



# WEEK 2

GREED // HUMILITY

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## GREED // GENEROSITY

### HEBREWS 13:5

*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."*

### REBECCA KONYNDYK DEYOUNG, GLITTERING VICES

*Greed is a perverted love. Its profile has disordered desire written all over it.*

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines greed as the "selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as money) than is needed." While the dictionary definition might give the word itself a negative connotation, in real life greed's outworkings are not only accepted, but applauded. Greed, it is argued, is the necessary psychological force for our capitalistic economic system. In contrast, Scripture opposes greedy behaviour and denounces greed as a sin. Jesus himself once warned a crowd: "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15b). Years later Paul declared that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils" (1 Tim. 6:10), a statement that has caused some to wonder whether greed, not pride, deserves the title of the root of the tree of vices.

But can't the Christian pursue wealth and Jesus simultaneously?! Jesus is clear that only one can be your God. "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (Matt. 6:24). Church father Augustine once said: "We will never be able to satisfy our deep, human need for an eternal, perfect good with any amount of temporal, imperfect goods." Every person on earth is searching for satisfaction, but the accumulation of money and possessions only brings added stress and anxiety as now one has to care for the added money and goods. Only Jesus has the ability to satisfy our deepest longings.

Greed demonstrates two personal faith failures. First of all, greed demonstrates a lack of trust in our heavenly Father's care and provision for His children. Secondly, greed exposes our belief that Jesus cannot satisfy all our needs and desires.

Scripture counsels us to fight the vice of greed with the virtue of generosity. When we give, the chains of greed are loosed and broken. Generous giving takes our gaze off this life and places it on the next as we store up treasures for ourselves in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). Finally, generosity in the name of Jesus can serve as a form of gratitude and praise for the salvation Jesus accomplished on the cross. "Though [Jesus] was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9b). Jesus demonstrated generosity at its fullest by giving His very life for us. Through our generosity we can honour his sacrifice and point others to His grace.

#### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- Imagine others had access to all of your financial records, including bank accounts, investment portfolios, a list of your possessions and their worth, your spending habits, tax returns, cash flow, etc. but they didn't know anything else about you. What would people conclude about your character and your values? Would they conclude that you are a generous person? Would they conclude based on the way you steward your money and possessions that you are a follower of Christ?
- In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus instructs his followers not to lay up treasures here on earth, but to lay up treasure in heaven. Judging by the way you steward the money and possessions God has entrusted to you, where are you focusing on laying up treasures?
- As you prayerfully reflect on whether/how greed has a hold in your life, are there particular items or a specific amount of money that God might be calling you to give away to free you from the chains of those possessions?

## WEEKLY FAST

### **Fast from Non-Essential Purchases this week.**

- Let go of things you don't use or have in excess of and pass them on to those who are in need.

### **Instead, choose one or more ways to practice Kingdom Virtue of Generosity in place of purchases for yourself:**

- Practice gratitude and contentment. Spend time thanking God this week for the good things He has given you. Thank him for the material possessions He's entrusted you with, but most importantly, thank Him for the gift of His Son Jesus, and the salvation Christ purchased on the cross. Lastly, feast on the practice of generosity
- Instead of buying a non-essential you've been longing for, buy it or something similar for someone else who might need it or be blessed by it.
- Give above and beyond your normal giving to the church, our benevolence offering or some other Christian ministry.
- Pay for someone's meal or coffee.
- Tip generously when possible.

## ADDITIONAL READING

Exodus 16; Ecclesiastes 5:10; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15;  
Philippians 4:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-10  
Chip Ingram, *The Genius of Generosity*