

INTRODUCTION

Some of the funniest things I've seen are actual pictures of cakes that made where the cake decorator took the design instructions literally. Here are some humorous examples:

- (1) Just write Happy Birthday.
- (2) Thanks for a great year in purple.
- (3) Can you hear someone calling and saying, "Where it says Love Mom and Dad take that out and just write Emma Rylee."
- (4) When the decorator asked what they wanted written on the cake the person said, "Nothing."
- (5) They called and said, write "congratulations as small as possible."
- (6) "Write CC just like that no periods."

There are some things you shouldn't take literally, like cake decoration instructions. But there are some things you should take literally, and at the top of that list is the Word of God. When we come to Hebrews 13 we encounter some very practical instructions we should take literally and obey them. In this message we are going to look at three of God's blessings that He provides for His people. One of the names of God from the Old Testament is Jehovah Jireh, which means "God will provide." When Abraham took his son Isaac up to Mount Moriah, God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac. And Abraham named the place "Jehovah Jireh" which means, "God will provide."

As followers of Jesus Christ, there are many traps the devil sets for us. In this message we are going to examine three of the devil's traps and how God provides us with resources to avoid these traps. The three traps are greed, fear, and spiritual error. Instead of reading the full passage before the heart of the message, I'll introduce each verse as we talk about God's provision.

1. God provides His presence to deliver us from greed.

Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you." One of the most dangerous things we do as a Christian is to take a single Bible verse remove it from its context. We are going to look at two of the most taken-out-of-context verses in the Bible. The writer points out that God has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you." in the CSB. While it IS true that God promises to be with us, the context of this verse has to do with overcoming greed. It is in the context of taming the money monster. This promise is more powerful than it appears in English. In the original Greek language it piles on three consecutive negatives making it one of the most forceful statements in the Bible. God says, "I will NEVER, NO, NOT EVER forsake you."

When my college roommate preached his first sermon, it was entitled, "Money is the root of all evil." A dear lady came up to him and said, "Sonny, that's NOT in the Bible. It's the LOVE of

money that is the root of all evil." He's a pastor today, and I'm sure he never forgot that mistake. We sometimes make the same mistake.

God says in 1 Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." Then look down to verse 17. There is a specific instruction given to rich people. The Bible says, "Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:10, 17) God has some instructions of everyone who is rich in this present age. He says to rich people, "Don't become arrogant and start putting your hope in your wealth. Instead put your trust in God who richly provides all things."

You may be thinking, "He's not talking to me. I'm not rich." Well, you need to think again. Chances are if you are listening to my words, you are a rich person. There's a website called Global Wealth Calculator. You can plug in your annual salary and it compares your earnings to everyone else on the planet. So if you earn the average annual income in America, then you make about \$56,000 a year. If you do, you are richer than 99% of the world's population. And if you even make half that much, or \$28,000 a year, you are still richer than 98% of the world's population. God warns us to keep our lives free from the love of money. If you're going to break away from greed you must recognize a couple of myths about money.

Money myth #1: My net-worth determines my self-worth.

People tend to think the more wealth they have the more important they are to themselves, to others, and to God. A rich person begins to think, "I must be really smart, creative, and brilliant because I have all this money." Or they fall into the trap of thinking they have a lot of money because they must be one of God's favorites. You can't measure God's blessings by your bottom line. If we measured God's love by how much money people had, who would be the most loved people in our world today? The Mexican Drug Cartel leaders, the Oil Sheiks, the Hollywood Stars and the profession sports figures.

Have you ever noticed when some people get rich and famous, they get arrogant and become an expert on everything from who should be in the White House to gun control, or how farm subsidies should be spent? I remember seeing a congressional hearing whether an oil pipeline should be allowed to go through some farmland. There was a Hollywood star (that you would all know) testifying about how damaging it would be to the environment. When asked how he considered himself to be an expert they said, "Oh, I played a farmer one time in a movie." Get my point? Some people think they are experts on everything because they have a lot of money—that's arrogance.

You determine your self-worth based on your relationship with God. And God said He loves you so much that He has your name engraved in the palms of His hands. And God loves you whether you're rich or poor.

This passage speaks of being satisfied with what you have. That's contentment. And contentment is the greatest tent you'll ever live in. There are some people who can never be content or satisfied. They are always wanting more, so they can never enjoy what they have today.

Studies have been done of Olympic Champions. Did you know that competitors who win a bronze medal are much more satisfied than those who win a silver medal? Think about it. The silver medal stays awake at night and thinks, "I came so close! If I had tried just a little harder I could have won the gold." But the bronze medal winner thinks, "Wow, I can't believe that out of all the competitors that I won an Olympic medal!" The difference is in the ability to be content.

Money myth #2: More money will make me happy.

Someone said, "Money can't buy happiness, but it allows you to pick your misery." Most American consumers are never satisfied. They want to keep up with the Joneses and the Smith's and the Brown's. They fall into the trap of possession obsession and they just want to have more, more, more stuff; and they want it now, now, now. They spend money they don't have to buy stuff they don't need to impress people they don't like.

I remember the first time I visited Uganda with Parental Care Ministries and Pastor Emmy. Because of my heart for adoption and foster care, I asked him about this. "Pastor Emmy, are there any plans for Americans to adopt any of these Ugandan orphans?" He replied to me in a sweet way, which is his style. But he basically said, "Why would we want to send these precious children to America for them to be spoiled by materialism? They are happy here and we are raising up the next generation of leaders for our nation." And I knew he was right. I've seen the families in Uganda who don't have running water or electricity in their homes. But they have something that money can't buy; they have the joy of the Lord.

If your satisfaction and happiness are tied to your money, then when the money is gone, you have nothing else to hold onto. It's sad that there are millions of people whose god is gold and greed is their creed.

In 2009 there was a German billionaire by the name of Adolph Merkel. He was one of the 100 richest people in the world. He was worth \$9 Billion. During the global recession, his pharmaceutical company started losing money, and it appeared as if he would be reduced from a billionaire to only a multi-millionaire. So he left a note to his family that said, "I'm sorry." The 72-year-old German businessman walked out and laid down on the tracks in front of an approaching train.

Don't put your hope and trust in your money. Put your hope and your trust in God alone. I said there were two popular verses that we take out of context. The first one is "I will never leave you or forsake you." The second one is found in Philippians: "I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:12-13)

This is a verse people pull out and print on coffee cups, bumper stickers and posters. Some people use it to claim their way to the top of the corporate ladder. Or they claim it pass a test or to win that championship game. But notice the context. Paul was writing to thank the church at Philippi for sending him a care package in prison. And he said he knows what it is to make do with a little. Can anybody here say "amen" to that? I know what it is only have a little bit, but we made it through. And Paul said, "I know how to make do when I have a lot." That's easier, but many of you know what it is to be in need, and then to have enough. Then Paul is going to reveal a secret to us. Now this is one of those places where you need to underline and circle the word "secret" and make an arrow from it to the secret itself. He says I have learned the secret. It's not something that comes overnight—it is a learned behavior. I have learned the secret of being content, when the cup is empty, or when the cup is full. And here's the secret of contentment: I can do all things through him who strengthens me." That's the context. Have you learned that secret? The trap is greed and Jehovah Jireh provides His powerful presence to deliver us from the love of money.

2. God provides help to deliver us from fear.

The second trap is fear; and let's see what Jehovah Jireh provides for us: "Therefore, we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6)

There's a lot of fear in our nation today. Every year, Chapman University asks 1,500 Americans, "What are you most afraid of?" Here are the most recent answers: (1) Corruption of government officials; (2) Terrorist attacks; (3) Not having enough money for the future; (4) Being the victim of violence; (5) Restrictions on firearms or ammunition sales.

Let's talk about gun violence. Yesterday, almost a million students and others marched to protest the rise in gun violence in America. Many marched here in our town square. This really is an American issue. When you study other nations of the world, they don't have the amount of random violence that we have in our country.

And we're seeing an increase in the frequency of mass shootings. Between 1982 and 2011 there was a mass shooting on average every 200 days. That frequency has tripled since 2011 until today a mass shooting occurs every 64 days. If this increase continues, soon we will be flying our flags at half-mast every day of the year.

There are plenty of talking heads who have ideas of what we must do to solve the problem of violence in America. Some people say the answer is gun control. Others say we need to get rid of violent video games. Maybe we should stop and ask ourselves, "Why do we live in such a violent time? We have the greatest government and constitution of any nation on earth." I think the answer lies in the fact that over the past sixty years, our nation has successfully removed Biblical morality from the national conversation.

This increase of mass shootings can be traced to the time when the U.S. was making decisions to remove the Bible and prayer from the public classroom. For most of American history,

children grew up knowing the Ten Commandments. But now most adults probably can't even quote five of the Ten Commandments, much less students in school.

I think our Forefathers saw this problem. John Adams was our first Vice President, and then our second U.S. President. In 1798 he wrote these words. And I want you to apply them to what we are seeing in our nation today. "We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by morality and Religion. Avarice, Ambition, Violence, Revenge or Galantry, would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

I'm proud of these students for assembling in Tyler and on Washington to march in protest of gun violence on Saturday. But I could only wish that on Sunday they would flood the churches of American and fall on their faces and beg God to once again restore His Word as the foundation for our national morality.

Whatever fear we are facing. God has promised to deliver us by providing His supernatural help. In Isaiah 41:10, God says, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand."

Whatever challenges we face in the future. God is here to help us. So, as Christians, we shouldn't be intimidated by what's happening in the world. This world is changing constantly. Kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but as we are going to see next week, our lives are connected to Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forevermore!

My late friend, Zig Ziglar, used to say there are two ways to spell fear. How do you spell fear? Some spell it Forget Everything And Run; but if you know the power of the Lord you can spell it Face Everything And Rise! Don't fall into the trap of fear. Jehovah Jireh offers His help in time of trouble.

3. God provides spiritual leaders to deliver us from error.

Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith." From the beginning of the church, God provided leaders to give direction for the churches. There were the apostles and the pastors who provided leadership to the congregation. When Paul started churches he appointed men to serve as elders, or pastors of the churches. We learn from this passage that one of the main responsibilities of a spiritual leader was to teach the Word of God. If a leader doesn't teach God's word, then the members of a church will drift into spiritual error.

In Hebrews 13, we are introduced to the danger of spiritual error. The Bible says, "Don't be led astray by various kinds of strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be established by grace and not by food regulations, since those who observe them have not benefited." (Hebrews 13:9)

A Spirit-filled leader will teach people about grace, not about the dos and don'ts of what you can eat or what you can't eat. Legalism is the error that you can make God love you more by what you do or don't do. For instance, if you don't eat pork, then God will love you more than if you do eat pork. That kind of legalism is still with us today. People think they can make God love them more if they take mass every week, or get baptized, or give a certain amount of money. All of that is a salvation-by-works mentality. But God gives us spiritual leaders to teach us about God's amazing grace.

When it comes to our relationship with our spiritual leaders, there are two things we are directed to do. First, we are to remember them. Then we are to obey them. We're told to remember them because when this was written, some of the pastors had probably already died—perhaps as martyrs. It's a good thing to remember those men and women who taught you the Word of God and have moved on to heaven. I will always remember men like Ray Stedman, Adrian Rogers, and Ron Dunn who taught the Word of God to me. We are look at the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith.

Green Acres has been in existence for 63 years and I have followed four other men of God who taught the Bible here. All four of these men are in heaven now. I'm thankful for Cecil Johnson, Lester Collins, Ed Bowles, and Paul Powell for the tremendous legacy of spiritual leadership that they have left. We should always remember them.

Can you think of some of some people who taught you the word of God? They may be in heaven, or they may still be teaching. If they are still alive why don't you remember them by writing them and telling them how much you appreciate them? Don't wait. Dead noses smell no roses.

In addition to remembering them, Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, since they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."

I've known a few dictatorial pastors who use this verse as a hammer to say, "It's my way or the highway." When I teach young pastors about leadership I teach that they should demonstrate loving leadership. We should adopt the servant-leadership style of Jesus. Jesus didn't lead with a title—he led with a towel. He led by washing the dirty feet of the disciples.

This is a verse I have circled back to hundreds of times in my ministry. The Bible says my job is to keep watch over your souls and that one day I will give an account of you to God. This verse says that when I give an account to God I will ever do it out of a sense of joy or a sense of grief.

If I died today, do you know what I would say to the Lord about watching over your souls? "Lord, there were some times of grief. I grieved over every marriage that failed. I grieved over every person who at one time seemed to be saved, but then they deserted You and the church. I grieved over the fact that I not everyone I witnessed to came to Christ. I grieved because I wasn't able to get to know everyone personally. But Lord, I've got to say that the JOY outweighs the grief by a thousand times. Those folks at Green Acres are the kindest, most

faithful, most generous people on the planet. They have a heart to reach all the nations of the earth with your Gospel. Lord, through the years I challenged them to do a lot of things, and on every single occasion they rose to the challenge. So, Lord, I give them a 10 out of 10 on the joy scale."

CONCLUSION

May God give us more spiritual leaders unafraid to speak the truth. When Andrew Jackson was president he was going to attend a church where Peter Cartwright was the preacher. Some of the deacons and leaders in the church warned the preacher not to say anything controversial that might upset or anger the President. When he got up to preach he said, "I understand President Andrew Jackson is here this morning. I just want to say that Andrew Jackson will burn in hell unless he repents of his sins and puts his faith in Jesus Christ." There were gasps of surprise at outrage. But at the end of the service President Jackson shook his hand and said, "Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could conquer the world!"

Remember our God is Jehovah Jireh and He will provide you His presence to deliver you from greed; He will provide His help to deliver you from fear; and He will provide His leaders to deliver you from error.

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
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