

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

[1.https://youtu.be/AzmbOCbK9uk](https://youtu.be/AzmbOCbK9uk)

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We return to our sermon series on the 7 Deadly Sins.

So far, we have looked at the sins of Lust and Gluttony.

Today, we'll look at the sin of Greed.

2.

According to the dictionary, *greed is a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as money) than is needed.*

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Pope Gregory of the 6th Century

Who was instrumental in formulating the Seven
Ranked Pride as the worst of the sins.

But I wonder if he were to catch a glimpse of today's
world

He might change his opinion
And place greed at the top of the list

Greed, it seems to me

Is the source of a great many of today's problems.

Psychology Today calls *greed the ultimate addiction.*

Environmental Science and Technology asks the
question, *is human greed at the core of modern day
environmental issues?*

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

The take away from military historian John Keegan's book,

“The history of war,”

Is that almost all wars are about greed.

Consider the economic crisis of 2008

Caused by Wall Street banking malpractices

Ponder the deforestation of the Brazilian rainforest

For more and more cattle ranches

Think about the fact, that some CEOs

Earn up to 1000 times more income

Than their employees

And that the wealthiest **1 percent** of the world's population

Now owns more than half of the world's wealth.

And reflect on the addictive behavior of hoarding

And the compulsion to max out credit cards . . .

You might agree that greed is an endemic disease

Throughout our society today.

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In our Scripture Lesson, Jesus warns us against greed.

He reminds us that we won't serve 2 masters

We cannot serve both God and money.

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

We will be devoted to one and despise the other.

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Marketing strategists know this.

And consequently, we're bombarded every which-a-way
By a consumer society that says

Buy this, buy that, make sure you have one of these.

So much so, that the difference between
Needs and wants, should-haves and must-haves
Becomes even more confusing.

Today, most of our basic needs are met
Food, clothing, shelter, and transportation.

But where do our needs stop
And our wants or desires begin?

When is enough, enough?

Is a TV at home a need or a want?
Is a TV in every room a need or a want?
Is cable TV a basic requirement?

How about computers, smart phones, and tablets?
When do needs change to wants?

Transportation is a basic need in society.

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

But is a car for every licensed driver in the family excessive?

And what kind of car?

And how about shelter?

How big should a house be?

In 1950 the average American home was 1000 sf
The average size family, 3.5.

Today, the average size home is 2500 sf
With the family shrunk to 2.6.

When does basic need change to basic greed?

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According to Gordon Gekko in the 1987 film “Wall Street,”

Starring Michael Douglas and Charlie Sheen
Greed is good.

3. <https://youtu.be/R8y6DJAeolo>

Greed is the fuel that runs our capitalistic engine.

According to economist Adam Smith

Greed is the Invisible Hand of the Free Market.

Another economist Alfred Marshall went so far as to say

*The love of money is the highest the most refined
And the most unselfish elements of our nature.*

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

Would you agree with his statement?
The Bible certainly doesn't.

What does the Bible say about greed?

Well, it says a lot!

In fact, the Bible addresses the sin of greed
Far more often than the sin of lust.

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The warning against greed begins in the 10
Commandments

In both the 1st and the 10th Commandments.

4.

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.

Jesus warns us we can't serve both money and God.

There is one God and money cannot replace Him
And if it does, money becomes the god we worship
And that's idolatry.

Greed also parallels the 10th Commandment.

5.

Exodus 20:17 (NRSV) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Covetousness is rooted in greed.

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The writer of Ecclesiastes also warns against greed.

6.

Ecclesiastes 5:11 ESV He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income.

7.

Proverbs 23:4a Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint.

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As in Matthew, also in Luke, Jesus addresses greed.

8.

Luke 12:15 (NIV) Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

And finally, we see the Apostle Paul warning of greed.

9.

Ephesians 5:3 (NIV) But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

Maybe the clearest warning that greed is a “deadly” sin
Comes from Paul’s letter to Timothy.

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

10.

I Timothy 6:9-10 (CEV) ⁹ People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them. ¹⁰ The love of money causes all kinds of trouble. Some people want money so much that they have given up their faith and caused themselves a lot of pain.

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The desire for basic provisions is not evil
God wants our good desires met.

Brian Hedges in his book,
Hit List: Taking Aim at the Seven Deadly Sins

“It’s not what you possess but what possesses you.”

But when desire becomes obsessive or excessive
When it becomes the wherewithal to
contentment.
It is sin.

Greed is love of something more than God.

Greed changes our love for God into love of money.

Paul says the love of money is the root of all evil.

11.

James 4:1-2 (CEV) Why do you fight and argue with each other? Isn’t it because you are full of

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

selfish desires that fight to control your body? ² You want something you don't have, and you will do anything to get it. . . .

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So is there hope for us who struggle with greed?

Of course there is.

But for many of us it is a life-long battle.

We have to redirect our love for possessions

To a desire to possess something far more important

Our relationship to God and neighbor.

The secret of contentment lies in Christ!

Jeremiah Burroughs writes in his book

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment:

[Contentment] is that sweet, inward, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

The Apostle Paul says it this way

12.

Philippians 4:11-13 (CEV) ¹¹ I am not complaining about having too little. I have learned to be satisfied with whatever I have. ¹² I know what it is to be poor or to have plenty, and I have lived under all kinds of conditions. I know what it

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

means to be full or to be hungry, to have too much or too little. ¹³ Christ gives me the strength to face anything.

Paul says to Timothy

13.

I Timothy 6:6-8 (NLT) ⁶ Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. ⁷ After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. ⁸ So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

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In Luke 18, a rich man comes to Jesus and asks
What must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus answers him, you know the Law
Follow the commandments and you will be saved.

“But I have,” said the rich man, “ever since I was a kid.”

Then Jesus told him, “you lack one thing . . .

Sell everything you have

Give it to the poor

And come and follow me.”

Sell everything you have and give it to the poor

And come and follow me.

And what did the rich ruler do?

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

He turned around and walked away from Jesus.

“How hard it is,” says Jesus,

“For the rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle

Than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God.

14.

Hebrews 13:5 (NRSV) Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

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The world looks at material wealth

And says this is where contentment is found.

But the people of God look to spiritual wealth

And says this is where contentment is found.

Paul says,

15.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NLT) You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

In the upper room the night before Jesus was crucified
He said to his disciples remembering back

7 Deadly Sins: Greed (Avarice)

To when he sent them out two by two.

16.

Luke 22:35 NIV When I sent you without purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?

Greed might bring us great material wealth
But it will rob us of our spiritual riches.

Because ultimately greed, in the end, fails even the greedy.

And so be content with whatever God has given you
Because through Christ Jesus

You possess a joy and a peace that the world cannot give
And neither can it take away.

To God be the Glory!