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The Book of Proverbs / Proverbs 1:8–19

Introduction

- <https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/exploration-survival/forrest-fenn-treasure-jack-stuef/> - 5 people died looking for Fenn's treasure. How much would you sacrifice to find \$1 million?
- We live in a culture that is obsessed with earthly gain. Daily, people sacrifice time, relationships, and their own character in order to get a little more money, stuff, possessions, etc.
- You live in a culture that regularly tempts you to be greedy. Greed is an excessive desire to have more than you need or deserve. Greed is a lack of satisfaction with the provisions of God. Are you greedy?
- Greed is a sin that we rarely talk about. Greed is a sin that you probably struggle with more than you think you do. I can't remember the last time someone said to me, "Pastor, will you pray for me? I'm really struggling with greed." You probably can't remember the last time you heard a pastor preach on greed.
- Solomon knew the pervasiveness of greed, and he warns his son to not give in to a greedy heart.
- This morning, I want you to beware of three characteristics of a greedy heart, and I want to show you how to overcome a greedy heart.

Characteristic 1: A greedy person listens to the promises of others while ignoring the promises of God.

- [Proverbs 1-9](#) - a series of poems by Solomon to his son(s) encouraging them to pursue Lady Wisdom and run from Lady Folly.
- The father and mother in this passage are the ideal/wise parents. Not everyone has wise parents. For parents in the room, we're striving to be wise parents who give godly instruction. If you are still in your parents' home, if they are godly parents, you need to listen to their wisdom.
- Solomon knows the "attractiveness" and lure of the pleasures of this world. He wants his son to know that wisdom is far more attractive, and wisdom will make you attractive if you choose to put it on. Wisdom like a garland - a victor's wreath. Or, a pendant - a chain of prestige.
- vs. 8 - value of father's instruction and mother's teaching - What kind of instruction and teaching are our children/grandchildren receiving from us? Whatever you value most will be what you teach the next generation to value. College students/singles - what you determine to value now in your singleness will shape what you eventually pass on to others.
- vs. 10-11 - An imaginary scenario. In some ways, vs. 10-11 don't make sense. vs. 10 - If sinners entice you to join a gang to murder and rob? Why would Solomon's son do that? After all, he's the son of the King of Israel. No one wealthier than Solomon. No one has more than Solomon's son, but that's the problem when you let a greedy heart take over. You'll believe two empty promises:
 - **The empty promise of life-giving community.** "Come with us..."
Enticing - we all want to be embraced by others - even it's the wrong people. You'll either tell yourself that if you get everything you want, then others will embrace you. You'll finally fit in to the crowd you want to be in. Or, you believe the crowd that says, "If you do life our way,

you'll be one of us." All around you is the pressure to conform to a greedy culture all in an attempt to improve your social standing. Trying to impress others so you can have friends who don't really care for you or want the best for you - you end up getting a life-taking community rather than life-giving community.

- **The empty promise of instant gratification.** vs. 11-13 - "You can have it all now. Don't deprive yourself of the pleasures of life. It will be fun. Experience the thrill of getting even if it comes at the expense of others." A greedy heart wants instant gratification. We want to gain now - and not just possessions - but experiences. We want to experience the thrill of gaining in the moment even if it cost us in the long term. (Real wisdom has the end in mind not simply the present.)
- A greedy heart is so impressionable - you'll believe the lies of the culture and ignore the promises of God. God promises you abundant life in a relationship with Him. God promises future blessings if you take up your cross and follow Him. God promises eternal satisfaction. He promises you Himself - to be ever-present with you.
- Are you listening to the enticing voice of sinners or the sure voice of God?

Characteristic 2: A greedy person is willing to destroy others in order to gain for themselves.

- The scenario that Solomon describes is horrific: target the vulnerable, eliminate them at all costs, and take their stuff.
- vs. 13-15 isn't merely focused on selfish gain, these verses are focused on destruction. Solomon warns of a gang of people inviting Solomon's son to destroy whoever stands in his path of sordid gain.
- That's the temptation - to value possessions, money, stuff, or whatever our hearts want more than we value people.

- You may not physically ambush or murder people to get what you want, but you gossip, you insult, you throw fits of anger, etc. Or, you ignore your most important relationships as you pursue what you want out of life. You might not even realize the destructiveness of your greed.
- **How has your marriage and family suffered because of your greedy heart?** E.g., You've chosen to work long hours and are never home because you want to possess the American Dream. Will your kids grow up remembering a father or a mother who was never there?
- **How have your friendships suffered because of your greedy heart?** e.g., That person you used to spend so much time with you're now envious of because they seem to have more than you, and you can't stand it.
- **How has your church suffered because of your greedy heart? [1 Cor. 12](#)** - We're the body of Christ - every part important. If you're a follower of Jesus and a member of this church, you're needed. But, you've made excuses for not serving your church with your time, talents, and resources because you'd rather spend your time, talents, and resources for your own selfish gain.
- **How has your relationship with God suffered because of your greedy heart?** Perhaps you're so busy pursuing your desires that you don't think about His desires. You invest a lot in yourself, but you invest very little in your walk with the Lord.

Characteristic 3: A greedy person is never satisfied and is unknowingly on the path to destruction.

- There's never satisfaction in pursuing your own desires, because it's never enough. Only Jesus is enough.

- A greedy person's heart is so deceived that he doesn't even realize he's setting a trap for himself. He's on a path to destruction (vs. 15-16) - a path to destroy others not even realizing that he's destroying himself.
- vs. 17-18 - the greedy set a trap for others, trying to take advantage of others to get for themselves failing to realize they are setting a trap for themselves.
- vs 19 - This is the path for all who try to make profit dishonestly. Solomon not warning against making profit, but he is warning against taking advantage of others to make profit.
- If you struggle with greed, how do you overcome? 5 ways:
 - **Repent** – Be honest with yourself. Our culture is so saturated with greed that we are blind to it. Ask God to show you your greed and ask Him to help you change.
 - **Resist** – Specifically, resist the temptation to compare yourself to others. Constant comparison robs you of the joy of being who God has made you to be. **The moment you start comparing yourself to others and try to gain what others have is the moment you start to lose sight of your unique identity in Christ.**
 - **Rejoice** – [Philippians 4:4](#), "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Rejoicing is a surefire way to kill greed. Instead of lusting after what you don't have, rejoice in what you already have in Christ. You have salvation! You have breath – an opportunity to make the most of today. Get over your sense of entitlement and living as if God owes you and recognize how much you have in Christ!
 - **Return** – Return to God what belongs to Him. Be a generous steward of what God has given you instead of a hoarder of possessions. **Giving is freeing and possessing is enslaving.** If you're merely a collector of possessions, you will discover that often your possessions possess more than you possess them. Do you have a

plan for giving? Most of us have a plan for getting, but do we have a plan for giving? Suggestion: work your way up to giving away 10% of your income and go from there. There is nothing more freeing than giving, and you imitate Christ when you give.

- **Refocus** – This passage reminds me of Judas. He was a greedy man. He was enticed by sin – the religious leaders of the day enticed him to ambush the One who was truly innocent – Jesus Christ. The promise to Judas was that if he turned Jesus over he would have wealth – 30 pieces of silver. He chose the path of folly rather than the path of wisdom. However, Jesus knew Judas would betray Him. He told Judas at the last supper to go and do what he had determined to do. Jesus could have stopped Judas, but he didn't. Judas' mission was material gain, Jesus' mission was the salvation of mankind. Jesus willingly fell into Judas' ambush and went to the cross and died at the hands of greedy people – people who were greedy for power, people who were greedy to protect their religious institution. At the cross it seemed as if greed won, but it didn't because three days later the Innocent One who rose from the grave victoriously defeating the power of greed and every other sin. Greed didn't win. Generosity won. The greatest act of generosity in the history of the universe paved the way for all people – even the most greedy – to be forgiven of their sins and receive the gift of eternal life. On that Friday, Jesus died as a willing sacrifice. Judas died as well. His greed ultimately destroyed him. Judas took his own life. Greed will consume you and greed will ultimately destroy you, but Jesus will forgive you of your greed and give you life. If you trust Him, He will save you and He will place His Spirit in you to empower you to live generously and sacrificially for the sake of His Kingdom. He will help you see from His perspective that what matters is not the here and now but the eternal. If you've never trusted Him, repent of your sins and place your faith in Him. Believer, refocus your life this morning. Perhaps greed has crept into your life and is consuming you. Ask God to help you refocus on

what matters: knowing Christ and living for Him. Ask GOd to help you to put greed to death this morning.