

## ***THE TENTH COMMANDMENT – PART 2***

**Exodus 20:17**

**By Andy Manning**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Today we are finishing up our sermon series on the Ten Commandments.

If you can believe it, we started this sermon series on Easter, and it has taken us 16 weeks to get through it.

But personally it has been the most rewarding and fulfilling sermon series that I've ever done.

Last week we started a two-part study on the tenth commandment.

Let's look at it again in **Exodus 20:17 (CSB)**<sup>1</sup>. "Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Last week I started out by explaining the importance of this commandment.

If you can overcome the sin of covetousness, then you can overcome unhappiness, you can overcome relational conflict, and you can overcome all the other sins in your life. Covetousness is that big of a deal. It's huge.

What is covetousness?

Covetousness is simply wrong desire. It is desire gone haywire.

Last week we learned that there are three ways to commit the sin of covetousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all verses are taken from the Christian Standard Bible, 2017.

Covetousness is when you desire the wrong things (things that God doesn't want for you);

or when you desire the right things for the wrong reasons (for pride or personal glory, for example);

or when you desire the right things too strongly (such as the desire for academic success that leads you to cheat).

We learned last week that desire in itself is not wrong. It is not wrong to have strong desires and passions and dreams and goals and wishes.

But it is essential that your strongest desires be for the right things – and that is God and the things of God.

This week I want to accomplish three things: First, the dangers of covetousness. Second, how to detect covetousness in your life. And third, the cure for covetousness.

## **II. THE DANGERS OF COVETOUSNESS**

Let's begin with the dangers of covetousness. What makes the sin of covetousness so dangerous?

### **1. It is deceitful.**

Covetousness is dangerous because it is deceitful. It is very difficult to detect in yourself.

It is too easy to excuse it, or to rationalize it, or to justify it as something else.

Covetousness always comes disguised in respectful ideas and concepts. For example...

“I’m not coveting, I just believe in equality; I believe that everyone should have an equal share.”

“I’m not coveting, I just believe in being financially wise; it is important to be ready for emergencies and contingencies.”

“I’m not coveting, I’m just want to be a good parent. I just want to be a good husband.”

“I’m not coveting, I just want a more reliable vehicle.”

“I’m not coveting, it just would be nice to have a bigger house for the kids.”

Look at **Hebrews 3:13**. “But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin’s deception.”

Sin can be deceiving, and covetousness just might be the chief deceiver.

So be careful that you don’t too quickly assume that this sermon is for someone else; this sermon might be for you.

## **2. It involves the sin of ingratitude for what God has given you.**

**1 Chronicles 16:34 (NLT)** says, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.”

**Colossians 3:17** says, “And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through him to God the Father.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT)** says, “No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

It is very clear from Scripture that God deeply desires gratitude. He wants us to notice His benefits, His blessings, His goodness to us. And He wants us to have thankful hearts and attitudes and words.

But covetousness is the opposite of thankfulness.

Covetousness is desiring what God hasn't given you rather than thanking Him for what He has given you.

It is discontent heart rather than a grateful heart.

**One preacher** said, "It breaks God's heart when he gives us something to enjoy and we say, that's not what I wanted. That's coveting. It's not wanting what God has given you."

### **3. It is a lack of faith in God's provision.**

**Hebrews 13:6** says, "Now without faith it is impossible to please God."

God promises to give you everything you need in order to be joyful, and content, and to have peace.

So when you covet, you are denying those promises.

You are calling God a liar. You are telling God that He hasn't given you enough. His provisions are insufficient.

To covet is to say to God, "I can't trust you to take care of me. You haven't given me enough."

### **4. It steals joy and contentment.**

God commands us to be joyful. **Philippians 4:4** says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

And God commands us to be content. **Hebrews 13:5** says, "Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have...."

God wants His children to show the world what a good, good Father He is. That no matter what our circumstances, we are joyful and content because of our relationship with God.

But covetousness steals your joy and contentment. You cannot be joyful and content and covetous at the same time. It is impossible.

A covetous Christian is bad advertising for God. As well, a covetous Christian is a miserable.

**Philip Ryken** said, “So much of our frustration in life comes from wanting things that God has not given us. In our covetous desire, we concentrate on what we don’t have rather than on what we do have.”

## **5. It leads to other sins.**

Covetousness is dangerous because it is the mother sin. It leads to all other sins.

It is the first sin. Eve’s first sin was not eating the forbidden fruit, but desiring the forbidden fruit.

**Phil Johnson** said, “Coveting is the seed from which all other sins come from. Coveting never remains just coveting. It leads to greed, bitterness, envy, theft, murder, adultery. All of evil came from Eve’s covetousness.”

One of the sins that covetousness leads to is stinginess; the absence of generosity. A closed-fisted attitude toward others.

Why? Because covetousness thinks the blessing is in the receiving rather than in the giving, which is the opposite of what the Bible teaches. .

**Acts 20:35** says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

**Thomas Watson** said, “It is impossible to be earthly minded and charitably minded.”

All sin seems to start with covetousness. **Coffman's Commentary** says, "There is no conceivable type of sin and wickedness that does not grow out of a disregard of this law. The crimes of antiquity and of the present, in the jungle or in the great cities, crimes of youth or of maturity, misdeeds of the strong and of the weak - all kinds of wickedness flow out of the common sewer of covetousness. The proper observance of this holy commandment would dry up all the streams of filth on earth!"

## **6. It keeps you from heaven.**

Don't make the mistake of thinking that covetousness is no big deal. It is such a big deal that the punishment is hell.

**Ephesians 5:5 (NKJV)** says, "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

In Luke 18 Jesus has an encounter with a young man. He was rich, and young, and he was probably some sort of politician. He asked Jesus how to go to heaven. Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." The young man replied that he had perfectly kept the commandments.

And then Jesus said this in **Luke 18:22-23**, "'You still lack one thing: Sell all you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' 23 After he heard this, he became extremely sad, because he was very rich."

Jesus was trying to show that man that he wasn't good enough to go to heaven; that he was indeed a sinner. And from the looks of it, the young man had kept the first nine commandments as good as anyone. But he forgot about the tenth commandment. He desired his money and possessions more than God. And his covetousness was so deadly that it kept him from heaven.

## **7. It confuses your priorities.**

Every Christian has the same three top priorities. Your relationship with God, your relationship with your spouse, and then your relationship with your kids.

But when you covet, you end up putting other things before your God-given priorities. You end up putting work, or money, or any number of things before God.

**Luke 12:15 (NKJV)** says, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

That’s what covetousness does. It causes you to think that life is all about what you own, how much money you have, what you drive, what you wear, how nice your house is, how successful you are at work, and on and on.

But that’s not what life is all about. Life is about relationships, beginning with God, spouse, and children.

**Matthew 6:19-20** says, “19 Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal.”

Jesus says that your priority, your focus in life should be storing up treasures in heaven; and you do that by serving God.

But covetousness causes you to focus the bulk of your energy on this life; on storing up treasures on earth. Covetousness leads to a wasted life.

### **III. HOW TO DETECT COVETOUSNESS IN YOUR LIFE**

Now let’s talk about how to detect covetousness in our own lives.

As I said, it is very deceptive.

How can you tell if this is something that you struggle with? Let me give you six signs that covetousness might be something that you struggle with.

**1. When your thoughts are consumed with the world.**

When your thoughts are rarely about God, but are almost always about the things of this world – work, house projects, money, worldly pleasures, material things that you want, upcoming vacations, etc., then that’s a sign that you struggle with covetousness.

**Colossians 3:2** says, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

**2. When you work harder for getting the world than for getting heaven.**

Some Christians are extremely hard workers when it comes to their career, or when it comes to making money, but when it comes to their spiritual life they are very lazy.

They are always early for work meetings, but always late for church.

At school they sit up front and take detailed notes, but at church they take a nap.

They go to work rain or shine, sick or well, even if they have to hitchhike, but they’ll miss church if they have as much as a hangnail.

They will jump at the opportunity to work overtime, but they can’t seem to find the willpower to wake up a little earlier to have a quiet time. This is a sign that you struggle with covetousness.

**3. When all your conversation is about the world.**

Think about your conversations throughout the week.

What do you talk about?



Is it all about the world? Work? School? The things you want to buy? The fun things you want to do? The places you want to visit? The things you need to get done? Your favorite sports teams? The economy? Movies and video games?

If most or all your conversation is about the world, and very little is about God and the things of God, then you struggle with covetousness.

#### **4. When you so desire the world that you are willing to part with heaven.**

If there is any sin that you refuse to give up for God, then that means you love your sin rather than God, and you are very likely headed for hell.

Some Christians are trying to give up certain sins but are struggling; but other so-called Christians refuse to even try.

They refuse to surrender completely to God.

Whether it is the command stop stealing the tithe, or to repent of drunkenness, or porn, or an adulterous affair, if you refuse to repent, then you obviously have a problem with covetousness.

#### **5. When you overload yourself with worldly business.**

Another sign of covetousness is that you overload yourself with worldly business.

You are overloaded with work, and school, and sports, and many other activities, so much so that they are crowding out spiritual activities.

When you are too busy for church; too busy for a quiet time; too busy to pray; too busy to disciple your kids; you have a problem with covetousness.

#### **6. When you are willing to break the laws of God to get the things of the world.**

When you desire something so bad that you are willing to steal, or lie, or leave your spouse, or abandon your kids, or cheat, then you have a problem with covetousness.

## **7. When you are caught up in consumerism.**

Here's what I mean by consumerism.

Consumerism is when you regularly buy things you don't need to make yourself happy, or when you buy things you don't need to make yourself look good.

In other words, you are relying upon material things for happiness rather than on God, and you are using your money to glorify yourself rather than God.

These are signs that you struggle with covetousness.

## **IV. THE CURE FOR COVETOUSNESS**

Now let's finish off this sermon by looking at the cure for covetousness. How can you overcome covetousness if you realize that you struggle with it? How can you avoid it?

The cure for covetousness is to pursue **contentment**.

**1 Timothy 6:6-8 (NLT)** says, "6 Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. 7 After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. 8 So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content."

Contentment is not laziness; and it is not complacency, which is being satisfied with less than God wants for you.

To be content is to be satisfied with the simple life.

It is being satisfied with what God wants for you, and with what God has provided for you.

It is being satisfied with your present conditions just as they are, and even if God wants you to stay in that place for the rest of your days.

How do you pursue contentment?

### **1. Pursue an intimate relationship with Christ.**

You were created for an intimate relationship with Christ, and you will be discontent and struggle with covetousness as long as your relationship with God is lacking.

**Augustine** said, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

And the closer you are to God, the more content you will be with your current circumstances.

If God is making you happy, then you won’t look to the world for happiness.

**Psalms 16:11** says, “You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.”

**Philip Ryken** said, “Contentment means wanting what God wants for us rather than what we want for us. The secret to enjoying this kind of contentment is to be so satisfied with God that we are able to accept whatever he has or has not provided.”

### **2. Beware of the Myth of More.**

The Myth of More is that the things of this world will make you happy. It is the myth that newer, better, bigger, shinier, and more will satisfy.

It’s a myth. The things of this world do not satisfy.

**Ecclesiastes 5:10** says, “The one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile.”

A new purchase brings instantaneous happiness, but it fades quickly.

Then you are left coveting the next thing that promises eternal happiness. But nothing ever does.

**Thomas Watson** said, “We covet that which will not satisfy us. Worldly things cannot remove trouble of mind. When King Saul was perplexed in conscience, his crown-jewels could not comfort him. The things of the world can no more ease a troubled spirit than a gold cap can cure the headache.”

The Myth of More also says that you are what you own. You are your possessions, your appearance, your clothes, your car, your house. You are your job, your position at work, your salary.

But that’s not true. You net worth does not define your self-worth.

You are a child of King of Kings. You are priceless in the sight of God. And true wealth is not earthly riches, but heavenly riches that you store up as your develop Christlike character and serve God and others.

### **3. Trust in God’s sovereign providence.**

To be content, you need to believe that God is in total control of your life, and that He will give you what you need to be happy and content and peaceful and fruitful in Christ.

You must have faith that you are where you are because that’s where God wants you. And if God wanted you to have more, He would provide it. If He wanted you to have a different spouse, He would give you one. If He wanted you to have a different body, He would give it to you. If He wanted you to have a bigger salary, a bigger house, a nicer car, better health, then He would give it to you.

You must believe that God loves you, and He in control, and He has you right where He wants you, and where He wants you is the absolute best place for you.

You must believe that if you truly need something, God will provide it at just the right time.

You must believe, as Romans 8:28 says, that God works all things together for your good.

You must believe **Psalm 34:10**, which promises that “Those who seek the LORD will not lack any good thing.”

**Thomas Watson** said, “Believe that condition to be best which God by his providence carves out to you. If he had seen fit for us to have more, we should have had it. Perhaps we could not manage a great estate; it is hard to carry a full cup without spilling, and a full estate without sinning. Great estates may be snares. There is no better antidote against coveting that which is another’s than being content with that which is our own.”

**Philip Ryken** said, “The truth is that if God wanted us to have more right now, we would have it. If we needed different gifts to be able to glorify him, he would provide them. If we were ready for the job or the ministry we want, he would put us into it. If we were supposed to be in a different situation in life, we would be in it. Instead of always saying, ‘If only this’ and ‘If only that,’ God calls us to glorify him to the fullest right now, whatever situation we are in.”

**Phil Johnson** said, “Be contented with whatever circumstances divine providence has given us. You cannot be truly content until you embrace the sovereignty of God and trust Him no matter what happens in your life. Job is the example of this. After losing it all, he said, ‘The Lord gave and takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ This is really a commandment to embrace the sovereignty of God.”

#### **4. Focus on storing up heavenly treasures rather than earthly treasures.**

**1 Timothy 6:18-19** says, “18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.”

Focus your best energies on your relationship with God; on serving God; on serving other people; on leading people to Christ; on building the church; on giving to the needy.

This is how you store up heavenly treasure for yourself.

When you focus on heavenly treasure, it will take your eyes off of earthly treasure.

In other words, covet heavenly treasure more than earthly treasure.