

Date: May 8, 2022

Series: *Building Inspection - Things that Tear Down the Body*

Title: *Greed*

Text: Hebrews 12:1; 1 Timothy 6:9–10; Luke 12:15

Preacher: Kevin Freeman

Greed can eat away at the foundation of Christians and churches alike if it goes unchecked. Why is greed so destructive, and how can we guard against it?

Fresh dust in the cracks

NOW

July 11, 2014 - just before dawn, Bourgone district of Casablanca rocked by the horrific sounds of three residential buildings collapsing. 23 people died.

What was the cause? Greed, according to Mourad Nouisser, whose father owned the main building that collapsed. Five story building had approval for only three stories. *"Houses in this area should not be more than three stories high. But because of corruption, my father was able to build a fourth and then a fifth floor... he was greedy."* He claimed some inspectors were bribed to produce falsified documents to add floors.

There were warning signs just before the collapse. Fresh dust was falling through existing cracks, and doors stopped closing properly.

Radouane Abdelali was one of the emergency services officials involved. He said all the residents were to blame, for not having spoken out. *"All of us saw our neighbours adding extra floors, but none of us said anything."*

The building owner's greed cost him his life - he died in the collapse - but it took twenty-two other lives, ripped loved ones from families, and had a ripple effect in society.

Source: <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/news/corruption-greed-blamed-casablanca-building-tragedy-1616912142>

THEN

Greed is nothing new, and it has always been destructive.

Original sin involved greed: *"I want more. I want to become like God."*

Since then, greed has plagued every generation.

- Traces of greed in Cain's murder of Abel - he wanted the acceptable offering.
- Jacob's greed destroyed the peace in his family - multiple times.
- Naboth was killed by Jezebel because of Ahab's greed for his vineyard.
- The disciples weren't content just to be with Jesus but greedily jockeyed for position. Being with Jesus wasn't enough for them. One betrayed Jesus to his death because of greed.

Greed has destroyed not only buildings but also countless lives.

ALWAYS

Eliminating greed is the only way to be content.

What is greed? The elevation of wants to the level of needs.

True needs are demoted.

"One of the weaknesses of our age is our apparent inability to distinguish our needs from our greeds." -Donald William Bradley Robinson

Greed for money, power, attention, status, happiness.

Luke 12:15 ESV

¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

1 Timothy 6:6–10 ESV

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Hebrews 12:1 ESV

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Why is greed so harmful?

1.) Greed SKEWS our OUTLOOK on life.

Belief that life is all about material gain.

"He who dies with the most toys wins." -Anon.

1 Timothy 6:9 ESV

⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Luke 12:13 ESV

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me."

Distorted image of Jesus: Jesus came to increase my wealth...further my material standing.

Luke 12:15

"¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.""

Belief that life is all about material gain.

Use mirrors frequently, but fun house mirrors are different. The light reflects off a bent surface resulting in a distorted image. It's possible to adjust a drawn image to get a "normal" image in a convex surface. The real image is out of proportion. Similarly, greed takes our lives out of proportion just so we can match a skewed perception of reality.

"It is not the fact that a man has riches which keeps him from the kingdom of heaven, but the fact that riches have him."
-John Caird

2.) Greed CAUSES other SINS.

1 Timothy 6:10

“10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”

Distinction between money and the love of it.

- God owns the cattle on a thousand hills.
- Job, Abraham, and Lydia all had some wealth.

“This craving” - greed is a craving. Giving in does not reduce cravings but increases them

Source: 1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching Materialism

In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what you want. The other is getting it. Misplaced desire means getting what we want won't satisfy. Short-lived happiness when purchasing. Dopamine and endorphins are released. Some become addicted.

What brings you a dose of happiness? Is it getting or giving?

3.) Greed WEIGHS us DOWN.

Hebrews 12:1

“1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,”

Differentiate between “every weight” and “sin which clings so closely.” Weights aren't sins, but they're heavy. If it involves greed, how is it not sin? Some things enter our lives, which we later find hinder our pursuit of Christ and what He has called us to. Video games and marriage...and fatherhood. Called to run the race for God, but cannot if we are weighed down.

“Nobody can fight properly and boldly for the faith if he clings to a fear of being stripped of earthly possessions.” -St. Peter Damian

Most recent Boston Marathon was April 18, 2022. Began 125 years ago in 1897. What do runners wear? Sleek clothing, not baggy; lightweight shoes. Moms run, but you don't see strollers. Business people run, but you don't see briefcases. Construction workers run, but there aren't tool bags. Runners lay aside every weight - even good things!

What weights must you lay aside?

Let us ALSO - there is a “great cloud” of believers who have overcome greed.

How can we avoid greed?

“Greed has three facets; love of things, love of fame, and love of pleasure; and these can be attacked directly with frugality, anonymity, and moderation.” -Paul Martin

1.) Think BIGGER.

1 Timothy 6:7

“7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.”

Psalms 49:17 ESV

¹⁷ ***For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.***

Ecclesiastes 5:15 ESV

¹⁵ ***As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.***

The problem of greed seems to be about wanting more, but it could also be described as wanting less. The slave to greed is addicted to lesser cravings that cannot satisfy. Junk food - potato chips, snacks, empty calories. Eating chips and saying, "Get that away from me." - admission of attraction to a lesser thing.

What lesser things have you become enamored with?

Colossians 3:1–2 ESV

¹ ***If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*** ² ***Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.***

2.) Develop a good DEFENSE and a good OFFENSE.

Hebrews 13:5 ESV

⁵ ***Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."***

Luke 12:15

"15 And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.""

Eliminating greed is just as much a positive act as it is a negative one.

Hebrews 12:1

"1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,"

Ants in our yard - covered in anthills. Removing the ants only worked if we also planted grass. Mothers - example of offense - many God-given reasons to not be greedy. Some of the most giving people on the planet. Mothers give time, talents, treasure - forego their own benefit for that of their children.

Defensively, we remove the greed weeds when they pop up

3.) Control your APPETITES.

1 Timothy 6:6 ESV

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain,

Proverbs 30:8 ESV

⁸ ***Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me,***

Butterfly named *Maculinea arion* or Large Blue has interesting life cycle.

- As a caterpillar, it secretes a sweet substance from its body that a particular species of ant enjoys.
- So much that the ants carry it back to their nest and care for it like an adopted larva. Keep milking it to get the sweet fluid.
- Meanwhile the caterpillar grows by eating the ant larvae.

The ants are so interested in the sweet fluid from the caterpillar that they wreck their own legacy.

Our legacy can be wrecked by greed if we cannot control our appetites.

Where's yours?

Source: 1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching Materialism