

# CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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## Greed Kills

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As a child, I remember hearing fabled stories in school and at home about people whose greed caused their demise. As their souls were consumed by the indulgence of their greed in possessions or treasures here on earth, they were *being* consumed, even to the point of death. These are examples of the extremes that greed can bring us to – even to the point that we do not realize what we are getting ourselves into.

Proverbs 1 gives a similar scenario of the demise of greed. Interestingly, it's the first warning given in this book of wisdom. In verses 10-19, Solomon warns the reader about joining those who seek gain through any means possible, even murder (v. 10). They seek the demise of the innocent (v.11) because this probably would be the easiest source of wealth; in essence, it's the first get-rich-quick scheme. They believe that the innocent will not expect their attack, so this is easy money. Because of their greed for quick riches, they are willing to take someone's life (v. 12).

In verse 13, they talk about finding "precious substance" (KJV) with which to fill their houses. Unfortunately, their greed has brought them to the point of finding earthly wealth to be more precious than life. This is not just the life of the one who will be killed but also the one who they are asking to join them (v. 14). There is certain risk of death ahead of them if they are caught, but they don't care if that death is one of their companions. Their persuasion to their new companion to join them is greed ("we shall fill our houses with spoil," verse 13). Greed is the singular motive for gratification.

Solomon warns us to stay away from people like this because, "so are the ways of everyone that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof." (Proverbs 1:19, KJV). In short, those who are that greedy will be the death of themselves. Yet this can be our end as well if we are not cautious. Most of us have never been asked to join a gang like this; however, gangs like this do exist in our country and all over the world. Men and women would be wise in listening to this instruction before they would join a group that is willing to kill for money, because the end of it all leads to their death.

But does this instruction apply to people who have a house in the suburbs, two cars, three kids (and maybe some grandchildren), and a 401K plan? I would say yes. I have never been asked to kill someone for his riches, and neither am I greedy to the point I would kill someone. (I am sure BBC is glad about that!) But there have been times that greed has blurred my perspective. I have wanted to have someone else's position or success in order to have the wealth the position or success would give me. This would be covetousness brought about by greed. What we all need to watch is our own coveting of others, however small or large it is, because before we know it, it may get out of hand and cause our perspective of true treasure to be blurred. We can see these stories unfold before us in our local news and in our local churches.

What we must do is: First, refrain from the way of those who believe that earthly wealth is the most precious treasure. We need to realize when we are allowing others to influence us to think covetously. It is not wrong to admire the possessions of others, but we need to be careful when these possessions motivate us. Second, refrain from allowing the world to disillusion us by reading the Word and believing that true, precious treasure is that which is above. We need to realize when we are coveting and realize that we need to change our perspective. Being thankful for what you have is one of the best ways you can do this.

Greed kills – "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird. And they wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof" (Proverbs 1:17-19).

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