

“God is Great, Beer is Good, &
People Are Crazy”:
The Ten Commandments

Grad & Career Fall '11

Desire for Contentment

The Tenth Commandment

Discussion Question

- Describe a time you were content and a time you were discontent.

1. Commandment of the Heart

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

- Exodus 20:17

2. What is Coveting?

"The theological tradition has distinguished several stages of desire:

1. Spontaneous desire (one that catches you off guard)
2. Nursing that desire (sometimes called *titillatio*)
3. Making a plan to achieve it
4. Accomplishing the desire (the deed)"

- John Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*

2. What is Coveting?

"In wanting, you're the dog and the want is the tail. In coveting, the want is the dog, and you're the tail. When it wags you...it has you by the neck and it has you by the jugular and it is in charge." – Tim Keller, sermon on *Freedom of Contentment*.

3. What's So Wrong with Coveting?

"the good life has become inseparable from the maximum possible consumption of thing...the dogma of the new religion is the dogma of increasing wants." - Joy Davidman quoting D.R. Davies' *The Sin of Our Age* in *The Smoke on the Mountain: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments*.

3. What's So Wrong with Coveting?

"Can we reasonably expect happiness from an insatiable appetite which, no matter how it stuffs its belly, is still psychologically like Oliver Twist in the poorhouse, holding an empty bowl and begging, "I want some more"?...Can the best of us feel sure that he is not corrupted by "the dogma of increasing wants"? Most of us are modest enough in our demands. We reject the disease of greed, the perversion that turns a decent little shopkeeper into a recluse dead of hunger on a mattress stuffed with ten-dollar bills; turns a cheerful girl in a shabby coat into a fretful neurotic in diamonds and mink; turns an idealistic young writer into a twitching Hollywood executive out to knife his best friend in the back...

3. What's So Wrong with Coveting?

...These, we feel, are the exceptions and mental cases. We could never go like that. We don't grudge our neighbor any success; we just want a standard of living that will enable us to maintain our self-respect. We've no heart's desire for a Cadillac - we'll be satisfied with a Chevy, for this year at least; and of course we've got to buy a television set, but that's only because the kids are so humiliated on account of all their friends' having one..." - Joy Davidman, *The Smoke on the Mountain: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments*.

3. What's So Wrong with Coveting?

"Covetousness is a dangerous sin, as it checks all that is good. It is an enemy to grace; it damps good affections, as the earth puts out the fire...'Covetousness hinders the efficacy of the word preached'...We preach to men to get their hearts in heaven; but where covetousness is predominant, it chains them to earth...You may as well bid an elephant fly in the air, as a covetous man live by faith." - Thomas Watson, *Ten Commandments*.

4. What's the Opposite of Coveting? Contentment.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

“6Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, 7for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”

4. What's the Opposite of Coveting? Contentment.

Philippians 4:12-13

12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

5. How Do I Become Content?

A. GO DEEPER INTO YOUR DESIRE TO FIND GOD

“Lying on that study sofa...I had sensations which you can imagine. And at once I knew that the Enemy would take advantage of the vague longings and tendernesses to try and make me believe later on that he had the fulfillment that I really wanted. So I balked him by letting the longings go even deeper and turning my mind to the One, the real object of all desire, which (you know my view) is what we are really wanting in all wants...” – C.S. Lewis

Application

A. GO DEEPER INTO YOUR DESIRE TO FIND GOD

Spontaneous desire (one that catches you off guard)

- Don't try to eradicate your desire
- Slow down in your desire, ask God and yourself, what is a legitimate want behind this desire.
- Go deeper into your desire by connecting with that legitimate want.
- Meditate on how God meets that legitimate want of yours.
- Rest in God meeting that want.

Nursing that desire (sometimes called *titillatio*)

Making a plan to achieve it

Accomplishing the desire (the deed)"

5. How Do I Become Content?

B. SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM...

"Christianity is everywhere paradoxical, everywhere too difficult for simple black-and-white thinking; but nowhere more so that in its doctrine of worldly goods. For they *are* good things - and yet we must not long for them. They *are* to be enjoyed - and yet must not make that enjoyment our goal...If we have them, the best possible thing we can do with them is to give them away; if we don't have them, we may expect to get them, but we mustn't worry about it!...It seems that we are told not to desire what, by our very natures, we cannot live without...**The paradox is easier once we remember that the test runs "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God" - once we remember ends and means.**" - Joy Davidman, *The Smoke on the Mountain: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments*.

5. How Do I Become Content?

C. WANT GOD MORE...MUCH MORE

"There is, in the last analysis, only one way to stop covetousness and the destruction of body and soul that spring from covetousness, and that is to want God so much that we can't be bothered with inordinate wants for anything else." - Joy Davidman, *The Smoke on the Mountain: An Interpretation of the Ten Commandments*.

5. How Do I Become Content?

D. COVET THE THINGS OF GOD...

"The third remedy for covetousness is to **covet spiritual things** more. **Covet grace**, for it is the best blessing, ... **Covet heaven**, which is the region of happiness... If we covet heaven more, we shall covet earth less... **O covet after heavenly things!** There is the tree of life, the mountains of spices, the rivers of pleasure, the honeycomb of God's love dropping, the delights of angels, and the flower of joy fully ripe and blown. There is the pure air to breathe; no fogs or vapor of sin arise to infect the air, but the Sun of Righteousness enlightens the whole horizon continually with his glorious beams." - Thomas Watson, *Ten Commandments*.

Q&A

