

# Five Ways Make War Against Greed

by John Piper

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of daily seeking and savoring the supreme value of Jesus through studying the Word, praying for spiritual insight, and trusting in God's promises. It also discusses the significance of disciplined and spontaneous giving as acts of worship, setting aside gifts for the church, and involving children in the practice of giving. Additionally, it addresses the need to put protections in place against materialism and to use prosperity to bless others.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:18, Philippians 4:19, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Luke 12:15, Proverbs 11:24, Malachi 3:10

**Topics:** "Seeking Jesus Daily", "Generosity as Worship"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Number one, verse three everybody can copy, second two are a little bit different. I study to see and savor the supreme value of Jesus every day. And by study I don't mean formal study, I just mean I make an effort.

Study war no more in that sense of study. I make an effort by reading my Bible every day on a quest for a vision of God that will reassert his supremacy in my heart. I want to see him and his son and his work in this book every day in such a way that it makes money lose its effect.

That's my goal. Or anything else that's clamoring for my soul. Notoriety or pick your idol.

The goal in reading the Bible is to see God as so supremely valuable that other things assume their way lower place and your idolatries fall away and your obedience becomes driven by what is beautiful than by this lash on your back. It's just a glorious thing if God would open our eyes, which leads to number two, I pray that he would help me see what I'm after. I don't assume I can get it.

It's a spiritual thing, it's not an intellectual thing nearly. You can stare at the Bible all day long and see nothing wonderful and nothing glorious and be moved in your heart not the least to be free from Best Buy. But if you pray the way the psalmist prayed, incline my heart to your testimonies and not to selfish gain.

Satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love that I may rejoice and be glad in you all my days. That's a good prayer to pray. Every day.

Satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love. Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your Word. Cry to God that he would reveal his supreme value to your soul so you feel it.

You walk into the day and he is so precious and so valuable and communing with him is so satisfying. Pornography loses its power and covetousness loses its power. That's the way I fight every day and it's a fight to the finish.

I have no illusions that between now and when I die I can coast. I could make shipwreck of my life. I taste it.

It is war till you're dead. And the war is to see. It's to see.

Number three. So first, study to see his value in the Word every day. And two, cry out to him and pray that he would let you and help you and make you see.

And number three, I daily put my trust in his promises that the needs of this church and the needs of my family will be met. My God will supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Not all the things you think you need, but all that you really need to give him glory.

They're going to be there even if you starve to death. Okay? I get that from Romans 8. What shall separate us from the love of Christ? So tribulation, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword. No! In all these things, we are more than conquerors.

I'll always have enough to glorify my King, which is all life is about. Life is not about food and clothing. It's about the kingdom.

Seek first the kingdom. All these things will be added. How much? Just enough to seek the kingdom.

It'll always be there. God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times you may abound in every good work. Is that amazing? There's not a single good work God has ever or ever will call you to do for which there will not be sufficient resources to do it.

You can never say, God wants me to do X, but I don't have the resources ever. That's awesome. If he wants you to do it, he provides the doing.

Number four, I set aside electronically on the Bethlehem website a gift to the church out of every paycheck automatically, and I spontaneously give gifts in worship services. Now, we didn't used to have this whole electronic stuff, and I had questions about it as it came. I still do, but it seems to me that in the New Testament, there are two streams.

One is the stream of be disciplined and regular and sacrificial in your giving. The other is to be spontaneous and free and uncoerced in your giving. The way I've worked it out, however you work it out, that it is good for me and Noel.

And I should say that when I say I on all these, I do, I do, I do, what's mine is Noel's. That's what I think one flesh means. All my money belonged to her.

She her name is on the bank account. In, out, it's just ours. What we do is say that the disciplined part to make sure we do what we've covenanted to do is to go on there and tell them that I have an account of Wells Fargo and to take out every two weeks this amount.

Now, I don't ever deal with it except come around January, I go in there and I'll tell you a minute later what I do with that. I don't think that's the only way you should give to Jesus. Out of sight, out of mind, it becomes a pretty sterile thing.

I think giving is an act of worship. It's what Romans 12, 1 and 2, I think, says. Therefore, historically, we've always built our services with a piece of worship called offering.

And the whole point of that is just to say, with that moment, letting our goods go shows how much we value you. That's just part of worship right here. We're doing that right here now.

We're saying, I love you. I don't need this. I'm letting it go.

Those little 30 seconds, whether it's a dollar, a thousand dollars, or 50 cents in some token way. And I know a lot of you don't think that way. And I'll just commend it to you that these two aspects of giving, the discipline aspect and the free worshipful aspect, can be symbolized by the electronic thing and the in-service participatory thing.

Just think that through, whether or not that commends itself to you. Which means, by the way, for me, I'm just thinking, here's my wallet tonight. I'm giving everything I need to give that I think I need to give electronically.

This thing right here, what I'm going to do tonight is whatever. Tonight it happened to be an envelope thing, because I got, what did I get? Where did that money come from? Some honorarium show. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

I did Carl's funeral on Monday. And bless their heart, they sent me a check. That's coming in just a minute, honorariums.

Children. The reason we give allowances to our children, as soon as they can count, is to teach them to give a portion of it to the church. That's the main, main, not only main, reason for giving allowances to two-year-olds or three-year-olds.

As soon as they can say 1, 2, 3, give them a dime every week, or a 50 cents, or a dollar, or something, and say, now we'll have an envelope here for Jesus, or the church, and then let them drop it in the basket. And so immediately, now I know that, this is one of the reasons I'm preaching this sermon, that hundreds of you grew up in homes where you had no model and no teaching on giving to the church at all. Don't want to be a father here.

Listen to your dad. Consider whether you've never given like this to the church, as to whether it might be a possible, or right, and good, and helpful, and joyful, and whether the children should be drawn in alongside. I made a covenant 32 years ago, 31 and a half, Tom and I joined the church about the same time.

I made a covenant along with 3,151, although nine we just did, so 3,151 sixty of you have made this promise to contribute cheerfully, regularly, to support the ministry, and the expenses of the church. And I

would commend to you those ways, possibly, of doing it. Lastly, number five, I put protections in place against bigger barns, and I turn the prosperity of my fields into blessings for others.

This is one that may be least like your situation, but let me let me say the the three ways we do this, Noelle and I, and and then you can apply it if it applies to you, which in principle it does, even if you are on a fixed income. Three ways I do this. Number one, I surrender all the copyrights and all the royalties to my books, and have from the beginning.

I surrender them to the Desiring God Foundation, knowing I'd be a millionaire if I didn't. I am scared out of my wits at being a millionaire. That's a weakness.

Some people can handle it, I don't have that gift, I don't think, like I chew a whole pack of gum immediately. Why wouldn't you? Just don't have, so those are gone, and the Desiring God Foundation has a board, you can ask me who the board members are if you want, and it keeps a \$10,000 in the bank, and has one meeting a year, and we give everything away, and we love it. And all of it goes to Desiring God in Bethlehem, except little teeny exceptions for other things in the church.

So that's one way, I'm just, watch out, keep up your guard. Number two, I surrender all my honorariums. Didn't used to do this.

Back in the early days, somebody give me \$100 for doing a wedding or a funeral, cool, take Noel out to dinner. Look, this church pays me enough to take Noel out to dinner every day. So one of the ways I protect myself is it all, whether it's thousands of dollars because of some big speaking engagement, or \$100 because of a wedding or a funeral or something like that, I'm just writing it off to the church.

To save tax money, I ask the people out there in the ministries, don't write the check to me. I can save the church a lot of money that way, like 15 or 20 or 30 percent, so just write it to them. That's a second limitation on my bigger barn temptation.

And here's the third. Noel and I regularly, just did it recently, go into that electronic account, look at that figure and adjust it up both in terms of amount and in terms of percentage year in and year out. We haven't always done that, but regularly we've done it.

And maybe I should say a word about how much. I left it out when it came to the children, I was going to say it there. If you were to ask me how much do you teach your children to give to the church, I would say start with the Old Testament standard of the tithe and build on that.

Frankly, now this could offend and just deal with it, I find it hard to comprehend that a child of the Living God, after the glories of the cross, would regularly give to the church less than the standard of the Old Testament. I find it incomprehensible. But of course you grew up in homes where nobody ever told you such a thing.

You never formed that habit. I did. This is no big deal to me.

And so what happens if you're competent in your work, and most of you are, is that if you stay at a job long enough you tend to get raises, and you get promotions, and things like that happen. Of course, catastrophes happen too, and you lose everything. But while you're going, what are you going to do about that? Well, we have said if we don't increase our amount and our percentage, we're going to get richer and richer.

Because the church keeps giving raises. And when you get richer and richer, you... and by that I mean keeping for yourself. Again, let's say this again, unless I forget to say it.

I haven't said a word against making a lot of money tonight. Anybody hear me say that? I have not said a word about prospering fields and profitable businesses and investments that go up and salary increases. Amen! Bring it on! The issue is, like we sang, not what you make but what you keep.

That's the issue. Man, glorious possibilities if you are given much. And what will happen if you don't build in some artificial governors, like a graduated tithe, is that more and more wants start to become needs.

I need a new suit. New suit? You don't need a new suit. This suit is fine.

I could tell you stories. It would make you laugh all over the place, but I won't. One last caution and I'm done.

Businessman, if you turn a \$200,000 business into a \$200 million business, not by glittering your lifestyle, but by plowing profits back in to create jobs and expand worthy goods and services, you have done a good thing. This is not an issue of the man's fields prospering. This is an issue of what he did with it.

So God, may you grant us all the joy, all the unadulterated joy of finding our life in you, not in possessions, and fulfilling our covenant commitments and showing the world what it means to be rich toward God.

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