THE QUESTION

What did the early Christians teach about money and how to spend it?

Asked by a THF member on April 11, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 9 numbered quotations · the 26 early Christian passages and 61 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-did-the-early-christians-teach-about-money-and-how-to-spend-it

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

The early Christians taught that no one can serve both God and money, and that the love of money is a root of evil. They urged believers to use what they have for people in need, to spend it well rather than on pleasures, and to trust God instead of fearing that giving will leave them poor.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 7

No one can serve God and money

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus explains that Christ does not call money a god, but he warns his disciples not to be ruled by it. Chrysostom shows why the two cannot be served together: money gives orders that are the opposite of Christ's.

1 “He does not call mammon Lord when He says, "You cannot serve two masters," but He teaches His disciples, who serve God, not to be subject to mammon, nor to be ruled by it.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book III* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 2, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

2 “For mammon gives commands opposite to those of Christ. The one says, "Give to those who need." The other says, "Plunder the goods of the needy.""”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **John Chrysostom,** *Homilies on John* 40 (c. 386–407 AD) **Source 23, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 7

Loving money turns owners into slaves

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement repeats Paul's warning that the love of money is the root of evils. Cyprian adds that rich people who cling to wealth only think they own it; in truth their money owns them.

3 “But now the love of money is clearly the stronghold of evil. The apostle says it is the root of all evils.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 2.3 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 7, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

4 “They think they possess their wealth, when really they are possessed by it. They are slaves to profit, not masters of their own money, but rather slaves of their money.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 10, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

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POINT 3 OF 7

Having more means giving to those in need

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria rejects the idea that abundance gives a right to enjoy it all. Since God made things for everyone's use, the better question is why not give to those who need, and money is better spent on people than on jewels.

5 “But this is more worthy of love: "I have; why should I not give to those who need?"”

later in the same passage

“How much more glorious it is to do good to many than to live in luxury! How much wiser it is to spend money on human beings than on jewels and gold!”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 2.13 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 4, page 5** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 7

Spending well is a virtue

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Lactantius answers the charge that feeding the needy is wasteful. He contrasts money spent on lust and gambling with money given out of kindness, and says spending for piety and for God is a virtue.

6 “Therefore, just as it is a vice to spend it badly, so it is a virtue to spend it well.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Divine Institutes* 17 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 18, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 7

Riches given to God are kept safe

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Lactantius urges the rich to stop fearing poverty and to use their goods well. Wealth on earth can be stolen in a moment, but what is entrusted to God cannot be taken away.

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7 “Why do you fear to make a weak and perishable good everlasting, or to entrust your treasures to God as their keeper? Then you need not fear thief or robber, or rust, or tyrant. He who is rich toward God can never be poor.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Divine Institutes* 12 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 17, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 7

Fear of running out is the real danger

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian speaks to the person who will not give because he fears his estate will shrink. He warns that while such a person guards his money, his own soul is what is being lost.

8 “While you are anxious that any of your wealth might be reduced, you do not see that you yourself are being reduced, because you love money more than your own soul.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 11, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 7

Give the first part of what you have

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Didache tells believers to set aside the first part of their goods, including money, for the prophets, or for the poor when there is no prophet.

9 “And of money, silver, clothing, and every possession, take the first-fruit, as seems good to you, and give according to the commandment.”

later in the same passage

“But if you do not have a prophet, give it to the poor.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 13 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 1, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- These passages do not set one fixed amount or percentage that every Christian must give.
- They speak mostly to the rich and to greed; they say little here about ordinary daily budgets.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 26 early Christian passages and 61 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–26, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 27–29, in Bible order), then 58 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *26 passages from 10 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · source 1*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 13 (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 4** “of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · source 2*

2 *Against Heresies: Book III* **Quote 1, page 2** “false accusation by these men has been dismissed, clearly showing that neither the prophets nor the apostles ever named another God or called anyone Lord except the true and only… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 3–7*

3 *Stromata* 4.6 (1885 English; on point 1) “what the saying, No man can serve two masters, God and Mammon?— the Lord so terming the love of money… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Instructor* 2.13 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 3** “that which is squandered on foolish lusts is to be reckoned waste, not expenditure… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Stromata* 7.12 (on point 1) “no one can serve two masters, God and Mammon," Matthew 6:24… [continues online] **read ›**

6 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 13 (1885 English; on point 3) “to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail, they may receive you into the everlasting habitations… [continues online] **read ›**

7 *Instructor* 2.3 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 2** “now love of money is found to be the stronghold of evil, which the apostle says is the root of all evils, which, while some coveted, they have erred from… [continues online] **read ›**

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Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · source 8*

8 *Against Marcion* 32 (on point 1) “16:13. Then the Pharisees, who were covetous of riches… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 9*

9 *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 2 (1885 English) “after this, when blindness of mind has succeeded passion, and the hostile powers, by their suggestions, hurry on the mind, money is now no longer desired, but stolen, and acquired… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 10–15*

10 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 2** “the root of all evil is the love of money, which, while some have coveted, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows… [continues online] **read ›**

11 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 8, page 4** “covetousness is a root of all evils, which some desiring, have made shipwreck from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Timothy 6:7-10… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Treatises* (1885 English) “the love of money is the root of all evil… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 3) “when in the Gospel the Lord was discoursing concerning almsgiving, and faithfully and wholesomely warned us to make to ourselves friends of our earthly lucre by provident good works, who… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Treatises* help. He said, "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; and redeem your sins by almsgiving, and your unrighteousness by mercies to the poor, and God will… [continues online] **read ›**

15 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 2) “riches, this wealth, she cannot possess, who had rather be rich to this world than to Christ… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · source 16*

16 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 2) “instead they go from one neighbor's house to another and trouble them. They heap up plenty of money for themselves, lend at harsh interest, and care only about mammon… [continues online] **read ›**

Lactantius, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 17–19*

17 *Divine Institutes* 12 (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** “to the ransoming of captives that from which you purchase beasts… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Divine Institutes* 17 (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 3** “you expend it upon your own appetite, or lay it up in the treasury of justice… [continues online] **read ›**

19 *Divine Institutes* 17 (1885 English; on point 4) “to use money sparingly, that is, moderately, is a kind of weakness of mind, either of one fearing lest he should be in want, or of one despairing of being… [continues online] **read ›**

Peter of Alexandria, *c. 300–311 AD · source 20*

20 *Canonical Epistle* “yet the Lord says, "What is a man profited, if… [continues online] **read ›**

John Chrysostom, *c. 386–407 AD · sources 21–26*

21 *Homilies on Acts* “you will ask, “What should we do after the money was spent… [continues online] **read ›**

22 *Homilies on John* 82 (1885 English; on point 3) “the money by being spent will sustain no injury, but your brother if neglected will perish… [continues online] **read ›**

23 *Homilies on John* 40 **Quote 2, page 2** “the love of money is the root of all evils… [continues online] **read ›**

24 *Homilies on Philippians* (on point 1) that glory, where will the one stand who carries the root with him? The one who is a servant of money cannot be a true servant of Christ. Christ Himself… [continues online] **read ›**

25 *Homilies on Philippians* (1885 English; on point 2) “then far from it. Covetousness consists not alone in the love of much money, but in loving money at all… [continues online] **read ›**

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26 *Homilies on First Corinthians* 23 (1885 English; on point 2) “is not money, but mere covetousness, which you seem to me to be in love with: nor would even the money be an object of your desire, if it had… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *3 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

27 **Matthew 6:24** No one 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 both God and Mammon. **read ›**

28 **1 Timothy 6:9** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. **read ›**

29 **1 Timothy 6:10** For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *58 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Numbers 33:26

Deuteronomy 18:4 · 22:10 · 26:18

Joshua 6:18

Proverbs 14:8

Isaiah 40:3

Jeremiah 17:10

Zechariah 5:1

Matthew 5:4 · 5:5 · 5:8 · 6:19 · 6:21 · 6:31 · 6:32 · 6:33 · 7:13 · 7:21 · 9:13 · 10:10 · 10:39 · 10:41 · 12:7 · 16:26

Mark 8:36 · 12:42

Luke 5:29 · 10:7 · 12:20 · 12:22 · 12:30 · 12:33 · 13:32 · 16:9 · 16:11 · 16:12 · 16:13 · 16:14 · 16:15 · 16:16 · 16:17 · 19:8 · 19:9 · 21:3

John 12:25

Romans 9:15

1 Corinthians 1:10 · 10:24 · 15:32 · 15:49

2 Corinthians 3:7 · 5:10 · 8:12

Colossians 3:5

1 Timothy 6:20

Hebrews 9:14

1 Peter 2:9

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

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THE END OF THIS STUDY