

The 7 Deadly Sins

Lesson One: Greed

Anger
Lust
Pride
Envy
Gossip
Overindulgence

Introduction

Welcome to our Bible study on the Seven Deadly Sins.

We recognize that every sin is deadly because every sin we commit is a violation of God's law. With every sin we become lawbreakers, thus falling short of the glory of God. But throughout the history of the Christian Church these sins have been recognized as being especially insidious. They are all too common and all too easy to fall into. They are "besetting sins," that is they can easily entrap and entangle us in an attitude or a lifestyle that is very hard to change.

Our first deadly sin is *greed*. What is greed? Is every desire for something more greedy? Are greed and materialism the same thing? Do greed and wealth go together? Is greed a particular sin of the rich, or are the poor also prone to greed? These are some of the questions we wish to answer in our study today.

Wealth—its pleasures and its pitfalls

God owns everything. Psalm 19 says, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." God gives us our bodies and our souls, our lives and our time on this earth. He places material things into our hands to manage. When our life is finished he will call us to give an account for what we did with the things he gave us to manage.

Money and material things do not have a will. They do not have a conscience. They do not act on their own. They are inanimate, amoral things. A pile of gold nuggets or a pile of wheat are both creations of God. One is not inherently evil and the other inherently good. What is important is our attitude toward material things: the value we attach to them, the importance we ascribe to them, and what we do with them.

Why is it wrong to call money or wealth evil?

What is the greatest danger with money or wealth? (See **Deuteronomy 6:5, 1 Timothy 6:10**.)

Mark 4:1-8 - Jesus taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed...Some seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. [People], like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful."

What danger of wealth does Jesus specifically point out in this parable?

Synonyms for greed include: stinginess, miserliness, selfish ambition. Can you think of others?

Consider Scripture's words of warning:

James 5:1-6—Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.

James 1:9-11 – The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

1 John 2:15-17 – Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Our attitude toward wealth

Proverbs 30:7-9 – “Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

What attitude toward wealth is desirable, according to this passage from the Proverbs?

King Solomon was one of the wealthiest people who has ever lived in the history of the world. What lessons did he learn about wealth?

Ecclesiastes 1:2 – “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”

Can you think of Bible stories that illustrate greed very clearly? Consider . . .

- Matthew 26:14-16
- Luke 12:13-21
- Matthew 19:16-22
- 1 Kings 21:1-16
- Joshua 7:19-23

What inspires in us a new and different attitude toward wealth?

2 Corinthians 8:9 – “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”

What virtues are the opposite of greed?

Hebrews 13:5 – “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ ”

Philippians 4:10-13 – “I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

How can you as a Christian practice godliness with contentment?

1 Timothy 6:6-11 – “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. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.”

What do we always need to be aware of, when it comes to possessions and money?

Proverbs 23:4,5 – “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.”

Have you ever seen your riches “sprout wings and fly”? Relate this caution to your experience.

Consider: Is *contentment* the same as *complacency*? Does being content mean foregoing every opportunity for financial advancement? Explain your answer.

For deeper consideration

Search your own heart and ask yourself, “Are you greedy?” How can you tell?

When do you feel you have “enough”?

List all the things you have that your grandparents did not have. Why is it a challenge to live in the age we do, especially considering many of us have neighbors and friends whom we observe?

Agree or disagree: Greed is a “first world” problem. People from poorer countries don’t need to be concerned about the sin of greed.

How can greed ruin your marriage? Your family?

How does the gambling industry thrive on human nature when it comes to greed?

Consider a passage from the Old Testament ceremonial law:

Malachi 3:8-10— “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

And one final passage from Jesus:

Luke 12:22-34— [Jesus’ instructions on worrying about wealth conclude with. . .] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.