

Cross My Heart, Part 4

Today we're going to continue studying four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart. Each one of them causes an imbalance that makes us "sick." **And each one of them creates this imbalance through a DEBT – DEBTOR relationship.** Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid – it causes an awkwardness in the relationship ("an elephant in the room") because there's a debt.

Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.

We've already talked about GUILT. Guilt says, "I owe you" and the only cure for guilt is CONFESSION.

We've also talked about ANGER. Anger says, "You owe me" and the only cure for anger is FORGIVENESS.

Today, we're going to talk about GREED. Greed says, "I owe me" and – as you might expect – there is only one cure for greed.

CODE YELLOW: GREED SAYS "I OWE ME."

The problem with greed is that it can be camouflaged as a virtue. No one ever says, "I'm greedy" – they say "I'm just careful with my money and my stuff." Greed disguises itself so well that you might just overlook it entirely, but the people around you know you have a problem because:

- Greedy people talk a lot and worry a lot about money
- Greedy people are not cheerful givers
- Greedy people are reluctant to share
- Greedy people are poor losers
- Greedy people quibble over insignificant sums of money
- Greedy people talk as if they have just enough to get by
- Greedy people often create a culture of secrecy around them
- Greedy people won't let them forget what they have done for you
- Greedy people attempt to control people with their money
- Greedy people are reluctant to express gratitude
- Greedy people are not content with what they have

Greedy people believe they deserve every good thing that could possibly come their way. Like angry people, they have a story to tell (why they are "careful") and an excuse for their behavior.

Greedy is not a financial issue; it is a heart issue. You can be poor and greedy or rich and greedy! Greed is not just about possessions, it is about how you live out your relationships.

Luke 12:15 (KJV) And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Luke 12:15 (NIV) Then 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."

This verse introduces one of Jesus' parables about a rich landowner who achieves great wealth and decides to build bigger barns to store it all, only to find out that his life is going to be cut short and he will lose it all.

The landowner believes that he himself has EARNED this abundance, and never even considers the notion that GOD might have had anything to do with it! He never even considers that the EXTRA he has been blessed with is intended for anyone's consumption but his own!

That's because greedy people don't think that way at all. They just say, "Lucky me!" They can always come up with a plan for any extra that comes their way. They have "BIGGER BARN SYNDROME."

Tragically, this landowner runs out of TIME long before he runs out of STUFF – and someone else gets everything he lived for, not because he is generous but because he is dead! Eventually, everything we claim to own will be owned by someone else (not a matter of "if" just "when").

Instead we should ask, "Lord, what do you want me to do with my extra?"

The greedy person lives his life as if his possessions are the most important thing. For him, **STUFF EQUALS LIFE**, because his stuff is an extension of who he is. As a result, his friends and family often end up feeling like they are not nearly as important as his possessions.

Jesus concludes this parable with His definition of a greedy person – someone who saves carefully for himself, but gives sparingly to God.

Luke 12:21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Ask yourself, "Why do I have so much more than I need?"

- It is more than your parents had at your age
- It is considerably more than most people in the world can lay claim to

As long as I'm continually on a quest for MORE, then when more comes along I automatically assume that it's all for ME! I'm consuming mentally what I hope to soon be consuming physically – and this attitude leaves no margin at all for generosity.

Has God provided more than enough just so you could ... Provide for your children? Not worry? Increase your standard of living? Retire early? Or maybe He has given you MORE so that you could SHARE!

When we DON'T have enough, we don't hesitate to talk to God about it? So why don't we do that when we have MORE than enough?!

You don't have to have EXTRA to be greedy. Where there is no margin financially, there is no way to avoid greed!

FEAR is the driving force behind greed ("What if ...?"). Ultimately, it is the fear that God won't take care of me, at least in the way I want to be taken care of! There is **NEVER ENOUGH** to satisfy a greedy person.

If aliens could observe our North American lifestyle from space, don't you think they would say, "If these beings didn't shop, they would die"?! ☺

We live in a culture that reminds us every day what we DON'T have! So, greed will not go away by itself. Here is the only cure ...

Matthew 6:19-20 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Jesus is not arguing against responsible living, He is arguing against **HOARDING**. Why? Because the only way to store up heavenly treasures is to give away earthly treasures! **And because the only way to break the power of GREED is through GIVING.**

"But I don't have the CASH to give!" That never seems to stop you when you want to SPEND. Why don't you make your giving decisions the same way you make your spending decisions?

Jesus said, "**If you want to know where your heart is, don't follow your FEELINGS, follow the MONEY trail!**" Why? Because your heart, your time, your care, and your attention follow your money. You can't help it, because that is now something you have INVESTED in.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The average Christian gives only 2% of their income. Your treasure is not just an indicator of where your heart IS, but also where it "WILL BE" in the future. That can be bad news, but it can also be very good news:

SINCE YOUR HEART FOLLOWS YOUR MONEY, YOU CAN ACTUALLY USE YOUR MONEY TO CHANGE YOUR HEART! How? Just invest differently! Send money outside YOUR kingdom!

Matthew 6:22-23 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Jesus is saying here that just as the eye directs the body, so our treasure directs our heart. **YOUR FINANCES IMPACT YOUR WHOLE LIFE.** (Just ask any person whose marriage crumbled with financial problems.)

Giving breaks the power of greed by sending your money in a new direction. **But what is the PRACTICAL way to do this?** After all, we can't give away all our money and still live.

The practical way to apply this principle is to become ...

- a **PERCENTAGE** giver (10% tithe)
- a **PRIORITY** giver (first expenditure)
- a **PROGRESSIVE** giver (increases over time)
- and a **SPONTANEOUS** giver (room for God's leading)

GIVING PUTS A LID ON MY LIFESTYLE! Before I fund MY kingdom, I give to God's kingdom. "I gave first, before I walked through the mall to see what it is that I can't live without (that I didn't even know existed!)."

People who finally decide to become percentage givers (tithers) always talk about changes in their HEART, not the changes in their MONEY.

If you're not willing to give to the point that it impacts your lifestyle, then you are GREEDY. Greed is not a feeling, it is a refusal to act. You can feel "compassion" and still be as stingy as Scrooge! Good intentions and greed can cohabit in your heart indefinitely. (God loves a cheerful giver, but He will put your money to good use whether you are cheerful or not!) **YOU HAVE TO GIVE YOUR WAY OUT OF GREED!**

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Malachi 3:10 – God says, "I dare you to put Me to the test!"