

## 2. I See, I Want, I Take (1Q 2018—Stewardship: Motives of the Heart)

**Biblical material:** 2 Cor. 8:1–7; Matt. 13:3–7, 22; Gen. 3:1–6; Isa. 56:11; Matt. 26:14–16; 2 Pet. 1:5–9.

### Quotes

- Do you not know that God entrusted you with that money (all above what buys necessities for your families) to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to help the stranger, the widow, the fatherless; and, indeed, as far as it will go, to relieve the wants of all mankind? How can you, how dare you, defraud the Lord, by applying it to any other purpose? *John Wesley*
- The greatest lesson you might ever learn in this life is this: It is not about you. *Shannon L. Alder*
- Greed is not a financial issue. It's a heart issue. *Andy Stanley*
- There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed. *Mahatma Gandhi*
- The American way of life, as I see it, is really the American way of death. Everything is determined by greed and the insatiable desire to be the richest and most powerful. And that desire is limitless. *Lydia Lunch*
- Capitalism is against the things that we say we believe in—democracy, freedom of choice, fairness. It's not about any of those things now. It's about protecting the wealthy and legalizing greed. *Michael Moore*

### Questions

Is it true that “Capitalism is... about... legalizing greed”? In what way do we have to be part of this world's self-centered system of greed? What's the answer to our own selfishness which sees “me” as top priority? How did Jesus deal with “I See, I Want, I Take”? While we can give general answers, how can I apply these lessons to myself?

### Bible summary

2 Cor. 8:1–7 details the generosity of the Macedonian churches, in direct contrast to greedy human nature. In Matt. 13:3–7 Jesus gives the parable of the Sower—which is more about the seed and the varying results. The main point in this connection is verse 22 FBV: “The seeds sown among thorns are people who hear the message, but then life's worries and the temptation of money choke the message so that they become fruitless.” Gen. 3:1–6 describes the process of the Fall—from seeing to wanting to taking the fruit and eating it. We are like dogs that never have enough, like shepherds always seeking their own gain, according to Isa. 56:11. Judas' plan to betray Jesus is described in Matt. 26:14–16 FBV. The key thought is “How much will you pay me for betraying Jesus to you?” 2 Pet. 1:5–9 gives us a range of spiritual qualities we should be seeking, instead of physical possessions.

### Comment

The title of this lesson, “I See, I Want, I Take,” is very apt. It describes the process by which we are sucked into fulfilling our desires for things. We first see something. We become aware of some object that arouses our interest. We then become

convinced that this is something we want, that we have to have. The final part of the process is action—to take hold of the object of our desire: either by buying it, or simply by taking it in any way we want!

This process is exactly what happened with Eve in the Garden. The record states that “the woman *saw* that the fruit of the tree was good for food and *pleasing to the eye*.” Next she realized that it was “*desirable* for gaining wisdom.” She wanted it! Finally she acted on this desire, “she *took* some and *ate* it.” Genesis 3:6 NIV, emphasis supplied. Things have not changed in the millennia since the Fall!

Jesus spent much time in his teaching talking about money and possessions. The real problem is that they can replace God in our lives, and become what we rely on instead of him. In the parable of the Sower Jesus gives us the different reactions to the good news. One of the most common surely is the positive response in the beginning, but the choking thorns that overwhelm the growing Christian with the distractions of money and personal property.

How then do we break that vicious cycle by which we see something, want it, and work to possess it? Is it enough to turn away? Isn't the problem that we may go on wanting it even though we do not or cannot possess it? For it's the *desire* for things that is the real problem, as if things can satisfy our deepest needs.

The quote, “He who dies with the most toys wins” is attributed to millionaire Malcolm Forbes. When you put it like that, our desire for things sounds absolutely stupid. And so it is. So why do we persist in wanting more and more things? You can never get enough of what you don't really need, as a number of people have said, including Irish rock band *U2*. So it's surely time to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, to find grace to help in time of need, so he can deal with these temptations to fill our lives with that which will not satisfy us!

### **Ellen White Comments**

Christ read his heart, and in His teaching He dwelt upon the principles of benevolence that strike at the very root of covetousness. He presented before Judas the heinous character of greed, and many a time the disciple realized that his character had been portrayed and his sin pointed out. But he did not confess and forsake his unrighteousness. He was self-sufficient, and instead of resisting temptation he continued to follow his fraudulent practices. . . . {CTr 264}

Wealth is obtained by every species of robbery—not robbery of people alone but of God. People are using His means to gratify their selfishness. Everything that they can grasp is made to minister to their greed. Avarice and sensuality prevail. . . . {CTr 349.5}

The priests and teachers did not perform the work of their sacred office as if they were handling the property of God. They were systematically robbing Him of the means and facilities entrusted to them for the advancement of His work. Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom. {COL 292-3}

He [Jesus] could say to whom He pleased, “Follow Me,” and the one addressed arose and followed Him. The spell of the world's enchantment was broken. At the sound of His voice the spirit of greed and ambition fled from the heart, and men arose, emancipated, to follow the Saviour. . . . {FLB 98}