

Confronting Greed

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

To be human is to be greedy. We all by nature crave more than is rightfully ours. Fortunately, God has given us a way to fight back against that temptation both in ourselves and in our church. Discover how to confront the greed within.

Background...

Q1: What type of legal case does Paul have in mind?

- v1: "case against his neighbor" & v2: "smallest law courts" – not a criminal case
- When believers see a crime committed, they should "go to law" b/c God loves justice!
- This is about civil law – one person suing another over money, property, or reputation

Q2: Why was it wrong to take another believer to civil court?

- Because civil courts were corrupt
 - o Judges & juries could be bought and intimidated by the rich and powerful
 - o That's why Paul is so hard on those who ran the courts in Corinth
 - v1: "unrighteous" – not just a statement of their spiritual condition but of their character
 - o Their lives were characterized by the sins of v9-10
 - Paul is NOT saying that if you commit one of these you're going to hell
 - He's simply describing the behavior of those who ran the courts in his day
 - o Lawsuits became a common tool for the rich to oppress the poor
 - o That's the background behind v8 – "You yourselves wrong and cheat"
 - Paul's talking to the wealthy members of the Corinthian church
 - o Paul was furious to see rich believers doing what all rich people did: using the corrupt court system to make a profit at the expense of the poor
- Because civil courts were public
 - o Not in a building – outside in the public square
 - o The way civil cases were won: shame your opponent!
 - o Paul was furious that rich believers were publically shaming poor believers

As we apply 1 Corinthians 6 to our lives... it's not about lawsuits... it's about GREED!

How do we fight the greed that's within each of us?

Apply to our church – 2 steps to protect Grace from greed

1. We will give no preference to the rich and powerful
 - Out in the world, money means everything
 - But in the church, money ought to mean nothing
 - No special treatment, favor, honor, or access given to the wealthy
 - We shame our church and Savior when we act like the world and favor the rich
2. We will judge greed when we see it in here
 - Context of chapter 5-6 is church discipline, the church judging sin in its midst
 - We are called to judge sin inside the church – not in the world
 - God has gifted us with wise leaders who can judge sin and resolve disputes
 - We shame our church and Savior when we act like the world and overlook greed

Apply to ourselves – 4 steps to protect yourself from greed

1. Admit your vulnerability to greed
 - The first step to conquering the greed within you is to acknowledge it
 - Luke 12:15 - be on my guard!
2. Practice the discipline of GRATITUDE
 - The habit of giving thanks to God for all He's given you and all He's done in your life
 - Gratitude is INCREDIBLY POWERFUL at fighting all forms of sin... including greed
 - Gratitude protects you from the 2 words that empower greed
 - "I deserve..."
 - The only thing any human deserves is death! Romans 6:23
 - Giving thanks reminds us of that truth & protects us from greed
 - If you'll fill your mind with gratitude there will be no room for greed to grow
3. Practice the discipline of GENEROSITY
 - Luke 12:33-34
 - Money is more powerful than you realize – has power over your heart!
 - Your heart always follows your money
 - If you don't want to have a greedy heart, you've got to give your money away
 - How much should you give? I don't know!
 - ~22% in the OT – but the NT doesn't specify a percentage
 - Instead it gives an even higher standard: you've got to give until it hurts!
 - Jesus praises the widow who had only 2 pennies and gave them both
 - So how much should you give? More than you can comfortably afford!

- Give until it hurts – that’s how you protect your heart from greed
- 4. Practice the discipline of SACRIFICE
 - Read v7
 - This is a hard verse! It raises the bar
 - Remember, we’re not talking about criminal matters
 - When a woman is beaten by her husband – she should not let that go
 - When a retiree is scammed out of his savings – he should not let that go
 - God cares about justice, and so should we
 - Civil matters: disagreements between 2 people that could cost money or reputation
 - Should you drop any civil matter? No, some are serious and need to go to court or be mediated by elders
 - But some are relatively small, and the question is: are you willing to sacrifice your RIGHT to justice and just let it go?

Greed is problematic because it’s so undefined. How do you know if you’re being greedy?

- Greed can’t be defined by the size of your salary or the size of your house.

So how do you know if you’re being greedy? Look for the 3 disciplines!

- The discipline of gratitude – giving thanks because you don’t deserve it
- The discipline of generosity – giving until it hurts
- The discipline of sacrifice – letting go of wrongs and insults