

PUT TO DEATH GREED
Colossians 3:5-11
By Andy Manning

I. TEXT

1. **Colossians 3:5** “Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.”

II. WHAT IS GREED?

1. Primary Definition: Greed is a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions that interferes with your love for God and others.
2. Alternative Definitions:
 - i. Greek: *pleonexia*; a thirst for having more.
 - ii. Louw-Nida Lexicon: "a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions or to possess more things than other people have, all irrespective of need."
 - iii. William Barclay said that the Greeks defined greed (*pleonexia*) as the accursed love of possessing.
 - iv. Hebrew: “Solomon used two Hebrew words to describe greed. One means “to deeply yearn or long for something”; the other implies wanting something so badly that you are willing to violate the rights of others to get it. Combining these two words gives us a fuller picture of what Solomon means. Greed is a deep longing for something that creates a willingness to do whatever it takes to acquire it. In other words, greed is not defined by what you want, but rather how badly you want it.” Steven K. Scott, *The Richest Man Who Ever Lived*
 - v. The English word “Greed” comes from the Old English word *graedig*, which means “always hungry for more.”
 - vi. The love of money. Heb 13:5
 - vii. The desire to get rich. 1 Tim 6:9
 - viii. Pursing material possessions for happiness, self-worth, or applause.
 - ix. Ed Young Jr. The desire to acquire gone haywire.
 - x. John Eadie The unconquerable love of appropriation; the morbid lust of acquisition.

- xi. Charles Swindoll “Practically speaking, greed is an inordinate desire for more, an excessive, unsatisfied hunger to possess. Like an untamed beast, greed grasps, claws, reaches, clutches, and clings—stubbornly refusing to surrender. The word enough is not in this beast's vocabulary.... Greed is forever discontented and, therefore, insatiably craving, longing, wanting, striving for more, more, more....”
- xii. Andy Stanley “Greed is the assumption that the extra is for my consumption.”

III. **GREED FORBIDDEN**

1. Since the middle ages, church leaders have recognized greed as one of the seven deadly sins (from which all other sins grow): Pride, greed, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and laziness.
2. **Luke 12:15** “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”
3. **Ephesians 5:3** “But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints.”
4. **Hebrews 13:5** “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.”

IV. **EXAMPLES OF GREED**

1. Elisha healed Naaman, the commander of the Aramean army, of leprosy. Naaman wanted to pay Elisha, but Elisha refused. But after Naaman left, Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, secretly chased down Naaman.
 - i. **2 Kings 5:20** Gehazi, the attendant of Elisha the man of God, thought, “My master has let this Aramean Naaman off lightly by not accepting from him what he brought. As the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”
 - ii. Gehazi disobeyed Elisha and then lied to Naaman. He said, “My master Elisha changed his mind. He has decided to accept your gift after all.” Then when Elisha confronted him about it, Gehazi lied to Elisha. In turn Gehazi and his descendants were stricken forever with leprosy, the same skin disease that Naaman had.
 - iii. Gehazi’s greed led him to sin against God and people, and it ultimately destroyed him.

V. **THE DANGERS OF GREED**

1. **You will never be satisfied.**

- i. **Ecclesiastes 5:10** “The one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile.”
- ii. **Proverbs 21:26 (ERV)** “Some people are greedy and never have enough. Good people are generous and have plenty.”
- iii. **Thomas Watson:** “The soul is a spiritual thing; riches are of an earthly extract—how can these fill a spiritual substance? A man may as well fill his treasure chest with sunshine, as his heart with gold.”
- iv. More money does not mean more happiness. Money can buy a house but not a home. Money can buy a bed but not sleep. Money can buy a clock but not time. Money can buy a book but not knowledge. Money can buy position but not respect. Money can buy blood but not life. Money can buy medicine but not health. Money can buy sex but not love. Money can buy insurance but not safety.
- v. Greed is driven by the Myth of More. More would make me happy. It is a lie.
- vi. Greed is driven by the “When... then” lie. When I have this, then I’ll be happy. It doesn’t work that way.
- vii. True happiness does not come from the riches of the world, but from having a rich relationship with God.

2. It hurts your relationship with God.

- i. **Colossians 3:5** “and greed, which is idolatry.”
- ii. How is greed idolatry? Greed is putting money before God. Anything you put before God is your real god. So when God tells you to stop having sex outside of marriage, and you refuse, then sex is your god. And if you put the pursuit of money before God, then money becomes your god.
- iii. There’s a story of this in the New Testament called “The Rich Young Ruler.” A young man ran up to Jesus, knelt down, and asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life. Jesus told the young man he had to be perfect – keep all the commandments perfectly. Shockingly, the young man said, “Done. Anything else?” Jesus said, “You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away

grieving, because he had many possessions (Mk 10:17-27).” The young man wanted eternal life, but he wanted money more. He chose to temporal riches over eternal riches. He would rather go to hell for eternity, than be poor on earth.

- iv. Greed keeps many people from God.
 - 1. They work so hard in the pursuit of money that they don’t have time or energy for the things of God.
 - 2. Their desire for money is strong that they violate God’s commands to acquire it.
 - 3. Their money affords them more opportunities for play and travel, which they do with their spare time instead of seeking God.
 - 4. Their money makes them feel safe and secure, so they don’t feel the need to seek God’s favor.
- v. **Psalm 10:3** “For the wicked one boasts about his own cravings; the one who is greedy curses and despises the Lord.”
- vi. Why do wicked people curse the Lord? Because God wants to control their money.

3. You can’t take it with you.

- i. **Ecclesiastes 5:15** “As he came from his mother’s womb, so he will go again, naked as he came; he will take nothing for his efforts that he can carry in his hands.”
- ii. It is told of Alexander the Great that he gave orders that when he should die his hands should be left outside his coffin, so that his friends might see that, though he had conquered the world, he could take nothing of his conquests into the hereafter.
- iii. The problem with greed is that you end up working tirelessly to acquire things that you cannot keep. Pretty soon you will die, and only what you have done for Christ will matter.

4. It leads to other sins.

- i. **1 Timothy 6:9-10** “But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”
- ii. “The Day America Told The Truth” – a mass survey of the morality of the American people. Question: How far would you go for \$10

million? 25% said they would abandon all their friends; 23% said they'd become prostitutes for a week; 16% would give up their citizenship; 10% would withhold testimony and let a murderer go free; 7% would murder a stranger; 6% would change their race; 4% would have a sex change operation.

5. It leads to unhappiness.

- i. **1 Timothy 6:9-10** "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
- ii. **Ecclesiastes 5:10** "The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich permits him no sleep."
- iii. **Proverbs 1:19 (ERV)** "This is what happens to those who are greedy. Whatever they get destroys them."
- iv. **Proverbs 15:27 (CEV)** "Being greedy causes trouble for your family, but you protect yourself by refusing bribes."
- v. According to Greek mythology, Midas, the Phrygian king, asked the gods for a favor, and they agreed to give him whatever he asked. So he asked that whatever he touched in the future be turned to gold. The wish was granted, but the consequences were severe. He touched a rock and it became gold. He touched his staff and it became gold. But when he sat down to eat, every item he touched turned into solid gold. He then realized that his new-found riches would be the cause of his death. Unfortunately he remembered these ominous words, "The gods cannot take back their gifts."
- vi. That's always the consequences of greed. We first seek money and material possessions, and then once we get them, they destroy us.
- vii. **Charles Swindoll** "To illustrate [greed], its probably fanciful yet fairly descriptive to think of a fellow who is thirsty taking a drink of salt water, which only makes him thirstier. His thirst causes him to drink even more, which ultimately results in making him terribly sick. And if he continues to drink he could die. That's the whole point of greed. You'll want more and more of something

that really isn't good for you. And in the getting of it, you'll suffer the painful consequences.

6. It leads to conflict.

- i. **Proverbs 28:25** “A greedy person stirs up conflict, but whoever trusts in the Lord will prosper.”
- ii. In 90 percent of divorce cases, arguments about money play a prominent role.
- iii. **Joe MeckKeever** “Greed is a cruel master. It can drive people to do awful things, to use and misuse and abuse people, and when it is frustrated to do even worse things, such as kill others or oneself.”

VI. HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE GREEDY

1. You are embarrassed by what you drive, wear, or live in. You are embarrassed that you can't afford to keep up with the latest fashions.
2. You regularly cut corners, lie, and cheat to get ahead financially.
3. You often feel depressed because of your current financial situation.
4. You often feel upset when someone you know prospers financially.
5. You are nicer and more respectful to people with money than to poorer people.
6. You make most decisions based on the financial impact. God may want you to take a new job across the country. But if you uproot your family from their friends, church, and support group, and move them across the country for more money, especially if you don't need more money, then that's greed.
7. You tend to put financial opportunity above family and health. How do you know? Your body will tell you, or your doctor will tell you, or your family will tell you.
8. You often experience destination disappointment. This is when you tend to feel that the grass is greener on the other side, and then when you finally get what you want, you regret it, or you still find yourself dissatisfied.
9. You would rather be a liar than poor. You don't want to lie, but if you have to lie to get ahead, or to keep from falling behind, you will. Your heart is revealed by opportunity and crisis.
10. You get angry when the church talks about money.
11. You don't tithe. You disobey a direct command from Scripture.

12. You plan to be generous someday. **Pastor Larry Osborne** “If generosity doesn’t start when you have nothing, it will never show up when you have something.”
13. You often use credit to pay for things. You are addicted to debt.
14. You regularly spend more than you make. You don’t live within your means.
15. You often have trouble sleeping because you worry about finances.
16. You are addicted to gambling; or you gamble often.
17. You often fantasize about being wealthy.
18. You make a middle-class income but feel poor.
19. Your family complains that you spend too much time at work and not enough time at home.
20. You have made it your goal to be wealthy.

VII. HOW TO KILL GREED

1. Be content.

- i. **Hebrews 13:4** “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.”
- ii. Contentment is being satisfied with what God has given you.
- iii. Contentment is learning to say, “Enough.”
- iv. Contentment is learning to seek happiness and fulfillment in Christ, and not in the world.

2. Be obedient with the tithe.

- i. **Malachi 3:10** “Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my house. Test me in this way,” says the Lord of Armies. “See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure.”
- ii. Tithing breaks the grip of greed.
- iii. When you tithe, you put God before your finances. You tell your money, “You are not my god; you belong to God.”

3. Be generous.

- i. Focus on giving rather than getting. Learn to be a taker rather than a giver. Someone who seeks out opportunities to share, not to grow rich.
- ii. **1 Timothy 6:17-19** “17 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. 18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.”

- iii. To be generous is to share your extra resources with those in need.
- iv. Keep your eyes open for people in need, especially church family, and be willing to help them out.

4. Seek the things above.

- i. **Colossians 3:2** “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”
- ii. Instead of focusing on building more wealth, and getting more stuff, and other worldly goals, focus on spiritual goals. Spiritual growth. Eternal rewards. Building the church. Soulwinning. Growing closer to Christ.

5. Develop the right definition of success.

- i. **Luke 12:15** “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”
- ii. Stop measuring success by money and possessions. Cars. Houses. Toys. Income. Jewelry. Vacations. Clothing. None of that stuff matters.
- iii. Success is not defined by stuff. It is defined by who you are when you strip all the stuff away. True success is Christlike character. It is obedience to God.

VIII. CONCLUSION

1. “How Much Does a Man Need?” By Leo Tolstoy.

Ambitious peasant named Pakhom.

Heard of a wonderful deal in a far-off country.

He traveled to the land of the Bashkirs and negotiated with the village elder, who seemed a fool.

The elder told Pakhom that he could have all the land he wanted for a thousand rubles a day.

Pakhom did not understand. “What kind of rate is that – a day?” he asked. “How many acres could that be?”

“We don’t reckon your way. We sell by the day. However much you can walk around in one day will be yours.”

When Pakhom expressed that a man can walk around much land in one day, the elder burst out laughing. "And all of it will be yours!" he replied. But there was one condition: If Pakhom didn't return to the starting point by sundown, the money would be forfeited.

The next morning, Pakhom met the villagers to the top of a hill where the elder put down his hat. After placing his rubles on top, Pakhom began walking, digging holes along the way to mark his land.

By noon he looked back and could barely see the hill where he had begun.

By the afternoon, the heat was exhausting. By then his feet were cut and bruised, his legs were weakened. He wanted to rest, but it was out of the question.

Then Pakhom started to make his way back. He walked faster, then ran. He worried that he had been too greedy. His fear made him breathless. His shirt soaked with sweat. His throat parched. His lungs were working like a blacksmith's bellows. His heart beat like a hammer. He was terrified. All this strain will be the death of me, he thought.

But he couldn't stop to rest. They'd call me an idiot, he thought.

When he was close enough to hear the Bashkirs cheering, he summoned his last ounce of strength and kept running. As he finally reached the hill, everything suddenly became dark. The sun had set. Pakhom groaned. He wanted to stop, but he heard the Bashkirs still cheering him on. He realized that from where he was at the bottom of the hill, the sun had set, but not for those on top. Pakhom took a deep breath and rushed up the hill. Reaching the top, he saw the elder sitting by the hat, laughing his head off.

Pakhom's legs gave way, and he fell forward grasping the cap. Pakhom had died.

2. Greed is the desperate pursuit of more. But more doesn't make us happier. And the pursuit and acquisition of more hurts us more than it helps us.
3. Let us seek the things above, not earthly things, and put greed to death.