

I Want It!

In the beginning of The Lord of the Rings, Gandalf the Grey gives a brief history of the One Ring, an evil object which corrupts whoever possesses it. At one point, Deagol, who was out fishing with his friend Smeagol, finds the ring where it had lain lost underwater for centuries after its last owner was killed in ambush.

And behold, when he washed the mud away, there in his hand lay a beautiful golden ring; and it shone and glittered in the sun so that his heart was glad. But Smeagol had been watching him from behind a tree, and as Deagol gloated over the ring, Smeagol came up softly from behind.

“Give us that, Deagol,” said Smeagol, over his friend’s shoulder.

“Why?” said Deagol.

“Because it’s my birthday, and I want it,” said Smeagol.

“I don’t care,” said Deagol. “I have given you a present already, more than I could afford. I found this and I’m going to keep it.”

“Oh, are you indeed,” said Smeagol; and he caught Deagol by the throat and strangled him, because the gold looked so bright and beautiful. Then he put the ring on his finger.

You may never have wanted something so badly you’d kill for it, but any time we desire something that belongs to someone else we are in danger of missing God’s will for our lives. This week we will read about finding contentment in the blessings God gives us.

Monday – Restraint

“Let your prayer for temporal blessings be strictly limited to things absolutely necessary.” Bernard of Clairvaux, 12th c. French theologian

1. Please read Exodus 20:17. What does it mean to covet? What types of things do people covet today?
2. What insights can you gain from Proverbs 23:1-5 in exercising restraint when you see the wealth of others?
3. In Matthew 6:25-34, how do Jesus’ words build upon the wisdom of Proverbs 23?

Making it Personal: How can you seek God’s righteousness in the area of possessions?

Tuesday – Money for Nothing

“There is enough in the world for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed.” Frank Buchman, 19th-20th c. American evangelist

1. Please read Ecclesiastes 5:10-16. How would you describe the ultimate value of material objects?
2. What types of situations do you think could fit the problem noted in verse 13?
3. Now look at James 4:1-3. Where does James tell us to turn for true satisfaction? What motives are we to have?

Making it Personal: Pray, asking God to give you wisdom in understanding your motives for obtaining things.

Wednesday – In Pursuit

“A greedy person and a pauper are practically one and the same.” Swiss proverb

1. Please read Matthew 6:19-24. Why do you think Jesus brings up spiritual darkness in the middle of this statement about money and treasure?

Text Insight: Jesus is talking about what the eye focuses on, not the physical health of the eyeball.

2. In 1 Timothy 6:6-11, what perils does Paul identify for those who pursue material wealth instead of God?
3. What does Jesus tell us in John 10:10 about the ultimate destiny of those who do not follow him?

Prayer Focus: Pray for FBC and God’s people everywhere. Ask God to give his people a heart for service over money and possessions.

Thursday – A Case Study in Greed

“When our Savior drove the sheep and oxen out of the temple, He did not drive them into His own pasture.” Thomas Fuller, 17th c. British Royal Chaplain

1. Please read 1 Kings 21:1-16. Who do you think is more at fault, Ahab or Jezebel? Why?

Text Insight: The Israelites were forbidden by God’s law from transferring their property to anyone outside their families. This was God’s way of providing each family with land to work and live on.

2. Now read 1 Kings 21:17-29. What does this tell you about God’s justice and mercy?
3. How does Ecclesiastes 5:10 apply to Ahab and Jezebel regarding Naboth’s vineyard?

Making it Personal: How might you be tempted to give up one of God’s blessings for material gain?

Friday – Rejoice, Release, Refocus

“True contentment is a real, even an active, virtue---not only affirmative but creative. It is the power of getting out of any situation all there is in it.” G.K. Chesterton, 20th c. English journalist and philosopher

1. Rejoice – Please read Proverbs 15:16-17 and Ecclesiastes 5:19-20. How can people honor God while enjoying the things he has given them?
2. Release – According to 1 Timothy 6:17-19, what are we to do with the things God has given us? How easy is this for you?
3. Refocus – Where do Luke 12:13-15 and 2 Corinthians 4:18 tell you to put your attention? What can you do to keep your attention from wandering elsewhere?

Making it Personal: Seek God’s guidance in rejoicing, releasing and refocusing.

For the Weekend: Re-read Exodus 20:17 and Matthew 6:19-34 and ask God’s for wisdom in pursuing your wants and desires, your contentment and satisfaction. Review the insights you learned this week and consider one way you can put them into practice.