

**UNEDITED DRAFT**

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are finishing up our study on the 10 Commandments as we study the last two together. God gave them that we might readily see the sin in our life, that we might repent, and that we might see a greater need for Jesus. As followers of Jesus... as God's children... he gives us these commandments that we might know the way, the path that is pleasing to him.

Today: 9-10: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house." 10<sup>th</sup>: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Unique commandment in that God wants you to guard your heart.

**Proverbs 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."**

Your heart is not guarded when you covet. What is coveting? We learn about this sin from James 4:1-4:

**What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.**

Coveting is having an ungodly desire. When we want something that God doesn't want us to want, the act of just wanting it is already sinful. We already stand guilty before God when we simply want what we should not have wanted. If you never act out on your desire, you are, nevertheless, accountable for God just for wanting it.

So three examples of coveting would be this:

- **Wanting something you can't have.** For example, your neighbor's **spouse** is something you cannot have. But if you desire your neighbor's spouse, you are coveting and sinning against God. If you desire your neighbor's house, that is something you can't have. By that I mean, you're not thinking that someday with hard work if God should so bless you, you would like to buy a house like theirs. I mean you are jealous of their house, and you want *that house* but you can't have it. That is coveting. Wanting something you can't have.
- Here's another clue that you are coveting: If you want something so badly you are **willing to sin to get it**. You want it so bad you would steal or commit fraud, or lie, or spread rumors about someone, or commit other sins in order to get what belongs to someone else. For example, maybe you want the position or promotion of a rival at work. In order to get it, you are willing to tell lies about that person. Or you're willing to exaggerate some of your past performance in order to get a leg up.
- A third way you know you've crossed the line into coveting is if you **get mad at God** if you don't get what you want. Maybe you feel God is holding out on you. You know what

you want is exactly what you need yet God isn't giving it, so you start to feel anger toward him. You are coveting.

That's different than the way the world works, isn't it? You can desire the money in your local bank all you want. You can sit there in the lobby and desire to rob the bank. You can imagine how you would rob it in your head. But as long as you don't carry out your desires, no one will ever arrest you for that. But God sees it! God knows it! God says that's already a sin!

Not all desires are bad. Wanting something is not always sinful. But in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Commandments, God makes it clear that our desires must line up with His desires.

If the desire of your heart is to see more and more people connected to Jesus, that is a good and godly desire! If you desire to work on your marriage and make it stronger, that is a godly desire. If you desire to be a good neighbor, that's a godly desire. If you desire to be honest, hard-working, truth-telling, encouraging, helpful, etc., if you desire to make your whole life a big thank you to God for all he's done for you, these are all good things! Your desires are lining up with God's desires.

*Why does God care so much about our desires... our wants?* As long as we keep it inside, what harm are our covetous desires? **James 1:14-15 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.** So one reason God wants us to guard our heart is because coveting is rarely remains just coveting. Coveting plants a seed and that seed usually grows. It starts us down a path that results in sin, and sin unchecked leads to eternal death. Since desires / coveting are what lead us down the wrong path, God warns us about coveting!

But it's not just that the coveting leads to outward sins. Understand that the coveting itself is already sinful. When our heart is set on what God does not desire for us, then we are already opposing God. This is already rebellion against God.

The Bible is full of examples of people who sinned against God by coveting. Eve desired what God said she could not have... the fruit of the tree. Cain desired the favor that God had given Able. Joseph's brothers coveted the favor of their father. David coveted Bathsheeba. Ahab coveted that vineyard. Zacchaeus coveted more money and as a tax collector defrauded his fellow Jews... until he met Jesus. Judas coveted money and betrayed Jesus.

So what do you covet? We live at a time when the temptation to covet has never been greater. You are bombarded with ads every single day dozens or hundreds of times per day. Every ad you see tells you not to be satisfied with what you have. Every ad says that what you have is not enough, that happiness will come if you'll buy just one more product... it's within reach! The world tells you the lie again and again that the more you have the happier you will be. But Jesus tells us the truth:

**Luke 12:15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."** And Eccles. 5:10 says: **"Ecclesiastes 5:10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless."**

So what do you covet? What do you desire that does not line up with God's desires? Maybe it's **stuff** you can't afford: a car, a cell phone, a TV, a laptop. You're coveting has maybe led you into debt. Or maybe it has led you to do some unethical, sinful things. Maybe you desire a **person** that you cannot have. Another's spouse. Maybe you desire a **job**, or a position that belongs to another. Recognize the coveting in your life, and confess that sin!

Jesus is calling us today to recognize our guilt, recognize the frequency with which we break this Commandment and repent. This sin is serious. It leads to eternal destruction. One who is guilty of coveting cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Stop holding this sin tight and defending it. Yes, EVERYONE does it. In fact, the world we live in no longer calls this one a sin. But that does not make us right with God. We are guilty of breaking it. How can we be set free?

We are set free by God through Jesus. God sent Jesus to rescue us from our sins of coveting. Look at the life of Jesus and you find no evidence of coveting. Remember that story where Jesus looks at Herod's palace and tells his disciples: "Why is he living there?! He doesn't deserve it! I am the Son of God and I do deserve it!" No? You don't remember that? That's because it's not in the Bible. Jesus was always content. He never coveted. He was content to grow up in poverty in Nazareth. He was content to survive day to day as people provided for his needs. He was content to not have a wife. When the time for his crucifixion drew near, Jesus asked the Father if there was another way. When there was not, Jesus was content to go the way that ended in his tortured crucifixion.

That crucifixion was not the punishment he had to pay for his coveting. He had none. It was the price he paid for yours and mine. Death is the consequence for coveting. So Jesus died... for you.

This means you are forgiven of all your evil desires. It means you are forgiven. It means God has placed in you a new heart, a clean heart, and holy desires. God has changed you from the inside out.

As his child fully, freely and unconditionally forgiven by the blood of Jesus, God is calling you to a new and different life. A life free from coveting. A life of contentment.

**Hebrews 13:5 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."**

**1 Timothy 6:6-11 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.**

**Colossians 3:1,2—Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**

Thankful to Jesus, let's spend this week guarding our hearts. Ask yourself the question: "What is my heart set on? What are my desires?" Are your desires holy? Do they line up with what God wants? What are your motives? What is your heart set on? Confess. Repent. Trust Jesus. Live with a changed heart!

I pray this study of the Commandments was a blessing for you! Amen.