

Question: What role do you think greed has played in our current economic crisis? How would Jesus deal with greed?

I do believe that greed has tragically affected our nation and our world. For example, consider the news reports about CEO's of corporations who took excessively high bonuses while the company itself was going bankrupt. As a result of such actions, thousands of workers lost their jobs and their retirement funds. Average American workers have demonstrated greed by borrowing and buying in excess of their ability to repay in order to have more, bigger and better things. Greed has also corrupted some governmental officials and law enforcement officers by causing them to accept bribes.

Jesus addressed the problem of greed directly in one of his parables. When a man asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide the inheritance with him, Jesus refused. He said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15). Then Jesus told about a rich man who built bigger barns to store the abundance of his fields. The man made the mistake of placing all of his confidence in his wealth, and he failed to consider the end of life and his accountability before God.

Greed has been defined as a selfish action which leads to an excessive accumulation of wealth, power, food or other possessions. However, merely gaining and having these things is not the problem because a person can be wealthy and righteous at the same time if he keeps his wealth subservient to God's righteous purposes. However, the potential problem arises when one person's accumulation of wealth and power limits the opportunities of another. This seems to be exactly what has happened in our country. The greed of some has ended up taking away from others, especially the poor.

Jesus would deal with the problem of greed by changing people from within. He said that greed and its associated evils like theft, deceit, envy and arrogance come from within the hearts of men (Mark 7:21-22). Jesus would transform hearts by replacing greed with unselfish concern for others and with a spirit of contentment. The apostle Paul said, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility

consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Paul also said that he had “learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Philippians 4:12). Contentment brings a joy to life that the greedy person assumes can be found only in the possession of more things. Truly, one who has learned to be content with what he has and who trusts in the wisdom and goodness of God will experience joy that will never disappoint. Those treasures cannot decay, rust or be stolen (Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34).

While greed may be only one factor in our nation’s current problems, it does create serious problems. That should not surprise us. As the wise man said, “A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper” (Proverbs 28:25).

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