

Word # 10

Exodus Series

10.10.2021

Message 28

Exodus 20:17 (CSB)

¹⁷Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Luke 12:15 (CSB)

¹⁵He then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed (KJV says Covetousness), because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions."

Mark 8:36 (ESV)

³⁶For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

1. To covet is to "crave something that belongs to someone else."

A. The Puritan Thomas Watson defined it as "an insatiable desire of getting the world."¹

1. Albert Mohler said to covet is "to desire that which is wrong to desire and to want that which is wrong to want" (Mohler 184).

B. The first time the sin of covetousness is described is in Genesis 3:6.

1. Genesis 3:6 (ESV)

¹ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God's Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 666.

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

2. The fruit of the tree was good and perfect.

a. This was not some ugly fruit.

b. There was nothing hideous about this fruit.

c. It was wrong to eat it, because God said it was wrong.

3. Eve saw something that was not hers to have, and she wanted it anyway.

C. **The sin of covetousness leads to all other sins.**

1. Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5 regarding murder and adultery could be described as a sin of coveting.

a. Jesus said if you hate someone, you have committed murder.

b. The act of hating is the desiring of wanting someone dead.

c. This thought is forbidden, but I want it anyway. I covet therefore I hate.

2. Jesus said if you look lustfully at another person, you have committed adultery in your heart.

a. Adultery begins by wanting something or someone that does not belong to you.

b. Coveting and lust go together.

c. You cannot lust and not covet.

D. This is the only commandment that deals with a sin of the heart.

1. All the others focus upon the outside action.

2. Do not covet speaks to the heart.

2. This commandment has some overlap with “do not steal”.

A. Just as in stealing, when we covet our neighbor’s stuff we are denying that God can provide for me in the same way.

1. When I covet my neighbor’s possessions and property, I’m declaring that God made a mistake.
2. Coveting elevates my desires above God’s goodness and faithfulness.
3. Coveting puts me in a position to judge God and others, on the basis of what I do not have.

B. Coveting is more common than we realize.

1. When I make statements like “it must be nice” or “must be nice to be able to buy, or do...” I’m coveting.
2. We covet people’s homes, time off, relationships, education, their talents and their cars.

C. Coveting devalues others

1. Coveting devalues people’s hard work.
 - a. Coveting denies the early mornings and late nights that people invested.
 - b. Coveting denies the practice, the study, and the time invested.
2. Coveting devalues the risks in business that people made.
3. Coveting circumvents principles of budgeting and tithing.
 - a. Instead of building wealth God’s way, which involves work, tithing, budgeting and giving, we instead covet the blessings while disregarding the process.
 - b. Our culture features opportunities for immediate gratification and easy fiscal policy, and has taken covetousness to a whole new level.
 - c. Covetousness is not only a Capitalist problem.

1. Coveting also plagues Communism and Socialism.
2. Coveting plagued the old monarchies.
4. Coveting is a heart problem, not a legislation problem.
 - a. Policies and legislation cannot keep us from coveting.
 - b. The root of coveting is in the heart.

3. Do not Covet is not the same as "do not desire".

A. I know I have found myself thinking:

1. If I can't desire that, I won't desire at all.
2. If I can't have that, I won't have at all.
3. But coveting, by its very nature, does not respond to boundaries.
 - a. In fact, coveting works within boundaries.
 - b. Example: I can't sleep with that person, so I will lust.
 - c. I can't kill that person, so I will hate.
 - d. I can't own that big house, so I will covet and denigrate the person that does.
 - e. Coveting leads us down the dangerous path of "look but don't touch".
4. Desire is not the problem.

B. Albert Mohler states that the idea of "do not desire" is not the Christian view.

1. To eliminate all desire is not Christian; that's Buddhism.
2. Christianity is about desiring the right things, the God things.
3. We were created to desire and to crave.
 - a. Sin corrupted that desire and causes us to crave the wrong things.

b. But desire is a good thing.

C. It is good to desire what God has for you.

1. It is good to desire your spouse.
2. It is good to desire a good future for your kids.
3. It is good to desire to not live pay-check to pay-check.
4. It is good to desire a dependable vehicle.
5. It is good to desire to be used by God.

D. When we desire what God desires, that is a good thing.

1. When I desire what God has prohibited or denied, that is coveting.
2. To rid myself of desire is to eliminate how God made me.
3. We must be mindful to channel our desire in the direction that God intends.

4. The Tenth Word reminds us that we have all sinned.

A. Who would know if I was coveting?

1. I could not kill someone, or lie, or worship a false-god, and people would think I was righteous.
2. But this word exposes the heart.
3. The Apostle Paul chose this Word to demonstrate the power of Law in Romans 7.

Romans 7:7–8 (CSB)

⁷What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! But, I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, **Do not covet.**⁷

⁸And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead.

4. The Tenth commandment thus functions as a kind of summary commandment, the violation of which is a first step

that can lead to the violation of any one or all the rest of the commandments. ²

B. What makes coveting so dangerous is that Coveting doesn't require any faith.

1. When I covet, I can picture what you have.
2. Therefore, I don't have to trust that God has something in store for me too.
3. I can see what you have, and it's easier for me to see what you have than to believe for what God has for me.

C. Therefore, instead of believing for my marriage to be healthy, I covet yours.

1. Instead of investing in my workplace or career so that it is a blessing, I belittle your job instead.
2. So instead of walking out my own calling, within the gifts that God has given me, I covet yours.

D. Coveting leads to jealousy, gossip, slander, theft, adultery, murder, and idolatry.

1. Coveting comes from a place of dissatisfaction with God.
2. When I am dissatisfied with God, I covet.
3. A covetous person is never a content person.
4. And the Apostle Paul admonished us to be content in all situations.

The Good News: Jesus offers to redeem our desires.

A. "we are not talking about a renunciation of desire. We are talking about the exchange of desire-lesser for greater, lower for higher, temporal for an eternal." (Mohler 194).

² John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 298.

1. Do not covet your neighbor's spouse, but instead be passionately in love with your own.
2. Do not covet your neighbor's stuff: but tend to your own and steward it wisely.
3. Do not covet your neighbor's giftings: develop what God has given you.

B. **The desires that sin corrupted can be redeemed by God.**

1. Some desires need to go.
2. Some desires need redeemed.
3. Some desires need to mature.
4. Some desires need to be blessed.
5. Some desires need to be cursed.

C. When we give our lives to Jesus, the Holy Spirit starts working in our lives.

1. We realize that coveting the wrong things is wrong.
2. We also need to realize that I need to covet the right things.
3. The Holy Spirit changes our desires so that we want what God wants.
 - a. And when what I want conflicts with what God wants, there is help through the Holy Spirit to die to self and to live for God.
 - b. Our prayer can be: God, change my desires.
 - c. May our desires come into alignment with the Will of God.
 - d. When our desire is what God desires, we receive what God wants for us.
 - e. **When I desire what God does not want for me, I live in discontent.**