

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"DO NOT COVET"

For individual study or group discussion

"Lord, if you cannot make me thin, at least make my friends look fat." American newspaper columnist and humorist Erma Bombeck's tongue-in-cheek illustration captures the character of covetousness: a discontentment with God's provision in our lives which inclines us toward resenting our neighbor. As we consider the final and tenth commandment in our sermon series on the *Ten Commandments*, we discover that "Do not covet" exposes the heart of our failure to love God and neighbor, and therefore contributes to our inability to keep the other nine.

The Intention of the Commandment

God is building a community of people who delight in him and trust in his provision. Recall that the *Ten Commandments* were given to rebuild a community disrupted by slavery and oppression. The Sinaitic Law focused on redeeming and remaking Israel's communal identity, restoring dignity and significance to the lives of those previously disregarded in Egypt. Being content with God's provision provides a template for how life is to be lived with our neighbor's best interest in mind.

- Jesus summarized the *Ten Commandments* as love for God and love for neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). The Apostle Paul said that "love is the fulfilling of the law." According to Romans 13:8-10, describe the kind of love we are to exhibit to one another.
- Sin enslaves and destroys lives (John 8:34). Explain how we need God's Word in order to "walk in love" with God and our neighbors (Ephesians 5:1-17).

The Meaning of the Commandment

The tenth commandment provides a more thorough communal ethic, presenting both a negative and positive application. Negatively, we are to depart from discontentment, envy, and begrudging what God has given to our neighbors. Positively, we are to direct our hearts toward God with gratitude and to desire what is best for our neighbor. By this, we see that the fundamental attitude of covetousness opposes love for our neighbor, as well as seeking their good and rejoicing in their prosperity.

- How is the contentment prescribed in the tenth commandment a safeguard against temptations from breaking the other nine (Philippians 2:3-4)?
- With what basic necessities should we be content (1 Timothy 6: 6-10)?
- Read the following accounts and discuss how covetousness led to more sin: King David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12); King Ahab and Naboth (1 Kings 21); Elisha and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:15-27).
- Read James 4:1-3. Where does coveting ultimately lead us?

The Hope for Forgiveness and Formation

Forgiveness is found in the One who had everything and gave it up for us (Philippians 2:6-8). Formation comes as we pursue contentment, knowing that we can lose anything because in Jesus, we already have everything (Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-10). Professor of philosophy at Calvin University, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, explains the hope we have in Christ: "What would it be like to have a self whose worth and value were unconditional and noncomparative? To overcome envy, we need to work from a new, unconditionally loved vision of who we are. God tells us in Isaiah 43:1-4, 'But you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine... You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.' We are loved already and unconditionally—not because of our moral worthiness, our attractiveness, our worldly achievements—but simply because we are God's own children."¹

- How can you pursue contentment, knowing that Christ's love for you is an undeserved gift? (Romans 5:8)

DATE: March 26, 2023

SPEAKER: Wil/Brian

SERIES: Deuteronomy

PASSAGE: Deuteronomy 5:21

Family Dinner Table

Antidote to Covetousness: Contentment

"There was a party given by a billionaire hedge fund manager on Shelter Island. The successful author Kurt Vonnegut informs Joseph Heller, another successful author, that their host had made more money in a single day than Heller had earned from his wildly popular novel *Catch-22* over its whole history. Heller responds. "Yes, but I have something he will never have ... enough."²

The Apostle Paul states in Philippians 4:11b, "For I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." Paul trusted that God would provide for his every need (v. 19). Coveting, however, compels us to compare our situation with others rather than trusting God, leading us to crave more than what God has seen fit to provide. According to theologian and pastor Sinclair Ferguson, contentment is an undervalued grace: "True contentment means embracing the Lord's will in every aspect of His providence simply because it is His providence. It involves what we are in our very being, not just what we do and can accomplish... Christian contentment, therefore, is the direct fruit of having no higher ambition than to belong to the Lord and to be totally at His disposal in the place He appoints, at the time He chooses, with the provision He is pleased to make."³

- Read the [WCF Larger Catechism Q&A 147-148](#). Describe how seeking contentment alters our love for our neighbor.

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS
PCA Committee on Discipleship Ministries (CDM),
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¹ DeYoung, Rebecca Konyndyk. *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies*. 2009, Grand Rapids, MI. Brazos Press. 54

² Bogle, John. *Enough: True Measures of Money, Business, and Life*. 2009. Wiley Publishers. 1

³ Ferguson, Sinclair. *Learning Contentment*. January 13, 2023. Ligonier Ministries. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/learning-contentment> March 22, 2023.