your loyalties lie. He's going to sift you. He is going to find out whom you are really serving. Are you serving yourself, because you want to be wealthy and prosperous and look good to the community? Or, are you serving the Lord, and you don't care *what* you look like to the community, as long as your Lord is happy with you?

When I look at the example that says, “If we have food and clothing, we'll be content with that,” I think, ‘Oh, my goodness! How many people in our culture would be content with food and clothing? That's not even mentioning a roof over your head or a hot shower!’

Paul is talking about some pretty *basic* standards here. I'm not saying that we should be *that* primitive, but I am saying that all of these other entanglements that we get ourselves into, to conform and to look good, are very destructive and not pleasing to the Lord at all; and they prevent you from growing spiritually. I struggled with these things for years! And the Lord showed me how much He *could* have done, if I had abandoned these things much earlier in my life.

In the end, we're going to be judged on what we did and what we failed to do, and we're going to face calamity and judgment. The Lord warns us, in Ezekiel, what that looks like.

In Ezekiel 7:19

They will throw their silver into the streets; their gold will be treated as a thing unclean. Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord's wrath. It will not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs, for it has caused them to stumble into sin.

Christian people, Christian leaders, and Christian pastors *don't* pursue money and wealth and that image, and they *don't* teach their people to do that. Teach your people to be totally 100% devoted to the Lord, without compromising. Teach them simple standards of living; teach them important things, and teach them to cleave to those things with all their hearts. So much depends upon that!

I want to say, please. Rethink your priorities! Please rethink your priorities and what's being taught to and modeled for people. Look at the kind of example that you are setting, and the kind of example that the elders are setting. Don't elevate people that have money and put them on a pedestal; don't talk about how wonderful they are, because they have money. That's the way the world talks.

If you've done those things, search your heart; go before the Lord and ask Him – beg Him – to show you the way, since you've compromised, and you've taught that compromise to other people. Repent for that, and ask Him to forgive you.

This message is coming with the grace to change. It's here before you, if you are willing to look at these dark places in your heart and to give them up, so that you can be 100% 'sold out' for Jesus, and for His Kingdom, and for His agenda right now. The Lord is with you, and He is going to give you the grace to repent and to turn your life around. This way you can show the world what it really means to be a Christian. å

God bless you.