

The Ten Commandments
Lesson 23: No Coveting (Part 2)
Contentment With God's Provision and God's Providence

1. Jesus' Words On Coveting And Contentment

Jesus came to deal with the hearts of sinful people, hearts corrupted by coveting. His words give us clear warning and wise guidance for dealing with coveting. Most importantly, the death He died paid for the sin of coveting and the resurrection life He now gives to the believing heart leads one in victory over the temptation to covet.

- a. Jesus knew the importance of following God's priorities and having God's perspective as guardrails against covetousness. We find His words concerning our focus or perspective in **Matthew 6:19-24**. According to verses 19-21, what are the two options or the two directions from which we can choose?
- b. What two viewpoints or "eyes" do you find in verses 22-23? This relates to what we have seen about an "evil eye" and a "good eye."
 - i. What is at the heart of one's attitude toward possessions, material goods, or money according to verse 24?

Jesus presents two options for acquiring treasure. One can have earthly treasures confined to earth, subject to earth's limitations and easily destroyed by earth's perils—rot, rust, and theft or one can have treasures stored in heaven, eternally useful, and always kept safe from the perils of earth. Where one places treasure, whether in heaven or on earth, will determine where that person's heart will be.

Jesus said, "*if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.*" The word "clear" can be a translation of the Greek word *haplous* which can be translated "healthy" or "single." The word picture presented is of a single piece of cloth spread out without any wrinkles or folds, no part hidden, thus the idea of no duplicity or deceit. The heart without hidden or ulterior motives or selfish schemes will be generous as in **Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:2 and 9:11, 13**. The application to one's life focuses on not having a deceitful or self-seeking eye, but having an openhearted readiness to give, a generosity of heart with the right motivation.

The generous eye starts with a heart surrendered to God. Jesus maintained a heart totally surrendered to His Father, giving all of Himself to His Father's will.

- c. Where does an "evil eye" come from? Look at Jesus' teaching in **Mark 7:20-23**. What comes from the heart according to verse 22?

When Jesus spoke of foods not defiling a man, His disciples were not clear about what He meant since the Old Testament had several dietary laws regarding clean and unclean foods. Jesus revealed that food does not make one clean or unclean. It is the heart that matters to God. Out of the heart comes the things that deceive and defile and destroy. Two of the things that relate to the tenth commandment, that come from the heart are "*deeds of coveting*" and "*envy*," which in the Greek language is literally "an evil eye." The heart is the source of the problems of coveting and self-seeking, wanting more or better or different things.

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- d. Jesus gave an example of the contrast between an evil eye and a good eye in one of His parables. Read **Matthew 20:1-16** and summarize what you find.
- i. What insights do you see in the contrast presented in verse 15?
- e. In **Luke 12:13-34**, we find Jesus making a very practical application of the matter of coveting to the hearts of all of His listeners. According to verse 13, what concern did the bystander in the crowd have? Was his concern a legitimate one?
- i. How did Jesus deal with this man in verse 15? What warning did he give to him and each one of us?
 - ii. What truths about coveting and greed do you glean from Jesus illustration of the parable of the rich man?
 - iii. In His application of the parable in verse 22-34, Jesus presented some of the truths He delivered in His Sermon on the Mount recorded in **Matthew 6**. What application do you see for overcoming coveting and greed?

A man asked Jesus to speak to his brother so that he could receive either his rightful portion or perhaps an undeserved portion of the inheritance. We don't know all the details but can assume that this man was not getting what he felt he deserved. We learn from the passage that Jesus chose not to be an arbiter in the dispute. Jesus wanted him to understand something much more vital. Not even when a man has an abundance, or in this man's case, possesses the largest portion of the inheritance, does that make him truly rich. One's life does not consist of possessions, but in knowing the Father and entrusting one's life and possessions into His care. True life and true riches come to the one who is "*rich towards God*," investing in the people and needs close to God's heart.

Knowing the danger of coveting, Jesus gave a double warning, "*beware*" and "*be on your guard*." "*Every form of greed*" or "*all kinds of covetousness*" can deceive a person into thinking that *more or better or different* is the answer to life, but none of these solve anything. To illustrate, Jesus told the parable of a rich fool who thought accumulated wealth was accumulated life. Even with a surplus, he had no thought of giving to others, only of keeping, storing, and enjoying for himself. His self-seeking mindset brought him the cry of God "*You fool!*" Death came to this wealthy man that very same night. All the possessions he had laid up "*for himself*," he would never enjoy. He left all to others. He was "*not rich toward God*," the tragic legacy of all those who are self-focused, covetous people.

It is useless to be anxious over food or clothing or any other temporal matter. Covetousness or greed for any of these things is wasted energy and thought. The Father gladly takes care of His creation. He will certainly do that for His children. Trust Him rather than striving like the godless people of the world. Invest in His kingdom first and foremost, making that the treasure place of your heart.

2. Christians And Coveting

Every person must deal with the temptation to covet. Even with a new heart and the presence of the Holy Spirit to empower and give victory, every Christian faces this in his walk with the Lord. How did the apostles help fellow believers overcome this temptation? What truths did the Holy Spirit reveal through their letters that will help us in our daily living? Let's look at these matters.

- a. What was Paul's personal testimony about the tenth commandment? How did he view this essential law? Read **Romans 7:7-13**. What did the tenth commandment do in the heart of Paul according to verse 7? How did his heart respond according to verse 8?
- b. Paul eventually discovered the liberating power of Jesus Christ to deal with any sin, including coveting. Read **Romans 8:1-2** and **8:9-14**. According to **Romans 8:1-2**, what is true of the person who knows Christ as Lord and Savior?
- c. How does the Spirit of Christ work in the individual believer's life, according to **Romans 8:9-14**?
 - i. What testimony of victory over coveting do you find in **Acts 20:32-35**?
- d. Read **Ephesians 5:3-5**. What is associated with greed or covetousness?
 - i. What insights do these verses give about the matter of coveting?
- e. What additional insights do you see in **Colossians 3:1-5**? What practical actions do you find in those verses?
- f. Paul wrote to Timothy who was a pastor in the city of Ephesus, a cosmopolitan center filled with people from all over the world. What commands and counsel did he give in **1 Timothy 6:6-11**? [You may want to read 6:1-5 to see the full context]

Paul wrote to Timothy seeking to help him in pastoring the church in Ephesus. That included dealing with false teachers and wayward disciples who followed their deceptive teachings. He had to deal with false ideas about material gains being linked to godliness. Paul clarified the connections. Godliness does bring wonderful fruit, "*great gain*," to a person's life when that person is rightly related to God and understands how He provides. As one rests in His providence, the way God gives what He gives, the believer can rejoice in His provisions, whatever it may be.

- g. We find wise counsel in **Hebrews 13:5-6**. To what does this verse call every believer?
- h. **James 3:13-18** and **4:1-5** have much to say about our desires and where they lead us. What contrasting directions do you see in **James 3:13-18**? What kind of desires do you discover in that passage?
 - i. What do you learn about coveting in **James 4:1-5**?

- ii. What fruit does coveting yield in a person's life?
- iii. What does God want to see filling our lives?

We can walk according to the wisdom of the world or with the wisdom from above. The wisdom from the world is marked by selfish desires, self-seeking, ambitious wants that line up as "*earthly, natural, demonic.*" They are bound to earth and earth's desires and ways. They are fleshly and sensual as well as deceptive and arrogant. These selfishly ambitious desires bring disorder, strife, fighting for one's own way, and all kinds of evil. The wisdom from above, on the other hand, is marked by purity, no selfish motives or self-seeking agendas. It is peaceable, characterized by gentle reasonableness, and showing mercy to others. Good fruit and the building up of righteous relationships abound with the wisdom from above.

When one chooses to walk in the wisdom of the world, thinking only of personal pleasures and covetous desires, then quarreling and fighting for one's way is inevitable. A person will even murder to get what he or she wants. Even asking in prayer can be corrupted by wrong motives. God calls the covetous lifestyle spiritual adultery, desiring the temporary satisfaction of the world rather than being faithful to God. Such a lifestyle conveys an attitude of hostility to God, something God will not tolerate. Because He longs to indwell and fill a person with His life and character, He will fight the proud person, dealing with covetous desires to see His will done in that person's life.

When one humbles himself in repentance over a covetous, selfish lifestyle, God pours out His grace. That person then begins to know the joy of the wisdom and life from above, the life God designed us to know.

3. For Me To Follow God

If we know a section of road is particularly dangerous, we are apt to drive more carefully. Often guardrails will be put in place to protect those who travel that road. In some ways, each of the Ten Commandments is a road to travel with guardrails built in to guide us along the way. Each protects us and makes our journey more enjoyable and helps us reach our intended goal. God has shown the way to live and has given several guardrail warnings concerning coveting. As we pay attention to these warnings and cooperate with Him, we discover a more enjoyable journey, especially as we allow the Lord to be the one leading us on every part of the road. Let's look at some of these guardrails and seek to apply them to our walk.

- a. Read **1 John 2:15-17**. We were made with the capacity to love. What are our choices according to verse 15?
 - i. According to verse 17, there are two ways to travel. What is the end result of each way?
 - ii. What are the ways or areas in which we can love the world according to verse 16?
- b. When we think of boasting or living in "*the boastful pride of life,*" there are many areas in which we can stumble. What three areas do you find in **Jeremiah 9:23**?

We were made to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, but some choose to love the world and all that is in it. Even Christians can easily stray into loving the world. That is why the apostle John gives this warning. The end result of loving this temporal world is seeing it fade into nothing. It will end in

destruction. The end result of loving and obeying the Father is enjoying His will forever, abiding with Him in an eternal home. The areas of temptation which we must guard against are *“the lust of the flesh”*—the temporal sensual pleasures of life, *“the lust of the eyes”*—the fading and faddish material realm, the possessions of earth, and *“the boastful pride of life”*—the self-focused, self-powered, and self-exalting ways of the world system. Each of these “lusts” is an area of intense desire of coveting. **Jeremiah 9:23** categorizes the faulty boasting of the world into three futile areas—what one knows (wisdom/intellect/skill), what one can do (through one’s own power—physical, financial, political, social), and what one can have (through riches).

Apply: Walk through the questions given below, looking for areas of coveting in your own life. Look to the Lord for His strength to overcome. Remember, the Spirit writes His law on the heart of every believer (see **Hebrews 8:10; 10:16**). He gives us discernment as to where we have overstepped His bounds and grace to overcome. Not only that, He gives us His grace to be content, satisfied in the will of God if we are willing to surrender to His will and His ways.

- In what areas of “the flesh,” the sensual motives, are you yielding to wrong desires? Do you look at others with a lustful look? What physical wants captivate your thoughts (ease, luxury, food, gluttony, sex, immorality)?
- In what areas of the material realm are you coveting? Cars (different, better)? Furnishings? Clothes? Fashions? House (different or better neighborhood or community)? Lands? More money? More “stuff” or more _____ (you fill in the blank)?
- Where is boasting a problem in your life? Your position—at work? On a team? Your title? Your possessions? Your abilities? Your education or academic degrees?

Areas to Beware—Jeremiah 9:23 speaks of boasting in what one has, what one knows, or what one can do. Those are three areas where covetousness easily arise—people want to have more so they can boast more; people want to know more to satisfy their personal pride; or people want to do more so they can boast of their accomplishments

- Are you being tempted to have more? Are you tempted to be proud because you do have more? Do you struggle with pride? Do you constantly wish for more approval from others?
- Are you coveting more knowledge for the purpose of pride, perhaps to bolster your ego, your income, your status, your reputation?
- Are you coveting more accomplishments, desiring more acclaim or fame, more fortune, more ability to boast?

Apply: Desiring to Obey the Ten Commandments—Coveting leads us to disobey every command, In the questions below, consider each of the Ten Commandments and how we sometimes dishonor God with our desires. Then, consider how by the power of the indwelling Christ, we can desire the fulfillment of each of these commandments in our lives and faithfully obey. Remember this: The key to not coveting is living empowered by the indwelling life of Christ, being content in Him, satisfied in Him, in His providence and His provision in our lives.

1. Do you desire another god, a different god, one who will give you what you covet to have? In the fullness of the Spirit, express your desire to honor Jehovah as your one and only God, to praise and worship Him who truly satisfies your soul, your innermost longings.

2. Do you desire some lame idol, some image of the world, some substitute for God? Knowing that God is the true and living God and that all substitutes are lies and lifeless, put away anything God shows you to be an idol in your life—career, income, education, recreation, sports, some relationship or person, whatever is getting in the way of you truly loving and walking with God.
3. Do you desire so many wrong things that you are dishonoring God's name with your discontentment and complaining? Seek to honor His name, His character, His reputation. Exalt and praise His name.
4. Do you desire more work time, more than six days God has provided, to get more money or more position or more prestige? Are you failing to rest, discontent in His schedule for you? Desire to rest in His schedule, working the six days with thanksgiving and resting and finding refreshment in your relationship with Him.
5. Do you desire parents other than the ones you have? Do you covet another homelife or heritage? By the power of God's Spirit, show honor to your parents.
6. Is your coveting filling you with anger? Are you coveting enough to hate someone else or even murder for what you desire? Desire to show kindness to another by the power of Christ in you.
7. Are you coveting another's spouse? With the purity of the Holy Spirit, seek to treasure your mate and treat as valuable the relationship others have as married couples.
8. Are you coveting someone else's property or provision? With the honesty of Christ, desire to give to others. Look for ways to give.
9. Are you coveting and willing to lie or bear false witness against another to get what you want? With the truth of Christ filling your heart and mind, speak the truth in every relationship and in every situation, you face, each day.
10. Are all kinds of coveting a part of your life? With the contentment of Christ satisfying your life, give thanks to Him for all His ways, all He gives, for His providence and His provision.

The key to not coveting is living empowered by the indwelling life of Christ, being content in Him, in His providence and His provision in our lives.

Homework: Read **Galatians 5:19-23** and **1 Corinthians 13**

Lesson Topics: **Fruit of the Spirit.**