



The Ten Commandments – Part 14
Exodus 20:17
GCSP – 01/23/2010

Are there things in your life that you have an unhealthy attraction to? Maybe you've never seen a mall that you can pass by without taking a long look at the new fashions. Perhaps you have an ever growing collection of fishing poles and rifles, or maybe your CD or DVD collections have taken over entire rooms of your home. You fill in the blank on what it is you either can't get enough of or you always desire.

I have several attractions that can get to unhealthy extremes, but books are probably the one I have to temper the most. I love books, and one of the reasons I have to be so very careful is that it is easy for me to justify. After all, I may be able to use something from this book in a sermon or Bible study some day.

The Christian magazines and publications I read always has advertisements for the latest books to hit the market, and I sometimes find myself paying more attention to these ads than I do the articles. I don't purchase them but I definitely desire to.

I have dropped many a hint through the years with me family back in Illinois that I don't need another tie or shirt for Christmas or birthday, but a gift certificate to CBD or Amazon or Mardel or Family Christian Stores would be nice.

Probably my biggest weakness is in wanting to complete a collection I have started. It actually bothers me to have a partial collection of a commentary series. I have one series that I am missing the Gospel of Mark, and have been for many years. Every time I pull out another volume of that series for my study or preparation I am always reminded that I still don't have Mark.

There is a five-volume set on the Book of Acts by one of my favorite pastor/authors of which I only have the first three. This same pastor/author has a six-volume set on the Book of Ephesians and I only have volume one. I even called my wife once to ask her to go to my bookcases and remind me which volumes I had from a certain author, because there was a 50% off sale at the store I was at on his collection. I even used to carry a list in my wallet of missing volumes.

And while I will justify in my own mind the fact that I do frequently use these resources in my own personal study and in preparation for a sermon or lesson, there are several books on my shelves that I have never cracked open as of yet; and there would be many others, that I would fill yet another bookcase with, if I were not restrained.

When I watch some of the old movies that have large houses and mansions, and a visitor stops in, where does the butler or servant tell the guest to wait? – In the library! In my mind I am dreaming; what would it be like to have an entire room in my home devoted to books? And I'm talking so many books and such a large room that you have to have a tall ladder on a track to move around the room in order to reach all of the books – wow!

But even though books are very useful, and to a certain extent necessary, for me in my calling to teach and preach, desiring them and collecting them can become an unhealthy obsession; and that can lead to violating the last of the Ten Commandments.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Exodus**.

Exodus 20:17

Let's pray.

The previous four Commandments we have worked our way through are:

- You shall not murder
- You shall not commit adultery
- You shall not steal
- You shall not bear false witness

I submit to you that the sin of covetousness leads into or contributes to breaking these others. Let me remind you of a few biblical accounts to illustrate my point.

When King David saw the beautiful Bathsheba from his view on the roof of the palace, he coveted his neighbor's wife. This led to breaking the 8th Commandment when he took, or stole Bathsheba. He then broke the 7th Commandment by committing adultery with her. We do not have a specific instance of bearing false witness (the 9th Commandment) but I am sure some lies were told somewhere in the process of this account. David then completed the course by breaking the 6th Commandment when he ordered the commander of his army to put Bathsheba's husband on the front lines of the battle and then retreat and leave him there all alone to be killed.

King Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard. This led to bearing false witness, murder, and theft. Achan coveted some of the spoils of war, which was forbidden, and this led to theft and bearing false witness. Judas coveted money and power which led him to steal, to bear false witness, and through his actions to be party to the murder of Jesus.

And all of these accounts began with coveting.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Colossians**.

Colossians 3:5

Paul links the sin of greed or covetousness with the sin of idolatry. He does this because the object of your desire will become your god if you do not nip it in the bud. If you covet and desire money, your god will be money and you will be focused on money and the pursuit of it above all else. If you covet and desire fame and notoriety then you will pursue that above all else. If you covet and desire power then you will find yourself consumed by its pursuit.

So I guess we can rightly add that breaking the 10th Commandment will inevitably lead you to break the 1st and 2nd Commandments as well: You shall have no other gods before Me and you shall not make for yourself an idol.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Timothy**.

1 Timothy 6:6-21

Wow – what a rich passage of Scripture. There is really only a section of what we read that applies to our current topic, but as I read and continued reading during my preparation the Spirit impressed upon me to keep going, and keep going, and keep going; so I have to assume that some of those verses are meant for some of you tonight. Jot down the reference and spend some time this week meditating on whatever pricked your heart. After you have jotted the reference down or have made a mental note, rejoin me for the topic at hand.

Paul opens this section of Scripture by giving Timothy the key to being able to keep the 10th Commandment; be content.

v. 6

Living a godly life and being content with the material wealth and possessions you currently have leads to great gain according to this verse; and the context of this passage is indeed dealing with material wealth. But again, make sure you do not miss the point, which is to live a godly life and to be content.

I know some of you now have thoughts of wealth and riches dancing in your heads, and if that's the case you have missed it. If you view this passage as some magic formula for all of your financial woes to disappear, you are closer to coveting than to being godly and content; so let's continue.

v. 7-8

How much money did you bring with you when you came out of your mother's womb? How much money has your deceased friends and family taken with them when they left this world? **"If we have food and covering (clothing and shelter), with these we shall be content."**

So if you want to get godly and content for the express purpose of seeing the great gain come your way, you are missing the point, because expecting the great gain is not being content with food and covering.

v. 9-10

Why is it that so many of us want more than we have? Why have we been deceived into buying the notion that advertisers have been selling since the invention of marketing? Advertising is a multi-billion dollar enterprise with the sole purpose of making you unhappy with your life as it is. Advertising seeks to destroy contentment. And when your contentment is destroyed your desire to have more will inevitably lead to a love of money, which **is a root of all sorts of evil.**

v. 11

If we truly desire to keep the 10th Commandment, and thus be content with where we are right at this very moment, we have to flee from the desire to get rich. And beloved we now have a paradox; for once we reach the genuine attitude of being content, and once we genuinely pursue righteousness and godliness and faith and love and perseverance and gentleness, we will have reached the point of being in line with God's requirement to experience great gain. And the paradox is that your pursuit of these

things cannot be for the purpose of the great gain, because that would show that you do not possess contentment.

The last thing I want us to see from this passage is in **verse 14**.

v. 14

What Commandment is Paul referring to? Even though Paul does not specifically state the Commandment, it is blatantly obvious he is referring to, "**You shall not covet.**" Covetousness is the polar opposite of contentment. And the reason he tells us to **keep the Commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ**, is because once the Lord returns we will never covet again; for we will have our full inheritance and never again have need of anything.

And this is the key to contentment; living in the reality that all the blessings and promises contained in this Book is mine right here and right now.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Hebrews**.

Hebrews 11:1

As our Monday night Bible study group has discovered, that word "**assurance**" (or evidence as some translations use) means title deed. I don't know if you have grasped the significance of what that truly means. As you live by faith in any and everything God's Word says, you have the legal right and claim to what you are placing your faith in!

Did you get that? As you live by faith in any and everything God's Word says, you have the legal right and claim to what you are placing your faith in!

So let me ask you something: Is it possible to be content with the reality of having legal claim to everything God has promised in His Word? So do you see how these two passages work in concert together? Paul tells us to pursue righteousness and godliness and faith and love and perseverance and gentleness in order to acquire the means to great gain, and the writer of Hebrews shows us we have legal claim to anything in God's Word by which we exhibit genuine faith. Beloved, if you can't be content in that then I would have to seriously doubt your salvation.

So why do we covet anyway? One reason we covet is because we have tunnel vision; we see most everything in the near or short term only. Covetousness elbows out the long term visions and the deeply held values. Covetousness only sees things in terms of satisfying your immediate needs.

How real are God's promises to you when you are in the midst of an immediate crisis? Of course you may give lip service to the promises of God, and you may quote Scripture, and you may acknowledge that God knows what's best for you, but just below the surface of all of the external masquerade lies covetousness; crying out for immediate satisfaction.

The fact is, God does know exactly what you, exactly when you need it, and exactly how much you need it. And sometimes what we view as a delay in Him standing at attention

to our call and jumping to action when we call, is actually Him trying to teach us how often we are driven by selfish desire and how lacking we are in genuine faith and trust in Him and His provision in His timing.

When we covet, we are telling God, "*What I have isn't good enough for me. What You have provided is less than I deserve.*"

Let me quickly give you six things God knows about covetousness that we will often forget or completely miss.

1. God Knows What We Covet Will Not Last

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **2 Corinthians**.

2 Corinthians 4:18

The Lord is telling us that life on this earth is uncertain and fragile enough as it is; concentrate on those things that will last. Clothes and cars and houses and toys are not going to last; a second after you die they won't mean a thing to you but will then become a plague in the lives of your children.

Ecclesiastes 5:11 says, "**The more you have, the more people come to help you spend it. So what is the advantage of wealth – except perhaps to watch it run through your fingers**" (NLT). In other words, money and possessions that are not properly handled according to God's Word will slip through your hands – and this is attributed by the overwhelming majority of lottery and sweepstakes winners. The sudden onslaught of money brings a very temporary happiness followed by divorce and ruin.

Think back on the times in your life that you fondly remember the most. Some of the greatest times of your life will have occurred when you had very little of this world's goods. The stories Connie and I share the most usually took place during the lean times. Sure, we enjoyed the vacations when more money was available, but the really great memories had little to do with money and material means – it was usually the exact opposite when there was a lack of money.

Even my fondest childhood memories are dominated by simple trips to grandma and grandpa's farm, or camping trips with my cousin and his family, not times where a lot of money was spent.

I wouldn't trade those memories for nothing.

2. God Knows What We Covet Will Burden Us

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Psalms**.

Psalms 51:3-4

This is King David's response to coveting Bathsheba and the results of it. Do you think David wished he could have turned back the clock of his life?

The rest of his days were marked by heartbreak as David's family fell apart. David helplessly sat back as he witnessed rape, murder, incest, betrayal, disgust, and rebellion, just to name a few, happen in his family; it never stopped the remainder of his days on this earth.

I'm sure on that fateful day David thought he would be fulfilled and satisfied if only he could have Bathsheba.

God knows how burdensome the things we covet can become in our lives.

3. God Knows Covetousness is Destructive

We won't belabor this point again since we have already looked at it when we spent some time in **1 Timothy 6:6-10**, earlier. Suffice to repeat that the longing for riches opens the door to all sorts of evil and hurt.

4. God Knows Covetousness is Deceptive

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Luke**.

Luke 12:15

Do you truly believe that? Do you believe this truth to the point of it changing your priorities, impacting your choices, and shaping the way you live your life?

As I mentioned before, Madison Avenue's sole purpose is to make you unhappy and dissatisfied with what you currently have. Commercials, advertisements, and sales pitches, if done well, get you dreaming.

Connie and I sat through a time share presentation this past summer on the promise of \$100 gift card that we could use for a couple of dinners out on the town. They were good. We didn't buy the time share but they certainly made us dream and truly believe we deserved a better class of vacation.

But regardless of whether you have the fancy things of this world and can afford the pampering of a high class time share, your life is not defined by these things, and Jesus wants to make sure we understand that. Do not be deceived by what the world says you must have, because newer, nicer, and more luxurious will not make you happy.

If your conversation is, "When I get this, or when I finally get that" you are living in deception brought on by covetousness. If you are waiting for more money or more things or more of anything beside more of the Lord to bring happiness and contentment, you are deceived.

5. God Knows Contentment is a Process

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Philippians**.

Philippians 4:11

Even the Apostle Paul, the man of God, had to learn to be content. Beloved, it is not something you are born with and it is not something you magically receive; godly contentment is learned.

Every experience you and I face is an opportunity to learn and practice contentment in the Lord. **Hebrews 13:5** tells us, "**Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you.'**"

We can learn contentment because the Lord is with us every step of the way and He will never leave us or forsake us.

Back up a chapter in the Book of **Philippians**.

Philippians 3:7-8

If you truly desire to learn contentment, then spend your days developing and growing your relationship with Jesus Christ.

6. God Knows True Contentment Brings Peace

Once more turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Psalms**.

Psalms 73:23-26

When you are in the presence of God you simply cannot have any other feeling or attitude except contentment. Spending time with the Lord frees you from every hurt and every concern and every worry and every apprehension. True contentment brings peace because true contentment is resting in the Lord and casting all of your cares on Him.

Let me leave you with this final thought; if you're not content with little, you will never be content with much. Contentment does not come from money and possessions.

Let's pray.