

Question: What role do you think greed plays in our nation and the world's economic problems?

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 over the past several years about Ponzi schemes and CEO's of corporations who took excessively high bonuses while the company itself was going bankrupt. A more recent example is the life-endangering defects in products that automobile companies failed to report because of a potential loss in profit margins. As a result of these actions, thousands of workers have lost their jobs, retirement funds have been robbed and lives have been lost in fatal accidents. Greed has also been demonstrated by average Americans who have borrowed or bought in excess of their ability to repay in order to have bigger and better things. In addition, government officials and law enforcement officers sometimes have been corrupted by bribes.

The Bible has several passages that mention the sin of greed. Proverbs 15:27 says, "A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live." The psalmist warned: "In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises. He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD" (Psalm 10:2-3). Recognizing greed at every level of society, the prophet Jeremiah commented, "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit" (Jeremiah 6:13).

Jesus addressed the problem of greed directly in one of his parables. When a man asked him 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 had made the mistake of placing all of his confidence in his wealth and had failed to consider the end of life with his accountability before God. 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). His desire is for hearts to be transformed 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). He illustrated these instructions with the example of Jesus. Later, Paul said the secret of contentment in all circumstances of life is the strength provided by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:12-13). Contentment brings a joy to life that the greedy person may assume can be found only in the possession of more things of this world. But 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. These treasures cannot decay, rust or be stolen (Matthew 6:19-21, 24-34).

While greed may be only one factor in our nation’s 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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