

END-TIMES ISSUES



#143 Commandment #10 – Where sin starts.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

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The Tenth Commandment:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
 Exodus 20:17 (BSB)

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
You shall not covet your neighbor's house or field, or his manservant or maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
 Deuteronomy 5:21 (BSB)

- [optional] For those who are interested in technical details...
 - ✓ Though there are slight differences, both passages communicate the same message. However, the *circumstances* the people were in had changed.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO VERSES:

- Word addition:** "house" (Exodus) vs. "house and field" (Deuteronomy) – In Exodus, the people were *nomads*. They did not have land that they could call their own. In Deuteronomy, they were about to enter the land that God had promised them... and the change in wording reminded them that the commandment applied to more than just the physical building.
- Change in word order:** "house," then "wife" (Exodus) vs. "wife," then "house and field" (Deuteronomy) – In the Deuteronomy passage, there is **also a change in the second word translated as "covet."** (Some translations may use the word "desire" or "crave.")
 - ✓ We aren't 100% certain of the reason for these changes. They might be simply stylistic changes, using the two words as synonyms.
 - ✓ Or they may indicate that different *intensities* of craving are equally sinful. The *first* word (the only one used in Exodus) seems to encompass a broader range of desire (including sexual desire), and could include the *intention of attaining or fulfilling* that desire, whereas the *second* word focuses more on the act itself – the *internal impulse* of wanting or craving something (even if it is not attained).

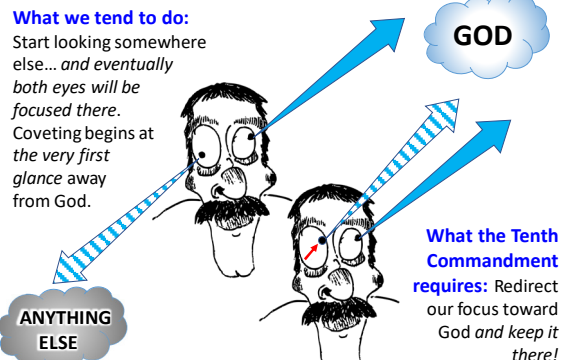
WHAT IS COVETING?

We need to understand the *First* Commandment, in order to understand the *Tenth* Commandment. *They work together.*

- Commandment #1** – The sovereign God, who both created us, and redeemed us, has an exclusive claim on our lives. We owe *him* complete allegiance in all things – not only as our *duty*, but also as our *desire*.
- Commandment #10** – This God is worthy of our utmost devotion and loyalty. Our response is to include contentment in the way he blesses us, as well as in what circumstances he brings into our lives. He deserves to be the central point in *all* that we desire; and everything else must spring forth from this central point.
- Coveting involves redirecting our desire *from* God *to* something else. It begins with decreasing our focus on God, and redirecting it into a focus on something else. It's a discontent linked to not trusting God to provide what we need, and a belief that something else will satisfy us better. In this, we have denied God's exclusive claim on our lives, and have replaced him with something else. He is no longer our central desire.

COVETING – A REDIRECTING OF OUR DESIRES AWAY FROM GOD.

What we tend to do:
 Start looking somewhere else... and eventually both eyes will be focused there. Coveting begins at the very first glance away from God.



What the Tenth Commandment requires: Redirect our focus toward God and keep it there!

The POSITIVE focus of this Commandment

You shall not covet ...
 Exodus 20:17a & Deuteronomy 5:21a (BSB)

IF WE AREN'T TO COVET, THEN WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

I desire to do your will, my God;
 your law is within my heart.
 Psalm 40:8 (NIV)

Your kingdom come,
 Your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
 Matthew 6:10 (BSB)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do it all to the glory of God.
 1 Corinthians 10:31 (BSB)

I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify Your name forever.
Psalm 86:12 (BSB)

Honor the LORD with your wealth,
with the firstfruits of all your crops; ...
Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)

★ He answered, " **'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'**"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ★
Luke 10:27 (NIV)

Teach me Your way, O LORD,
that I may walk in Your truth.
Give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear Your name.
Ps 86:11 (BSB)

With all my heart I have sought You;
do not let me stray from Your commandments.
Psalm 119:10 (BSB)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge Him,
and He will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6 (BSB)

Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail,
but **God is the strength of my heart**
and my portion forever.
Psalm 73:25-26 (NIV)

... for **I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.** ...
I have learned the secret of **being content in any and every situation** ...
I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
Philippians 4:11b, 12b, 13 (NIV)

Give thanks in every circumstance,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:18 (BSB)

LORD, my heart is not filled with proud ambitions;
my eyes are not lifted up in arrogance:
I do not preoccupy myself with heroic exploits
and mighty accomplishments.
But **I have calmed and quieted my restless soul,**
content like a child resting in its mother's arms.
My soul is like a contented, resting child.
O Israel, **be content to put your hope in the LORD,**
both now and forevermore.
Psalm 131 (DHT)

Coveting – a fatal trap!

**From the very first glance away from God,
to the point where it becomes an uncontrollable desire...**

- The journey toward sin begins when WE choose to take the first step.
This is the point where coveting begins. (Don't blame God!)
- The more steps we take, the more difficult it will be to turn around.
- Eventually, the desire becomes uncontrollable and that desire (which is a sin... but it's *hidden* inside) "gives birth" to sin (the *visible* act).

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone.
But each one is tempted when **by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed.**
Then after desire has conceived, it **gives birth to sin**; and sin, when it is full-grown, **gives birth to death.**
James 1:13-15 (BSB)

Our focus is on *sinful* desires – those that take our eyes off God.

- GOOD DESIRES *do* exist. They *don't* take our eyes off God.** (Context is important! *Good* desires may be *sinful* in a different context!)

CRAVE MEAT... REJOICE IN GOD (V. 18)

When the LORD your God expands your territory as He has promised, and you **crave meat** and say, "I want to eat meat," you may eat it whenever you want.
Deuteronomy 12:20 (BSB)

- SINFUL DESIRES – a violation of the *Tenth* Commandment – will lead us toward breaking the *other* Commandments, if not stopped.**

CRAVE MEAT... REJECT GOD

Meanwhile, the rabble among them had a strong **craving** for other food, and again the Israelites wept and said, "Who will feed us **meat**?"
... and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, ...
"... you have **rejected the LORD**, who is among you, and have cried out before Him, saying, 'Why did we ever leave Egypt?'"
Numbers 11:4, 10b, 20b (BSB)

EXAMPLES – 10th Commandment sin leading to other sins...

- Eve's temptation – the *first* instance of sinful coveting/desiring.**
 - ✓ **God created trees to be desirable/pleasing.**
Out of the ground the LORD God gave growth to every tree that is **pleasing** to the eye and good for food.
Genesis 2:9a (BSB)
(This word "pleasing" is translated as "covet" in the 10th Commandment.)
 - ✓ **Eve began to desire (covet) the *only prohibited* tree, because the Serpent told her it would give her wisdom that God hadn't given her.**
She decided that getting what *she* wanted was more important than obeying the *God* who made her, and who also gave her the rest of creation to enjoy. Once she sinned, she tempted her husband to eat.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and that it was **desirable for obtaining wisdom**, she took the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.
Genesis 3:6 (BSB)

✓ **What commandments did Eve violate?** There are ways, directly or indirectly, that she violated *all* of them.

- » **Commandment #1** – She removed God from the center of her life and put herself there. She rejected God's authority and accepted the Serpent's "authority."
- » **Commandment #2** – She "imaged" God as one who would withhold good from her life – a "mean-spirited God"!
- » **Commandment #3** – God's "name" (his worth, significance, his will, etc.) was not devalued in *words*, but in *actions*. This was not merely careless irreverence, but willful contempt for his authority and character.
- » **Commandment #4** – She destroyed the nature of work (which would become difficult and exhausting from then on). The Sabbath itself changed from a time of a joyful participation in God's rest (and his completed work of creation), to something that was desperately needed for spiritual survival.

13

- » **Commandment #5** – She failed to honor God, who, relationally, was her "Father." She usurped her husband's authority in leading him into sin. (He was also at fault for listening to her in this matter- Genesis 3:17.)
- » **Commandment #6** – She brought death into the world.
- » **Commandment #7** – She encouraged her husband to sin. She destroyed the original harmony of their marriage relationship. She committed *spiritual* adultery.
- » **Commandment #8** – She took something that wasn't hers.
- » **Commandment #9** – She accepted the Serpent's false testimony.
- » **Commandment #10** – This is where it started. She coveted what the Serpent claimed the fruit would provide: wisdom, obtained *apart from God*.

(Adam was also guilty of violating many of these commandments, though sometimes in a different way.)

14

✓ **We could also describe what she did in terms of "love"** – or rather, the *violation* of "love."

- » **She destroyed her ability to properly love God with all her heart, soul, strength, and mind.** Her heart was no longer devoted to God; her soul's allegiance was directed elsewhere; she used her strength to violate God's will; her mind abandoned unwavering trust in God.
- » **She destroyed her ability to love her "neighbor" (= Adam and their future offspring) as herself.** Love for *neighbor* is a reflection of our love (or lack of it) for *God*. So having violated all aspects of love for God, it was inevitable that she would violate all aspects of love for neighbor. Having rejected *God*, it was no longer possible to have a right relationship with those who were made in the "image of God." The best she would be able to do (without God) would be superficial and influenced by self-interest.
- » **She destroyed her ability to be herself– the woman that God had created her to be.** She would struggle with false perceptions and self-will, and would live in a world of difficulty and frustration.

15

More EXAMPLES:

• David and Bathsheba (and her husband) – 2 Samuel 11-12.

- ✓ **David coveted.** He saw Bathsheba unclothed. His response at that moment would influence everything.
 - » At this point, he had to decide: 1) look away and *kill* (or prevent) that desire, or 2) keep looking and *increase* it.
 - » He kept looking, and eventually the desire overpowered him – just James 1:13-15 would later describe.
- ✓ **The resulting sins** (other commandments broken) **include:**
 - » **Commandment #7** – adultery.
 - » **Commandment #8** – stealing another man's wife.
 - » **Commandment #9** – attempt at covering-up the sin.
 - » **Commandment #6** – murder of Bathsheba's husband.

16

• The merchants in Amos' day.

✓ **What they coveted:** money; and to get it, they were willing to exploit the poor and enslave them with debt.

✓ **The resulting sins** (other commandments broken) **include:**

Hear this, you who trample the needy,
who do away with the poor of the land,
asking, "**When will the New Moon be over,**
that we may sell grain?
When will the Sabbath end,
that we may market wheat?

Let us **reduce the ephah** and **increase the shekel**;
let us cheat with **dishonest scales**.

Let us buy the poor with silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
selling even the chaff with the wheat!"

Amos 8:4-6 (BSB)

- » **Commandment #4** – despising both holy days, and days set aside for God.
- » **Commandment #8** – theft – increasing cost [shekel] and decreasing quantity [ephah].
- » **Commandment #9** – lying – putting "fillers" in the food.

17

• Many church-goers today.

✓ **What they covet:** an escape from hell. (No focus on God's glory, doing his will, etc.)

✓ **The resulting sins** (other commandments broken) **include:**

- » **Commandment #1** – They have made themselves the center point of their lives. God has been replaced.
- » **Commandment #2** – They have invented their own "image" of who God is: someone whose purpose for existence is to please them or "meet their needs."
- » **Commandment #3** – They tend to devalue God and who he *really* is, to *not* fear him, and to *not* be reverent when using his name.
- » **Commandment #4** – They "go to church" for all the wrong reasons (such as trying to impress people, or "to make God happy").
- » **The "people commandments"** – Since God is *not* the center point of their lives, they will be inclined to do *anything* that they think will get their desires fulfilled. (God may graciously restrain them.)

18

It is EASY to covet... and to encourage coveting!

- We can even encourage others to follow the Ten Commandments for self-centered (=covetous) reasons! Do we want people to obey the Commandments because it will glorify God... or just because, if they do so, it will benefit us?

IF PEOPLE WOULD JUST START OBEYING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS...

THEN LIFE WOULD BE HAPPIER FOR ME!

I WOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT PEOPLE LYING TO ME OR STEALING FROM ME...

- Most of the advertising industry is based on encouraging the sin of coveting.

GO AHEAD... YOU KNOW YOU WANT IT!

YOU DESERVE IT!

IT'S SO-O-O-O DELICIOUS!

THE RICH AND THE FAMOUS USE THIS PRODUCT!

EVERYONE WILL ENVY YOU!

19

It is EASY to cover-up coveting!

- If it looks like coveting... just redefine it! We might even make it sound like a virtue!

I'M NOT "GREEDY"... I'M JUST BEING "FINANCIALLY WISE"!

IT'S NOT "LUST"... IT'S JUST "ENJOYING WOMEN"!

I'M NOT "JEALOUS" OF WHAT YOU HAVE... IT'S JUST THAT I "DESERVE" THE SAME!

It is EASY to use coveting!

- How often do people try to get others into the church, by appealing to their self-centered (covetous) desires? (More people will come, if we keep things entertaining, and don't mention the topics they don't want to hear.)

COME TO JESUS... YOU'LL HAVE A HAPPY LIFE!

OUR SERMONS DON'T MAKE YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE!!

FOOD, FUN, ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE!

20

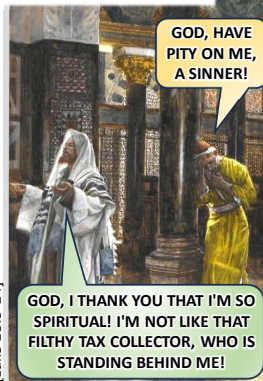
We can even make coveting look "spiritual"!

- In Jesus' day, many of the religious leaders coveted attention.

"Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi.'"

Matthew 23:5-7 (NLT)

[Luke 18:9-14]



GOD, HAVE PITY ON ME, A SINNER!

GOD, I THANK YOU THAT I'M SO SPIRITUAL! I'M NOT LIKE THAT FILTHY TAX COLLECTOR, WHO IS STANDING BEHIND ME!

11

In all these things (and more), God provides a way to escape the temptation!

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)

★ The problem is that we often refuse to take that way out. ★

- We often say "NO!" to the escape. We often delay taking the way he offers... and each delay makes the escape more difficult.
- Delay weakens resistance and strengthens the tempter's grip. Our eyes become more focused on the temptation, and the escape becomes more clouded to our vision and difficult to find.
- In the end, when we give-in to the temptation, we can't blame God or accuse him of NOT providing a way to escape! *We did it to ourselves.*

22

OUR MISSION!

COVETING

IS IN THE HEART, AND IS WHERE THE OTHER SINS START.

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander.

Matthew 15:19 (BSB)

(The "evil thoughts" are the "bridge" between coveting and all the other sins.)

MAKE THIS OUR GOAL:

- **RECOGNIZE** the seriousness of coveting. It's invisible, easily disguised, and leads to all other sins.
- **LEARN** to oppose coveting immediately, when it begins! Don't delay and give it time to grow!

23

Credits

SCRIPTURE

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24