



Faith in Action

“Greed”

“Then he said to them, ‘So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s’” Matthew 15:21

Lesson: Defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as “*a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as money) than is needed*,” it is little wonder that greed is one of the seven deadly sins. Its unsatiable appetite for self-gratification, through the accumulative acquisition of temporal possessions, including wealth and/or power, is not only seemingly impossible to fulfill, but can also drastically interfere with our relationship with God and our neighbor, much to our spiritual detriment. After all, how can we set our eyes to heaven when our hearts are bound to earthly matters? So, what then counters our greed? The first step begins with the realization that *everything* belongs to its Source and rightful Owner, God, who has generously chosen to share creation with us. The rest of the journey is all about living out our gratitude for such a bountiful and gracious gift!

This I Know, for the Bible Tells Me So

Our innate sense to want more than what we've been given wasn't born in the age of iPhones and mini iPads. It can instead be traced back as far back as the Exodus when God's provision of manna and quails was found to be about as satisfying as a flip-phone and pong game to us chronic complainers today!

So, this week, why not give your family a taste of God's provision by whipping up a batch of manna with your child to serve with your main meal? You don't have to wander 40 years in the wilderness to discover how God has fulfilled our needs since the beginning. All you "need" to do is click on this link for a 21st century manna recipe:
<https://familymealblog.com/2013/03/30/manna/>

As you are baking, tell the story of the manna and quail found in Exodus 16 to your child and then talk about how the Israelites' "grumbling" wants relate to our own dissatisfactions today. Before eating your dinner and manna, be sure to thank God for the bounty of your own meal courtesy of the eternal Provider.



I Want to Need Treasure Box

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that, where our treasures are, there would be our hearts also (Matthew 6:21). In other words, it's all a matter of priority. When our wants and greed drive us, we can expect our lives to be filled with piles of temporal things and a void within that our stuff is never quite able to fill. Only a life lived in gratitude and its by-product, generosity, is ultimately satisfying.

This week, help your child discover the value of setting their hearts in the right direction by creating a Treasures of Heaven treasure box. (If using "jewels" to decorate, you may want to talk about the difference between those alluring things on the outside versus the things of substance on the inside.) Then, encourage them to fill their box with real treasures, AKA the ways they can build up God's Kingdom on earth (i.e. helping someone, walking for CROP, being kind to another child who is lonely or marginalized, etc.).



Money, That's What I Want!

...to spend on the things that I *think* I need...NOT!

So, you've been given \$1,000 fake dollars to pretend to bid on all those things that your heart "wants" to desire and some other stuff that aren't exactly stocking stuffers, like forgiveness from someone you hurt, a rustic mission trip to an impoverished town in America, or the key to world peace. So, what will you and each member of your family invest in??? This week, dare to find out by creating your very own make-believe family auction.

Ahead of time, you will need to prepare notecards with luxury, must *want*/must have items and some with should *want* to *need* things (imagination is your only limit). Give all of the participants a \$1,000 in fake money, choose an auctioneer and then let the bidding (and *want*) begin!

After everyone has gone broke, debrief the activity by talking about what your high-end items were, what things were sold at bargain bin price and **why**.

If I Were a Rich Man (or Woman)...

...we know what Jesus would do. He'd tell us to first keep all of God's commandments and then strive for perfection by selling all of our possessions so that the profit could be given to the poor (Matthew 19:17-21). But what would *we* do?

This week, challenge your child (and your family) to ponder on this uncomfortable question by reading the story of the Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31 or Luke 18:18-30) and then ask what would you do? (For added emphasis, insert each person's name at various points in the reading.)

When reading this passage, you will want to point out that it is more the way we cling to our possessions, than the material things themselves, that separates us from God. As Jesus further teaches, we cannot serve two masters, God and money, as we will end up devoted to one, while despising the other (Matthew 6:24). Which will it be? The choice is always ours to make.

Thanks A Lot (Really!)

Author Anne Lamott insightfully summed up our prayer vocabulary in three basic words: *Help*, *WOW*, and *Thanks!* (Pastor Tim Keller would later add *sorry* to the list.)

This week, encourage your child to add *thanks* to their daily repertoire through a modified version of "button prayer."

All it takes is some buttons, one for each person you want to give thanks for. Ask your child to choose a button, purchased from a craft or thrift store (sometimes you can even get lucky and find a big jar of "prayers!"). You can even use a button from a piece of discarded clothing to add a personal touch.

Before praying, talk about the reasons this button reminds your child of the person God so generously shared with them and the reasons they are grateful for that special person's presence in their life. Then invite your child to say thanks to God every time they pick up that special person's button.

Note, because all of creation needs some prayer, you may want to check out the following site for even more creative and fun ways to share button prayers. The best things in life are after all free!

<http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2017/07/button-prayers.html>

Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow

Praise takes many forms, from corporate worship to prayer, with art, music, and a whole lot of etcetera in between. But did you know that generosity shown to others is also another form of how we can exalt and honor God? It naturally flows from the gratitude we ourselves have for the many ways God has in fact shared blessings with us.

This week, set aside some time to praise God with your child by supporting those who are water and food insecure through the CROP Hunger Walk. CROP offers lots of opportunities for you to be part of the work that helps to bring God's justice to those in need. Virtually form a team, take the Cup of Change Sunday School challenge, collect food, make a monetary donation are all great ways to show praise and gratitude for God's grace.