

7 Sins & 7 Virtues Class #3 Greed vs. Generosity

** Greed is all right, by the way . . . I think greed is healthy. You can be greedy and still feel good about yourself.*

Ivan F. Boesky (b. 1937), U.S. financier. Commencement Address, 18 May 1986, School of Business Administration, University of California, Berkeley. Boesky's words were later picked up in Oliver Stone's film, *Wall Street* (1987), spoken by Gordon Gecko. Boesky himself was later convicted of conspiring to file false documents with the federal government, involving insider trading violations, and agreed to pay \$100 million in fines and illicit profits.

** Men hate the individual whom they call avaricious only because nothing can be gained from him.*

Voltaire (1694–1778), French philosopher. Dictionary, "Avarice" (1764).

** The point is that you can't be too greedy.*

Donald Trump (b. 1946), U.S. businessman. *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, ch. 2.

** Wars and revolutions and battles are due simply and solely to the body and its desires. All wars are undertaken for the acquisition of wealth; and the reason why we have to acquire wealth is the body, because we are slaves in its service.*

Socrates (469–399 B.C.), Greek philosopher. Quoted in: Plato, *Phaedo*, sct. 65c–66e.

** Providing for one's family as a good husband and father is a water-tight excuse for making money hand over fist. Greed may be a sin, exploitation of other people might, on the face of it, look rather nasty, but who can blame a man for "doing the best" for his children?*

Eva Figes (b. 1932), Anglo-German author. "A View of My Own," in *Nova* (Jan. 1973).

Prayer –

"Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: ⁸ Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. ⁹ 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. *Proverbs 30:7-9*

Stories – Frivolous Lawsuit Stories + A generous attorney

Texts –

Luke 12:13-34 Parable of the rich fool / seek first the kingdom

*"Watch out! Be on your guard against **all kinds of greed....**"*

Also – 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Acts 4:32-35 The first Christians gave joyfully and shared possessions in common.

Deuteronomy 8:2-18 God wants to know what is in your heart – you may be tested to reveal what is there.

Definitions / Perspectives – Greed

All kinds of greed (Examples)

- love of money (1 Tim. 6:10) + Ivan Boesky Speech
- desire to have more than others (Eccl 5:10)
- greed of possessions for self aggrandizement or reputation inflation. (Acts ;18 Luke 20:47 Col 2:3,14,15)

ISSUES

- Control / Security (Mat 6:24 Psalm 49)
- Trust/Belief [Lack of, misdirected] (Col 3:5 Ezek 33:30-33 Jer 6:13-15)
- Obsession / Pleasure Driven (Luke 12:19 Col 2:,14,15)

Definitions / Perspectives – Generosity

- Love of God trumps love of money (Matt 6:19-24; II Sam 24:18-25)
- Giving is better than receiving (Acts 20:32-35)
- Considering others first is key Christian virtue vs. possessions for self aggrandizement or reputation inflation. (Matt 6:2-3 Phil. 2:3-8) (also Proverbs 22:1 "A good name is more desirable than great **riches**; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold")

ISSUES

- Control / Security (Matt 6:25-34 Psalm 49)
- Trust/Belief (Duet. 8:2-18)
- Self Control/Moderation/Delayed Gratification (Gal 5:22 Proverbs 13:11; II Chronicles chp. 1 Solomon's example)
- Love (I Cor 13:3 Acts 4:32-35)

7 Sins & 7 Virtues Class #3 Greed vs. Generosity

"God loves a cheerful giver"
II Cor. 9:7

"It is always so pleasant to be generous, though very vexatious to pay debts."

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), U.S. essayist, poet, philosopher. Essays, "Gifts" (Second Series, 1844)

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:32-35

Things That Work When Applied With Wisdom –

- Intentionally and regularly (daily is not too much) cultivate gratitude in your life.
 - Continually offer prayers of thanksgiving for small and large things (even for the trials that test the authenticity and depth of your faith).
 - Enjoy what you already have. Pull out forgotten books, toys, hobbies, etc. and recapture the joy those things brought. Be thankful in the process.
 - Call to mind, and meditate on the blessings of Heaven, the promises of God, and the kindnesses that have been shown to you by others.
- Get serious about helping the poor, the widows, and the orphans – be it locally or internationally. This is high on God's lists. (Isaiah 58, James 1:27)
- Address your greed head on.
 - Honestly identify those things that powerfully capture your desires, or those things that bring fear or anxiety if taken away – even those things that only the *threat* that they (or "it") *might* be taken away causes the fear or anxiety. Mentally and emotionally practice living without that *thing*. Sit with the fear and anxiety, let the feelings come full force, then prayerfully reason it out and work it through with the Spirit's help.
 - Give something away (money or possession) that is causing you to be a slave to it, and follow the above steps.
- Address your greed subtly and skillfully (not head on).
 - Learn to rejoice in the good fortune of others. When you go to someone's house that is more luxurious than yours, when someone gets a gift that you wish you had, when something good happens to someone who you don't feel necessarily even deserves it, etc. Practice (and I mean really work on it...) rejoicing with them – either in their presence or when alone with your private thoughts.
 - Practice giving.
 - Share your food, your clothes, your possessions with family, friends, neighbors, strangers, especially "enemies" – i.e. those who don't like you.
 - Give financially to the work of building the Kingdom of God. Church, Compassion ministries, Outreach.
 - Pay total attention to someone for 30 minutes without one thought about yourself – not about your agenda, your hunger, your looks, your next appointment, etc. focus totally on that other person. Really listen, really engage. This type of generosity is enormously important. If you excel in this skill, you will defeat not only greed but many other vices as well.

Personal Applications / Goals –