##### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**Lesson 13 - The Tenth Commandment - Thou Shalt Not Covet**

**Exodus 20:17**

**Introduction:** “Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.” (Ecclesiastes 4:6)

In this lesson, I hope to show you the ugliness of covetousness. It is foolish for any person to claim no violation of this commandment! Who among us has not desired something that is not ours . . . this week?!

# I. WHAT IS COVETOUSNESS?

## A. The word “covetous” is from the Greek word *pleonexia.*

### We are all aware that a popular way of softening the blow of naming sins is to give it a name that sounds less sinful. For example, there are nicer names than drunkard, thief, glutton, gambler, sodomite, dope addict, and so on. It sounds much better to say a person is afflicted with pleonexia rather than the harshness of saying, “They are covetous.”

### Pleonexia means to want what you ought not to want; to desire what one has no right to possess; to set the heart upon; literally, to pant after; to desire that which is not ours to have; to lust after the unreachable or the forbidden.

3. Carroll Simcox: “Pleonexia is a disease of the soul, compounded by greed, pride, sloth, envy, and ingratitude to God.”

4. William Barclay: “. . . to have more, and it is the spirit which always wants more, and wants it in the ugliest way.”

## B. Notice the areas of life in which covetousness operates.

### 1. To desire material possessions of another is covetousness.

### 2. To desire the position or status of another is covetousness.

### 3. To desire a person not ours to have is covetousness.

4. The commandment says if it thy neighbor’s, it is not yours to have, and to pant after it and desire it is a violation of the commandment.

**C. But the heart of natural man argues that covetousness is not so great a sin because it takes place in a man’s own heart and harms no one else. Wrong!**

# ii. COVETOUSNESS: HOW BAD IS IT?

## A. Are there lists of sins repeatedly given, and is covetousness among them?

### 1. I Corinthians 5:9-11, I Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:3-7, II Timothy 3:1-5, II Peter 2:12-15

### 2. We know God’s mind toward fornication, idolatry, extortion, railing, drunkenness, etc. Covetousness is listed in the midst of these deplorable, abhorrent sins.

### 3. All sin is offensive to the Holy God. But when God lists certain abominations again and again, no doubt we ought to pay particular attention to them. A man must be willfully ignorant to not see that covetousness is particularly abhorrent to God.

## B. Is it bad to not be content with what God has provided?

### 1. Of course it is! Covetousness is the opposite of contentment; it is to desire more than God has provided. (I Timothy 6:6-10)

### 2. Many professing believers who do not tithe or give to missions, reply, “I can’t afford it.”The reason they “can’t afford it” is because of the desire for things they truly cannot afford but are determined to have. Their debt leaves them so financially bound that they do not tithe or give. They are choked by covetousness. The media begins very early in a child’s life to fill them with the desire for more than they need or could have legitimately.

### 3. Hebrews 13:5,16 The contentment of a child of God is to be based upon that relationship with God. A child of God may have possessions, status, etc.; however, when the heart is right, those things have nothing to do with the contented spirit. It is enough to know He will never leave us nor forsake us.

4. Covetousness is so bad that the violation of every commandment can conceivably be related to it. Commandments one through nine may be violated as a person lacks contentment with God and with His provision and desires more or something else.

## C. What is the nature of covetousness?

### 1. Isaiah 14:12-15 Lucifer, filled with pride, was removed from his exalted position due to covetousness. He desired what was not his: the position of God (“I will”). Ezekiel 28:13-19 also records that unholy desire was his destruction. Covetousness has a diabolical nature.

### 2. Genesis 3:1-6 The appeal to Eve by the serpent was satanic. Satan was convincing Eve she may be a “self-god” and live independently of God’s restraints. Eve saw and desired; she coveted!

3. Understand that to live with a desire for what is not yours is a diabolical act that brings confusion, destruction, and ruin. It is an insult to God to say to Him that He is not enough; to desire what He has not provided.

# iii. COVETOUSNESS: HOW IMPORTANT IS IT?

1. **Covetousness is condemned by the law of Moses, by the prophets, by the wisdom of Proverbs, by the Savior, and by the apostles.**
2. Romans 7:5-7 & Galatians 3:24 By the law, we recognize our sin and helplessness and are driven to Christ. “Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”
3. That a covetous desire arises in and through our sinful nature is one thing. That it is allowed to linger and be a continual and uninhibited part of our life and heart and thought process is another.
4. The tenth commandment, violated and unchecked, leads to certain destruction.
5. **Some graphic illustrations of the destructiveness of covetousness.**
6. Achan at Jericho (Joshua 6-7) – He saw, coveted, and took what God had clearly claimed. The children of Israel were defeated at Ai, thirty-six men died, and Achan and his family were stoned to death.
7. The sin of Korah (Numbers 16) – He coveted a position that God had given to another. He was swallowed up in the earth with his family and 250 other men who were part of the rebellion.
8. David and Bathsheba (II Samuel 11) – He saw and coveted a woman that was not his to have. Bathsheba’s baby died, Uriah was killed, covetousness and rebellion were perpetuated in David’s own son’s desire for his father’s throne.
9. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) – Their unholy desire caused them to lie and keep back part for themselves. They both died in the same day.
10. Surely thinking people are aware that a covetous heart will affect many countless other lives, most of the time unwilling and innocent participants.

**Conclusion:** All the nine previous commandments are, without question, inexpressibly important. Jesus said that murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witnesses, and blasphemies all proceed from the heart. It is accurate to say that every commandment that is violated could be traced to a heart that is given to covetousness. G. Campbell Morgan said, “All the former commandments have forbidden overt acts. To disobey any of these is sooner or later to be detected by one’s fellowman. This final word utters its solemn warning against sin in the inner and hidden life.”