

I Will Build My Church – Part 4

Matthew 16:18-19 (KJV) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

- This series is about discovering God's blueprint for building His church!

PRINCIPLE #7: HONEST MOTIVES

(Acts 5:2)

Acts 5:2 (KJV) And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:2 (NLT) He brought part of the money to the apostles, but he claimed it was the full amount. His wife had agreed to this deception.

- This is the SECOND time in the book of Acts that everyone sold everything and laid it at the feet of the Apostles. (Acts 2:44-45)
- Basically, everyone who had a job gave his entire salary into a common pool, and everyone who had property sold it and gave the proceeds into the same fund. Then, everyone in the church had their basic needs met by living in common on the money placed in the pool.
- Ananias' plan was simple. He decided to give only PART of his money but to tell the apostles he was giving ALL. **By doing this, he would be able to secretly save money for his wants in the future, while the church met all of his needs in the present!**
- His sin was not in having land, possessions or money. His sin was not in choosing not to give in this particular offering – no one was being forced to give. His sin was not in giving only part of the money – that was a personal choice as well.
- Ananias' sin was two-fold:
 1. COVETOUSNESS – wanting for the flesh what belongs to God
 2. HYPOCRISY – appearing to do outwardly what is not true inwardly
- These sins are often closely tied together under an area we call "**MOTIVES**." The word "motive" simply means "the real reason for action." In a similar way we say, "this is what MOTIV-ates me" – my motives lead me to action.

- Ananias' sin begs us to ask ourselves **two questions**: Am I serving my flesh or God in my everyday choices? Am I the same person in secret as I appear to be in public?

COVETOUSNESS

- **COVETING IS THE UNCONTROLLED DESIRE TO ACQUIRE.**
- The impulse for WANTING is a very necessary part of being human. Without this particular form of energy, people would be inactive and unmotivated. However, it is also true that human nature desires more than it needs. Animals and plants function automatically to take from their environment only what they need to survive. There are clear limits to their acquisitions, dictated by instinct. But not so with human beings!
- When a journalist asked the late John D. Rockefeller how much wealth was enough, the millionaire, who was at the time one of the richest and most powerful men in the world, answered, "**Just a little more.**"
- THERE ARE NO SURVEYS INDICATING THAT PEOPLE ARE ANY HAPPIER WITH MORE STUFF! One interviewer asked several instant millionaires, "How many of you are happier today?" Not one responded positively. One winner replied, "Every time you get something nicer, it isn't good enough, because you see and want something even nicer."
- Coveting is serious business with God, because it is one of the most complex and grievous of sins. The Bible lists it with vile passions, and warns that unrepented covetousness will exclude a person from heaven.
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** ⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰ Nor thieves, **nor covetous**, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.**
- Coveting is what you might call a "**seed sin**" because it can quickly lead to other sins. In fact, the Bible tells us that coveting was the original sin behind the fall of man ...
- **Genesis 3:6** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*
- Both the Old and New Testaments point out that coveting is the root of many forms of sin, including lying (2 Kings 5:22-25), theft (Joshua 7:21), domestic troubles (Proverbs 15:27), murder (Ezekiel 22:12), lust (1 Timothy 6:9), greed (Proverbs 1:19), envy (Titus 3:3), and jealousy (1 Corinthians 3:3).

- **THESE ARE ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF DESIRE THAT HAS RUN AMOK.**
- **Matthew 6:24 (NLT)** “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and money.**
- **1 Timothy 6:10 (NLT)** For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with **many sorrows.**
- The antidote to coveting is CONTENTMENT, and contentment is something you have to **LEARN** – it does not come naturally or automatically. **None of us are by nature a contented person!**
- **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 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 “**learned**” through his experiences that **CONTENTMENT IS NOT RELATED TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES!**
- Contentment is not passive or lazy – it’s not the absence of ambition. Instead, contentment means that at every stage of your life your happiness is measured by an appreciation for **what you have**, and not postponed by dwelling on an inventory of **what you are missing**.

FOUR WAYS TO CONQUER COVETING

1. Resist comparing myself to others

- **Comparing always leads to coveting!** One of the greatest lessons you can ever learn is to **BE ABLE TO ADMIRE WITHOUT HAVING TO ACQUIRE**. If the only things in life you enjoy are the things you own, you’re going to be miserable, because you can’t own everything.
- Why do we constantly compare? Because the way we “keep score” in our society is by possessions. We’re insecure, so we’re always looking around and asking, “How am I doing compared to ...?” **BUT NET WORTH HAS ABSOLUTELY NO RELATION TO SELF WORTH.**
- You can be possessed by your possessions, sacrificing values, morals, integrity, even relationships, just to obtain more things.
- **1 Timothy 6:9 (CEV)** 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.

- When you can truly enjoy the success, happiness and blessings of others, you know you are on the right track. But when you feel **resentment**, you are ensnared by the sin of covetousness.
- Ahab coveted Naboth’s property (1 Kings 21), David coveted Uriah’s wife (2 Samuel 11), Saul coveted David’s popularity (1 Samuel 18), Miriam coveted Moses’ ministry (Numbers 12). What do you covet?
- **Proverbs 14:30 (CEV)** It’s healthy to be content, but envy can eat you up.

2. Rejoice in what I do have

- None of us would have ANYTHING if it were not for the goodness of God. He wants us to enjoy what He has given to us! (Think of how you feel as a parent when your children enjoy what you give them.)
- **Ecclesiastes 5:19 (NLT)** And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life — that is indeed a gift from God.
- Some people fall into the trap of “WHEN AND THEN” thinking, which says, “When I get ... then I’ll be happy.” But that’s faulty logic, because things never satisfy! **WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR TO MAKE YOU HAPPY?** You’re falling into the trap of covetousness!
- You are as happy as you want to be! Happiness is not getting whatever you want, it is enjoying whatever you have. One of the marks of maturity is being able to say, “Enough is enough.”
- There are two ways to have enough in life: get more or want less.
- **Ecclesiastes 6:9 (CEV)** It’s better to enjoy what we have than to always want something else, because that makes no more sense than chasing the wind.

3. Release what I have to help others

- God doesn’t want to just bless you for your own benefit. He wants you to share your blessings to help others. He’s watching you to see **WHAT YOU GIVE AWAY**.
- **1 Timothy 6:17-19 (LB)** ¹⁷ Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. ¹⁹ By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven – it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well.

- This verse is talking to those who are RICH – that’s US! North Americans are in the top 2% of income in the world; even if you’re on social assistance in Canada, you’re RICH!
- Is it possible to be rich and not be materialistic? Yes, because materialism is an attitude, not an amount. **GIVING IS THE CURE FOR MATERIALISM!**
- **Acts 20:35b (CEV)** Remember that our Lord Jesus said, “More blessings come from giving than from receiving.”

4. Refocus on what’s going to last

- Everything earthly is temporary. We MUST give our attention to permanent values and reorganize our lives around eternal priorities!
- **2 Corinthians 4:18 (GN)** For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time; but what cannot be seen lasts forever.
- The worst thing about materialism is that it clouds our vision of God, and we begin to think that all there really is to life is getting and enjoying things. Our perspective gets warped.
- At a funeral in Beverly Hills, CA people were gathered around the casket of a wealthy widow who was worth millions. One person said, “It’s so sad – she had so much to live for.” The person standing next to them said, “No, she had so much to live ON – she had nothing to live FOR.” **WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?**
- **Luke 12:15 (NLT)** Then he said, “Beware! Don’t be greedy for what you don’t have. Real life is not measured by how much we own.”
- I challenge you to challenge the MYTH that says having more will make you more happy! You have to make the choice: IS MY LIFESTYLE GOING TO BE DETERMINED BY CULTURE OR BY CHRIST? What’s really important in light of eternity? What do I talk about the most? What do I spend the most time on? What am I really living for?
- The church is the only earthly institution that is eternal. There will be no marriages or children in heaven, but the church will be in heaven! **WHAT ARE YOU DOING TODAY THAT WILL BE AROUND IN 1000 YEARS?**
- Some people are like Ananias; they want the church to meet all their needs while they are saving up for themselves on the side. But that is not the spirit of a real Christian.
- **To paraphrase the words of John F. Kennedy, “Ask not what your church can do for you, ask what you can do for your church.”**

HYPOCRISY

- **The word “hypocrite” comes from the Greek stage and means “play actor.”** Its root word means, “to simulate, feign or pretend” or “to take up another’s statements in reference to what one has decided for one’s self (as an actor would recite lines written for him).”
- In other words, a hypocrite is a **MIMIC**. They go through the motions of everyone around them, but they have no corresponding reality on the inside. This was the sin of Ananias!
- **AN APOSTOLIC CHURCH CAN ONLY BE BUILT ON TRUTH!** That is not only referring to Acts 2:38, it is referring to our lives as well. We must truly live what we preach if we want God to honor our efforts!
- It is worthy of note that the first sin in Israel (the church in the wilderness – Acts 7:38), immediately after the great victory at Jericho and entering the Promised Land, was over COVETOUSNESS and HYPOCRISY. Achan’s attitude brought defeat into the camp until it was judged.
- The first sin in the New Testament church, immediately after the great Holy Ghost outpouring in Jerusalem and entering the New Covenant relationship, was over COVETOUSNESS and HYPOCRISY. God is definitely trying to tell us something!
- **Matthew 6:5-6** And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites [are]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.
- **Philippians 1:10** That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;
- The word "sincere" has an interesting history. It comes from two Latin words that mean "without wax." In the Middle East, items fashioned out of clay could easily become cracked as they dried. Dishonest merchants would accept the cracked items at a much lower price and then fill the cracks with wax before offering them for sale. Honest merchants would display their uncracked wares with signs that read, "sine cera," that is, "without wax."
- Aaron was the MOUTHPIECE for Moses; he did what Moses wanted and said what Moses dictated, BUT HE DID NOT HAVE A WORD FROM GOD FOR HIMSELF! That is why the episode with the golden calf happened WHEN MOSES WAS NOT AROUND!
- **You help build an Apostolic church when YOU know the Lord!**