

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 (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.**

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**.

Greed 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 (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

- **Never considers** that **GOD** may 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**.

- **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 who lays 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, 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 CEV - Don't store up treasures on earth! Moths and rust can destroy them, and thieves can break in and steal them.

²⁰ Instead, store up your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy them, and thieves cannot break in and steal them.

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!

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 CEV – Your heart will always be where your treasure is.

- 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 NKJV - The Lamp of the Body - ²²“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

Matthew 6:22-23 CEV – Light - ²² Your eyes are like a window for your body. When they are good, you have all the light you need. ²³ But when your eyes are bad, everything is dark. If the light inside you is dark, you surely are in the dark.

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)

CLOSE:

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 CEV - You cannot be the slave of two masters! You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Malachi 3:10 – ⁶“I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. **Return to me, and I will return to you,**” says the Lord Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’

⁸ “**Will a mere mortal rob God?** Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “**In tithes and offerings.** ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ **Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,**” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ **I will prevent** pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty. ¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

God's next dispute with the people was that they had become dishonest in their faith and in giving their money.

- **God's people** have disobeyed and even scorned his law,
- **But He has always been willing to accept them back.**
- Here the people had the nerve to imply that they had never disobeyed him!
- How are we to return????

Many people have turned their backs on forgiveness and restoration because they have refused to admit their sin.

PRAISE TEAM:

Don't follow their example.

God will always accept and forgive us when we humbly return to Him.

God says, "I dare you to put Me to the test!"

- ***Malachi urged the people to STOP holding back their tithe.***
- ***STOP holding on to your SIN.***
- ***START letting God have COMPLETE control...***

The people of Malachi's day ignored God's command to give.

- ***They may have feared losing what they had gained.***
- ***But they misjudged God...***
- ***"Give and it will be given to you".***

Luke 6:38 NIV - Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."