

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with Paul's warning to Timothy about the danger of loving money. Paul had many helpers but no one was as special to him as Timothy. He explained this to the Philippians: **"I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare" (Phil. 2:20)**. Paul called him: **"My true son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2)**. Just as your father gives you advice, Paul gave advice to Timothy. The love of money is a serious problem. Jesus also warned about it and reduced the complexities of life to serving either God or money. You cannot serve both! Jesus said: **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 God and Money" (Matt. 6:24)**.

Paul knew this and therefore warned Timothy: **"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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" (1Tim. 6:6-10)**.

The life of the late J. Paul Getty illustrates how the love of money can pierce your heart with "many griefs". Getty died June 6, 1976 which was long before you were born. Before he died Fortune magazine named him the richest living American and the Guinness Book of World Records honored him as the richest private citizen in the world. Unfortunately, his money did not make him happy.

While plenty of information is available about this famous man, most of the following information is condensed from an article by Robert Lenzner in the December 1985 issue of Life Magazine.

Money and security – If you think that all Getty's money made him feel secure you are wrong. He was pathologically insecure. In fact, his mansion was like a prison. There were steel bars fitted on all 500 windows. The outside yard was patrolled by vicious Alsatian guard dogs. The door to his bedroom was embedded with steel and an armed security agent with a guard dog was stationed outside his bedroom door every night. Just in case, a variety of weapons were also on his bedside table.

Money and your wife – Getty was married five times and reportedly was visited by an assortment of female friends whom he would write into and out of his will as the whims would strike him. Unfortunately, it seems that he was not happily married to any of his wives.

Money and your children – Getty had 5 sons by 4 of his wives. He did not seem to be close, however, to any of his children. When his son Timothy died of a brain tumor in 1958 he didn't even attend the funeral. Once when his son George came to see him for a business consultation Getty kept him waiting 8 days before granting him an appointment. A week before George committed suicide he wrote his mother saying that he would see her: *"In the hereafter and happier life"*. He disinherited his son Paul Jr. for using drugs and never saw him again. When Getty died in 1976 the family fought over control of his fortune and forced the sale of the Getty Oil Co. to Texaco.

Money and parents – Sadly, Getty did not seem close to his parents either. He never introduced his girl friends to them and his parents were not invited to any of his 5 weddings.

Money and grandchildren – It is also unfortunate that Getty did not seem close to his grandchildren either. His grandson J. Paul Getty III once wrote: *“I am a refugee from a Rolls-Royce . . . I am an escapee from the credit card”*. When he was kidnapped and held for ransom his grandfather suspected it was a trick to extort money. Getty only realized it was not a trick and paid the ransom when the kidnappers cut off the boy’s ear and mailed it to the police. This one eared grandson later became blind, paralyzed, and unable to speak as a result of drug and alcohol abuse.

Money and generosity – Lenzner wrote: *“His parsimoniousness was pathological. He would rarely buy anything – from a company to a work of art for his Malibu museum – unless he felt he was getting a bargain. His public image was symbolized by the pay telephone in his house”*. Getty never felt rich and was afraid that everyone was after him for his money. Perhaps he was right!

Note that our text does not say that “money” is the root of evil, but that the “love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”. Paul didn’t love money and was therefore content with “food and clothing”. We can also be content in the same way! It doesn’t matter how rich you are you can only eat a certain amount of food. Everyone of us can therefore eat just as much food as J. Paul Getty ate! Getty lived in a huge mansion with 500 windows but he could only sleep in one bed at a time! That is precisely the way we can sleep too! It is difficult for the devil to deceive people who are contented! If you have something to eat and something to protect you from the weather then be content!

When a man asked Jesus for help in dividing an inheritance, Jesus warned: **“Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Lk. 12:15)**. Jesus then illustrated this truth with the story of a rich man who trusted in his possessions to provide him with a long and happy life. God called him a fool for he died that very night and all of his possessions were left behind for someone else to enjoy. It is far better to lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot corrupt and thieves cannot break through and steal.

Since **“godliness with contentment is great gain”**, may your primary ambition be to serve God and not make money!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce