

The TENDER Commandments
EXODUS 20:17
DO NOT COVET

INTRODUCTION

Wrapping up a series, so if you feel like you've walked in at the end of the movie, you have. THAT'S OK.

I hope it will be meaningful and helpful for you. You may be a convinced believer or you may be a devout skeptic, or you may be in between, but I'm glad you're here and would love to hear your comments, concerns or questions.

If you grew up in or around church people and the idea of the Ten Commandments makes you nervous or nauseous, hang in here with us. We all know the feeling in some way. The original audience for the Ten Commandments may have felt that way as well.

After 400 years of slavery in Egypt, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are delivered by God's mighty hand, and God promises to bring them to a land of milk and honey. They'll have their own vines and figs and freedom, so we might think they'd be happy and carefree, yet God commands them to NOT COVET their neighbor's stuff. That is an insight into the human heart.

God has promised to go before them and drive out their enemies, but the Ten Commandments show that the nearest and most dangerous enemy is their OWN HEARTS. That is true of US TODAY. The person who can hurt you the most and do the most damage to your life is YOU. And it usually happens when we stray from one of these commandments.

As we've seen, when we stray from one of them it means we've violated at least 1 other of them, probably more.

(say it with me...)

-The Ten Commandments ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT God WANTS FROM US, BUT WHAT HE WANTS FOR US.

-Remember that THE Ten Commandments ARE SOMEONE WE MEET BEFORE THEY ARE SOMETHING WE OBEY.

The context of the Ten Commandments is to be understood as a Covenant commitment ceremony,

Stipulations Relating To Loving
LOVE FOR God IS SINGULAR – EXCLUSIVE

Love for God is SPIRITUAL

Love for God must be Sincere

Love for God must be Safe Guarded

Honor Your Father and Mother

Do not murder

Do Not Commit Adultery

Do Not Steal

Do Not bear False Witness against your neighbor (HOW DID THE TONGUE TEST GO FOR YOU?)

Exodus 20: 17

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

WHY THE COMMANDMENT

God knows that our sinful hearts will lean toward idolatry and coveting is a form of idolatry. WE WILL WORSHIP SOMETHING – either God, or something else. The Hebrew word for covet is “chamad” = desire, to delight in, to take pleasure in. **The heart is not neutral; we are continually taking pleasure in something.**

We are not desire neutral. We want what we want, we love what we love, and we’ll do what we need to do to get what we want

God knows that we struggle with contentment. This commandment is based on the value God places on contentment. **At the heart of contentment is a resting and trusting in God as God; it is rooted in the 1st commandment.**

MARTIN LUTHER Large Catechism 297] For we are so inclined by nature that no one desires to see another have as much as himself, and each one acquires as much as he can and lets others look out for themselves.

SIDEROAD <file:///C:/Users/Tom/Downloads/Large%20Catechism.pdf>

Luther goes on to explain how the Tenth Commandment is aimed at those who suppose themselves innocent regarding the others, but this one exposes the heart and ties them all together. He also points out that in the cultural context in which it was given this commandment provided protection for women/wives. The cultural practices allowed for broader reasons for divorce and wives often got the short end of the deal. Men who coveted another woman could try to manipulate things so as to create a divorce in order to snatch up a woman. (293-297 L.Cat)

WHY WE COVET

At its core, coveting is not a “stuff problem”; it is a theological problem. It is rooted in Unbelief – at its roots, coveting is a theological heart problem. We either don’t know or don’t believe the truth of God.

You may not think of yourself as a theologian, but you are.

You are the most INFLUENTIAL THEOLOGIAN IN YOUR LIFE.

You and I are ALWAYS doing theology when we COVET, OR lie, steal, commit adultery or murder (in our hearts or in real life). We are doing theology every time we violate ANY of the Ten Commandments . Our theology flows out from our hearts, so all coveting is first of all a heart theology problem.

<http://sixseeds.patheos.com/schaeffersghost/2013/04/killing-the-green-eyed-monster/>

ALEXIS NEAL reviewing the book by Melissa Kruger, The Envy of Eve.

“When I sin, it is a clear sign that there is some piece of the Gospel that I do not believe, some characteristic of God and His work that I ignore or deny.”

In the case of covetousness, Kruger argues that the root unbelief is three-fold:

Unbelief in the character of God (specifically His sovereignty and goodness),

Unbelief in our purpose (that we were created to be in relationship with and glorify God and to be with Him for all eternity), and

-Unbelief in our relationships.

"If these are the root cause of envy, it follows that the remedy is to increase our belief that God is in fact both good and sovereign, that our relationship with Him matters more than (and will outlast) our circumstances, that He will bring glory to Himself through those circumstances, that He knows which circumstances will maximize our sanctification and long-term joy, and that we can therefore celebrate the blessings received by others." Alexis Neal

WHAT IT MEANS -- TWO TESTS (Francis Schaeffer??)

I am to love God enough to be content

I am to love my neighbor enough not to envy.

First Test

Contentment, or the lack of it is mainly A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

When I lack contentment, then I am revealing my true theology about God. I reveal that I have forgotten that God is God and is worthy of my trust.

A quiet disposition and a heart of giving thanks are the marks of contentment at any given moment.

WCF SC - Q. 80. What is required in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment requires full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," ⁶so that we confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?"

We covet when we think God has deserted us or His presence has little value to us and so we begin looking elsewhere for contentment.

1 Tim 6 tells us to be free from the love of money. This is not some romantic notion about poverty or business failures (Michael Horton), but it is rooted in the Sovereign Providence of God.

Ephesians 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

1 Thessalonians 5:18 everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:28

These verses are important for our understanding of the whole biblical view of the present world. The Bible doesn't tell us to call evil good or to seek suffering, but when it does come we should see it as an opportunity to lean into God so that our roots in Him would grow deeper. ... Psalm 119:71, 72

71 It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.

72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of gold and silver *pieces*.

EITHER we live as if God is in charge and that He is good, **OR** we live as if He is not in control, or His heart is evil.

What do the two look like?

Contentment and thanksgiving vs an angry, demanding, complaining spirit, boasting
envying

A Christian is one who doesn't revolt against God when hard times come because he/she lives out of Romans 8:28 and has a thankful heart. Thankfulness is the hearts response of faith. **A lack of thankfulness is at the core of unbelief and ungodliness.**

Romans 1:18-23 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ ²¹ **For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened**

Romans 1:25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

At the heart of rebellion against God is NOT BEING THANKFUL. The beginning of rebellion is the lack of a thankful heart. Grumbling and complaining show that at that moment we have taken the place of the creator rather than the place of the creature – Romans 1:25

When I fail to give thanks in times of trial, then it shows that I have forgotten that God is God and that he is my God and I am coveting by desiring His proper place as God.

THE SECOND TEST:

I am to love my neighbor enough not to envy.

Q. 81. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

What things do we envy? Possessions, position, grades, status, looks, clothes, house, car, "toys" - kids and adult- relationships – family, marriage, kids, friends

How to know if we are coveting? Do you have a secret joy when bad things happen to him/ her? Do you secretly long for her/his misfortune? Are you secretly angry or jealous at their success?

The inner coveting will spill over into the external relationship. To envy what one has will lead to disliking the person who has it. If I'm happy when he loses something, then the next step is to cause his loss by lying about him, stealing, or seeking to ruin his reputation.

The extreme is GOLLUM – one becomes absorbed with coveting – "our precious". **The truth is that there is a bit of Gollum in all of us.**



Enneagram examples- type 4 deadly sin of envy; type 5 - avarice

Johnny Long

X. No Coveting. Do I envy the physical beauty, energy, intellect, spiritual giftedness, natural talents, breeding or possessions of others, secretly wishing they belonged to me? Do I hide my envy of, and desire for, these things by self-righteously belittling either the things or those that possess them?

Or, do I delight in, commend for, build up, and seek to develop God's good gifts and graces in others, so that they are empowered to bring more and more glory to God by the use of them? This is the Second Table of the law.

CS Lewis: - pride is not so much in having, but in having more than someone else.

Pride, ALONG WITH UNBELIEF, is at the root of coveting.

Jesus – “Beware of every form of greed.” 1 Tim 6 Greed and coveting are destructive for the soul. Living beyond our means, or desiring to do so is a form of coveting – Horton- The Law of Perfect Freedom

GENEROSITY is the anti-dote to coveting.

When we see that our coveting and lack of love go together we must be on our knees in repentance. The command against coveting destroys any simple surface view of the Christian life.

The Envy of Eve by Melissa Kruger, details four steps to coveting: (1) see, (2) covet, (3) take, and (4) hide.

Kruger points to the example of Christ.

“When tempted, Christ did not yield to the pattern of coveting. Instead He defeated it, relying on a deep understanding of and belief in the Scriptures (the key in our own battle against coveting). Because of Christ's perfect life and atoning death on the cross, Christians have been set free from the penalty and power of sin, and can now embark on a new pattern of righteousness through the Gospel: Seek the Lord, desire rightly, give generously, and confess freely.”

Piper – Covetousness is desiring something so much that you lose your contentment in God. The fight of faith is the fight to keep your heart contented in Christ – to really believe, and keep on believing, that he will meet every need and satisfy every longing- Faith in Future Grace p. 221-222

Journey wrote and sang the Battle Cry slogan for the Christian – **DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'**

Maybe you need to start believing. If so here are the **ABC's of belief**

Admit

Believe

Confess

Next week we'll wrap up the 10 Commandments by looking at how to fight the fight of faith so that we don't stop believing.

This may be particularly helpful as we head into the summer. There's a tendency to “take the summer off”. That is a bad idea because sin never takes a day off. The World, the flesh, and the devil don't take any time off.

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