

Wanting Too Much



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 14:12–14; Joshua 7; John 12:1–8; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then he said to them, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against wanting to have more and more things. Life is not made up of how much a person has’ ” (Luke 12:15, NlrV).



The Bible warns us not to want too much.

THE BIBLE WARNS us not to want too much or to want things that already belong to someone else. This sin is as bad as lying, stealing, and killing. God warns us in His law: “ You must not want to take your neighbor’s house. You must not want his wife. . . . You must not want to take anything that belongs to another person’ ” (Exodus 20:17, ERV).

Wanting too many things is a sin. Having pleasure in too much stuff will stop people from entering heaven. that will keep us out of God’s kingdom. “Surely [for sure] you know that people who do wrong will not get to enjoy God’s kingdom. Don’t be fooled [tricked]. These are the people who will not get to enjoy his kingdom: those [people] who sin sexually [do sex sins], those [people] who worship idols [statues of false gods], those [people] who commit [do] adultery [sex outside of marriage], men who let other men use them for sex or who have sex with other men, those [people] who steal, those [people] who are greedy [want too much], those [people] who drink too much, those [people] who abuse [hurt] others [people] with insults, and those who cheat” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, ERV).

This week we will learn that wanting too much stuff is bad. We will see how we can stop letting this selfish sin control us.

THE FIRST SIN (Isaiah 14:12–14)

People often wonder, “What made sin happen? How did sin start?” The Bible helps us understand how sin started. Sin started because Lucifer wanted too much. He wanted more power and honor. He wanted the things that belonged only to Jesus. So, maybe we can say that wanting too much was the first sin.

Read about Lucifer in Isaiah 14:12–14. What do these verses tell us about Lucifer’s sin? Did Lucifer want too much? If yes, what did he want? How did his wanting too much cause him to sin?

“God honored Lucifer above all the angels in heaven. Lucifer was the prince of angels. But Lucifer was not happy with the things he had. Lucifer wanted more. He wanted to be worshiped the same as Jesus. Lucifer didn’t encourage the other angels to love God and be loyal to Him. Lucifer wanted for himself the honor and praise that God gave to Jesus. Lucifer also wanted control over all the things that belonged only to Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 35, adapted.

Read Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5. In these verses, what does Paul say about wanting too much?

Paul says that wanting more than God gives us is the same as the sin of worshiping false gods. Worshiping false gods is the same as loving something more than God. We worship false gods when we love the things that God made more than the God who made them (Romans 1:25). So, we must not want something that we shouldn’t have. We should not want something so badly that our getting it becomes more important than serving God.

Lucifer may not have known that his wish for wrong would cause problems. The same danger can happen to us. We must be sure to obey God’s 10th commandment: “ ‘ You must not want to take anything that belongs to another person’ ” (Exodus 20:17, ERV). This commandment is the only one about controlling our thoughts. Obeying this commandment can stop us from breaking the other commandments. (Read 2 Samuel 11.)

Read 1 Timothy 6:6, 7 and Philippians 4:11, 12. How can these verses help us say no to the sin of wanting too much?



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ACHAN'S SIN (Joshua 7)



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Israel traveled in the desert for 40 years. Finally, they were ready to enter the Promised Land. God did a powerful miracle so that the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry land. The miracle happened during the time when the Jordan River was flooded (Joshua 3:15)! This miracle was powerful proof of God's favor. The kings of Canaan heard about the miracle. The news made the kings too afraid to fight Israel (Joshua 2:9–11; Joshua 5:1).

Jericho was the first city that Israel marched against when they crossed the Jordan River. At first, the Israelites didn't know how to win against the city of Jericho. Joshua also didn't know what to do. So, he prayed. God answered his prayer. God showed Joshua a plan to destroy the city. The Israelites followed God's plan. The plan was a big success. But then something bad happened.

Read Joshua 7. As we see from this chapter, what happened after Israel won the battle against Jericho? What lesson does this story teach us?

Achan's sin was terrible. When he confessed his sin, he said that he "wanted" for himself the things he saw (Joshua 7:21). So, Achan took them. The word written as "wanted" comes from the Hebrew word "**chmd**." "**Chmd**" can mean something good. But in Achan's story, the word "**chmd**" means something bad. God already commanded His people not to take any forbidden thing from the people they fought (Joshua 6:18, 19). But Achan disobeyed God. Because of Achan's sin, the Israelites failed to win against the city of Ai. Many Israelites died in battle. The Israelites failed to follow God's plan.

Maybe Achan said to himself, "Well, I'm not taking very much for myself at all. No one will know. My family really needs this money anyway." Do we make the same excuses for sin? How can we keep from doing what Achan did?

THE HEART OF JUDAS (John 12:1–8)

Judas's story is one of the saddest stories in the Bible. Judas had been with Jesus during His work for God on earth. Judas learned Bible truth from Jesus Himself. Many people who have been given much less than Judas will be saved. But Judas, who had so much, will be lost.

What happened? The answer is that Judas wanted too much. He stole money. He wanted power and honor. He had a selfish heart.

Read the story in John 12:1–8. What did Mary do that caused everyone at the feast to pay attention to her? What did Judas say? Why? What was Jesus' answer?

Jesus scolded Judas for his selfish words. So, Judas got upset and left the feast. Judas went to the palace of the top spiritual leader for the Jews. Jesus' enemies were at the palace. Judas offered to sell Jesus into their hands for money. The money was a lot less than Mary's gift. (Read Matthew 26:14–16.)

What happened to Judas? God gave him so many wonderful blessings. So, why would Judas do something so evil? Ellen G. White has this to say about Judas: "Judas loved Jesus, who was a Mighty Teacher. Judas loved to be with Jesus. Judas wanted to change his own heart. He wanted to change his life, too. Judas hoped that being with Jesus would change him. The Savior didn't send away Judas. Jesus let Judas join His 12 followers. Jesus trusted Judas with special work. Jesus asked Judas to share the Good News with other people. Jesus gave Judas special power to heal the sick and cast out devils. But Judas never gave himself fully to Jesus."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 717, adapted.

In the end, we are all sinners. If we give our lives to Jesus, we can win the fight against our sins. God's strength will work in us. He will help us win the war against sin. But Judas didn't give himself to Jesus fully. So, Judas lost the fight against sin. Then terrible things happened both to him and Jesus.

We all fight against the sin of wanting too much. Judas wanted money. This is a "heart" problem. This problem caused Judas to steal (John 12:6). Then Judas turned against Jesus Himself.

Judas's story is a terrible lesson for us all. His story shows us the danger of wanting too much. A small sin can lead to disaster and everlasting loss.



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ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA (Acts 5:1–11)



Ananias and Sapphira started out wanting to do many good things. Their sin caused them to pretend to be good Christians on the outside.

Ananias and Sapphira were part of the New Testament church. Ananias and Sapphira saw the church grow. They saw the Holy Spirit work in the church, too, in a mighty way. The Bible tells us about the church and its members at this exciting time: “They all received [got] the things they needed. Everyone that owned fields or houses sold them. They brought the money and gave it to the apostles [teachers and leaders]. Then each person was given the things he needed” (Acts 4:34, 35, ICB).

Ananias and Sapphira were excited about all these wonderful things happening in the church. They wanted to be part of God’s work, too. So, they decided to sell some property and give the money to the church. So far, so good.

Read the story in Acts 5:1–11. Ananias and Sapphira did two wrong things. They held back part of the money, and they lied. Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira got such a tough punishment?

At first, we may think that Ananias and Sapphira really wanted to support God’s work. But “Ananias and Sapphira wanted too much. They allowed this sin to control them. Their behavior made the Holy Spirit sad. Soon, Ananias and Sapphira felt unhappy that they promised to give God all the money. They lost the blessing that came from wanting to do big things to support God’s work.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 72, adapted. In other words, Ananias and Sapphira started out wanting to do many good things. Their sin caused them to pretend to be good Christians on the outside. But inside, their hearts were selfish.

“At that moment Sapphira fell down by his [Peter’s] feet and died. The young men came in and saw that she was dead. They carried her out and buried her beside her husband. The whole church and all the other people who heard about this were filled with fear” (Acts 5:10, 11, ERV). For sure, people must have been more careful about keeping these promises to God after that happened. What does this story teach us about selfishness? What can selfishness cause us to do?

HOW TO STOP WANTING TOO MUCH (1 Corinthians 10:13)

As we saw, wanting too much is a sin that starts in our hearts. Often, we don't know we have this problem. Why? Because the sin starts in our thoughts. How do you stop wrong thoughts? That's a tough question.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What promise is in this verse? Why is this promise so important? How does this promise help free us from the sin of wanting too much?

How can we protect ourselves against the sin of wanting too much? We must trust in God's power to fight for us against this sin. God can help us to do three things:

1. Decide to serve God, depend on Him, and be part of His family. "Today you must decide who you will serve. . . . You must choose for yourselves. But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, ERV).

2. Pray daily. Include Matthew 6:13 in your prayer: "Keep us from sinning when we are tempted [want to sin]. Save us from the evil one" (NIRV). When you want something that you know you shouldn't have, pray about it right away. Ask God to keep His Bible promises to you. (1 Corinthians 10:13 is a powerful Bible promise.) Also, ask God to give you His strength to win the fight.

3. Study the Bible every day. The psalm writer says, "I study your teachings very carefully so that I will not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11, ERV).

Jesus solved the sin problem. He offers us His strength to win the fight against sin. Prayer was Jesus' secret weapon against sin. Sometimes Jesus spent whole nights praying to His Father. Jesus gave us an example of how to live. This example helps us understand how to fight against sin. Jesus makes it possible for us to obey Him in faith. When we obey God, Jesus will help us. "So you should look for the LORD before it is too late. You should call to him now, while he is near. Evil people should stop living evil lives. They should stop thinking bad thoughts. They should come to the LORD again, and he will comfort them. They should come to our God because he will freely forgive them" (Isaiah 55:6, 7, ERV).

When and how did wanting too much hurt you? What lessons have you learned? What changes do you need to make?



When you want something that you know you shouldn't have, pray about it right away.



Right before Jesus comes back, many people will have selfish hearts and love money too much.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Achan was the only man who dared to disobey God’s command. Achan wanted what did not belong to him. He got excited when he saw the expensive clothes from the land of Shinar. Later, even when Achan confessed his sin, he said the robe looks ‘beautiful’ [Joshua 7:21, ERV]. One sin led to another sin in Achan’s heart. Achan took the gold and silver which belonged to the Lord. Achan robbed God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 496, adapted.

In 2 Timothy 3, Paul makes a list of the terrible sins that people will do during the end times. The first two things on Paul’s list are about our love for money and the things we own. “Remember this: There are some terrible times coming in the last days [end times]. People will love only themselves [their own selves] and money” (2 Timothy 3:1, 2, ERV). Right before Jesus comes back, many people will have selfish hearts and love money too much.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1 Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10. In class, talk about examples of people who have loved money more than God. How has this sin caused them to suffer? How has their sin caused suffering in the lives of other people? We can think of many examples, right? Of course, we need money. But when does that need become a sin? How can we avoid falling into the trap that Paul warns about here?

2 We must be careful to avoid wanting too much money. What other things do we need to be careful about?

NOT AFRAID TO TALK ABOUT JESUS

Simo Vehkavuori is a retired pastor. On an Easter Sunday, he stood in a train packed with people. Simo just finished preaching about Jesus. Now he traveled back home by train to Helsinki, Finland's capital. A 24-year-old university student also got on the crowded train and looked around for a seat.

Simo said to the young woman, "There aren't any empty seats in this part of the train. If you stay here, you will have to stand the same as I am. But why don't you walk through the train cars and see if you can find an empty seat?"

The young woman came back to Simo a little while later. She said, "I found two free seats. One for me and one for you. Come with me!" Simo followed the young woman to the empty seats. He sat down across from her. Then Simo said to her, "Excuse me. But may I ask you how you feel about religion?"

"I'm not very spiritual right now," she said. Simo asked, "Do you want to know how I became a Christian?" She said yes. Simo told her his story. As the train approached Helsinki, Simo asked, "Would you mind if I remembered you in my prayers?"

The student burst into tears. "Yes, that would be wonderful. Please do that!" Before Simo left, he said something to the student that he often tells new friends: "Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. This same Jesus has promised to come back and will take us to a home in heaven. Then we will live forever with Him. So, dear friend, let's stay on the road to heaven until we get there."

On another trip, Simo was surprised when a young woman said hello to him. The young woman shook Simo's hand as he got on the train. Simo introduced himself. He said, "Hello, I'm a retired Seventh-day Adventist pastor."

"That's interesting," the woman said. "I've never heard of Adventists. I want to hear all about your church on this trip. Here are two empty seats. Let's sit together."

Simo spoke about the Seventh-day Adventist Church the whole trip, which was 300 miles. As Simo and the young woman left the train, a man walked up to them. The man grabbed Simo's hand in both of his hands. The man said to Simo, "Thank you for being brave enough to share God so that the rest of us on the train also could enjoy what you had to say."

At 84 years old, Simo looks for ways to share Jesus with people on every train ride. "The older I get, the braver I get!" he said. "I'm not afraid to share Jesus!"

This story shows us Spiritual Growth Task Number 5. Spiritual Growth Task Number 5 is: "We will help people and families live more Spirit-filled lives." Read more: IWillGo2020.org. Read more about Simo next week.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



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