

GREEDY

Moral Issues

Greed

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The problem of greed has plagued men of all ages. It is not limited to any particular race, gender, economic class, age group or nation. Biblically, many Bible characters have set themselves up for problems by an inordinate desire for the best of material things.

The first woman, Eve, desired the forbidden fruit and sinned (Genesis 3:6). Lot selfishly chose the beautiful plain of the Jordan and gave Abraham the inferior land (Genesis 13:10-13). Laban's greed caused him to act deceptively with Jacob in order to keep his profitable work ethic on his farm for a while longer (Genesis 29:15-30; 31:7,15,41-42). Balaam loved the "wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). Achan hid the money and clothes he coveted and stole from the accursed city of Jericho (Joshua 7:21). King Saul coveted the praise of the people and defied God's command to receive this earthly glory (1 Samuel 15:8-9). Even King David was not immune to greed as he coveted another man's wife, Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-5). King Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:26). Gehazi took a gift from Naaman when he should have refused it (2 Kings 5:20-27). The Jews unlawfully charged interest to their own brethren and even kept back the portion due to the Levites (Nehemiah 5:1-11; 13:10).

In the New Testament, Jesus boldly rebuked the sins of the covetous. He threw the greedy moneychangers out of the temple. (Makes one wonder what he would do with some churches today!) Further, Jesus spoke bluntly to the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-

22) and His own death on the cross was partially the result of greed—Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15-16).

These examples show us greed and covetousness can refer to much more than money. It can apply to a thirst for land, clothing, tools, women, popularity and much more. Yet, the problem with greed is it is often so easy to see in others and so hard to see in ourselves. Thus, Jesus tells us "beware of covetousness." In other words, greed will blindside you if you are not careful!

Since greed is difficult to detect notice a few indicators of its presence.

Greed is focusing on the earthly over the spiritual. Jesus demands His followers be more interested in "treasures in heaven" rather than "treasures on earth" because serving both is impossible (Matthew 6:19-21, 24). Do you spend more time on the earthly and temporal or the heavenly and spiritual?

Greed is leaving God out of our finances. There was nothing wrong with the "rich fool" making a profit (Luke 12:16-21). His real sin was using all of his money for his own pleasures and not thinking at all of how God would have him spend his money. Jesus makes this point saying, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (12:21). Are you as generous with the Lord as you are toward yourself? Is the Lord in your weekly budget (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)?

Greed is seen as we hoard everything for ourselves. The rich man refused to give Lazarus even the crumbs off of his table (Luke 16:14-23). Part of our money should be used to share with others who are less fortunate (Ephesians 4:27; 1 Timothy 6:17-19). When was the last time you paid somebody's utility bill, bought someone a grocery gift card or took someone shopping who was in need? Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Greed is the failure to live within our means. Paul demands "contentment" with just "food and clothing" as he writes to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:6-10). How often do we make ourselves slaves to financial lenders and credit card companies because we are not content with the basic needs of life (Proverbs 22:7)?

Greed is refusing to honorably support yourself. If we are capable of working, we should (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Some try to steal, gamble or bum their way through life as they refuse to work. For the able-bodied, God's only authorized means of support is a J-O-B! Even Paul made tents when he did not receive enough support via preaching (Acts 18:1-3).

If you see the symptoms of greed in your life, you can change. God offers forgiveness for this sin as well as all others (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Seek the true riches of heaven today!

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