

Enough Is Enough

The outgoing president of a state university in the South was in the news of late.

According to newspapers, his annual salary was \$365,000, the second-highest in the nation for a university president. That's more than twice the compensation for the mayor of the largest city in the state—a lot more. It's more than four times the amount the state's governor would've earned had he drawn a salary, which he declined to do.

He also had a \$20,000-per-year expense account for which he was accountable to no one. He reportedly took fabulous business and personal trips on the university's airplane, staying in fine hotels, sometimes with a female companion, at university expense. He spent \$500,000 of the state's money redecorating the university president's mansion. Part of that included \$4,800 for a gas grill to replace the \$165 model the university had provided.

He resigned only after his lavish and seemingly out-of-control spending came to light, and he was caught in a lie related to some of it.

What's appalling to some parents, who forego most luxuries and even some necessities to send their children to this university, is that this man will be paid his salary through the end of this year. Meanwhile, they borrow money and work extra jobs so that their children can get an education there.

Those students, and hopefully the rest of us, are learning a lesson all right. It's about greed, and it's not limited to the powerful and affluent.

A 28-year-old woman was arrested in New Hampshire recently after trying to sell her 19-month-old son to his father for \$2,000 and a 1999 Ford Explorer. The father had been granted custody of the child but told police his son had been missing for more than five weeks. The mother was jailed on kidnapping and extortion charges.

We've had no drought of examples of greed, from college athletics to corporate boardrooms to investor trading scandals. We ought to recognize it when we see it and call it what it is: a disease.

Our culture has cleverly named it—affluenza—and James Sherman has written a play by the same name, which will open in Chicago in November. It's [billed](#) as “a wicked contemplation of today's culture of decadence and greed served up in delicious comedic form and fashion.”

The play's promotion makes affluenza sound like a good thing. It isn't.

In spite of a culture that tells us more is better and wealth equals accomplishment, greed is harmful to us physically and mentally, leading us to overwork, and is thus harmful to families.

More significantly, it harms us spiritually, causing us to replace God as our object of worship with money or things. Greed reveals a lack of trust that God will take care of us and give us what we need.

Arthur Simon, founder and president of Bread for the World, a non-partisan citizens' hunger lobby, recently wrote a book titled *How Much Is Enough? Hungering for God in an Affluent Culture*. In it, he identifies the cure for affluenza: understanding our identity in Christ. “We are human beings, not human havings. God loves us for who we are, not what we have.”

Most of us have more than we need. And it is enough.

“The greedy person stirs up strife, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be enriched” (Prov. 28:25).

[Jan Turrentine](#) is managing editor of *Acacia Resources*.