



December 15-16, 2012

Exodus 20

“The Grass is not Always Greener”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

It’s fitting that we come to the final study in the Ten Commandments series a few days before Christmas. To covet means to desire enviously that, which belongs to another, and after all, isn’t it true that a trip to any store or mall is a trip down Coveting Lane? We see things and long for what we can’t afford, and we long for things others have and can afford. It’s as though the mannequins and electronic devices in every store are screaming at us: “Buy me! You need me! You can take me home with you today with a purchase that includes no interest for three months! Your friend has me already, so now’s your chance!” It seems like we can’t get away from the fact that someone is always trying to sell us something because what we have isn’t big enough, good enough, new enough or improved enough.

So, what is a violation of this commandment and what isn’t? To start with, it’s not a violation to have nice things or even desire nice things. When we read [Psalm 37:4](#)¹ and [Psalm 103:4-5](#),² we see that the Lord is the giver of all good things, so having or desiring good things isn’t the problem. The Bible also encourages us to desire certain things, like spiritual gifts,³ a godly spouse,⁴ or a child.⁵

In this study we’ll learn, in a contemporary way, more about what it means to violate this commandment by coveting the house, spouse, servants, ox or donkey of another.

¹ *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

² *“... [he] redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, [and he] satisfies your desires with good things.”*

³ *“...eagerly desire greater gifts.”*

⁴ *1 Corinthians 12:31 - “...eagerly desire greater gifts.”*

⁵ *Proverbs 18:22 - “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.”*

⁵ *1 Samuel 1:20 - “So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I asked the Lord for him.’”*

We Violate The 10th Commandment
When We Want Or Desire Something That Belongs To Another

1. **Exodus 20:17** - *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*
2. Don’t covet your neighbor’s house.
 - a. The great number of “McMansions” in Loudoun County provide plenty of opportunity to enter in to the temptation to look at how big, how many garages or how many features a home has, and yielding to this temptation can cause us to have a first-class case of coveting our neighbor’s house.
3. Don’t covet your neighbor’s manservant or maidservant.
 - a. It’s not too much of a stretch to translate these titles as pool boy and housekeeper!
 - b. When we spend time thinking about the pool we could have and the help we could get around the house with the cooking, cleaning, shopping, and laundry, we can slide down the slippery slope in a hurry.
4. Don’t covet your neighbor’s spouse.
 - a. Seeing certain characteristics or physical traits in our neighbor’s spouse, causes us to covet and desire an inappropriate relationship with that person.
5. Don’t covet your neighbor’s ox or donkey.
 - a. You can almost hear someone say, “I wish I had his or her Jaguar or BMW!”

What’s Different About The 10th Commandment?

6. The 10th Commandment deals with the thoughts and attitudes of the heart, while the first nine are focused on outward behavior.
7. Our thoughts and attitudes may not lead to outward behavior, but we can be guilty of coveting without ever acting upon our thoughts or the attitudes of our hearts.
8. This commandment is a reminder to us that God is not simply interested in what we do or what we say, he’s even interested in what we think.

9. [Psalm 94:11a](#) - *"The Lord knows the thoughts of man..."*
10. [Psalm 139:2, 4](#) - *"You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord."*
11. In many ways the 10th Commandment is the most severe, because coveting is often the basis for many other sins, including:
 - a. Adultery (#7) usually begins in the heart as covetousness.
 - b. Stealing (#8) usually begins in the heart as covetousness.
 - c. Murder (#6) is not always an act of anger or passion; it is sometimes a matter of covetousness, where someone kills out of envy or greed.
12. [Mark 7:21-22](#) - *"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly."*

We Violate The 10th Commandment

When We Want Or Desire Something Because Of Greed, Lust, Jealousy Or Envy

13. Coveting is a silent killer, because its destructive nature often goes unnoticed until it's too late.
14. In [Romans 7:7](#), Paul said, *"I wouldn't even have known what coveting was except that the law said 'Do not covet.' "*
15. Oftentimes we are not aware of "playing" the comparison game, because it is so subtle and private, nestled in our thoughts.
16. We can covet someone's house, car, spouse, job, talent, title, good looks, personality, intelligence, fame, physique/figure, money, and success.
17. Coveting is an offense toward God, because at its core, covetousness means that we are:
 - a. Ungrateful for what we have.
 - b. Envious about what we don't have.
18. In [Joshua 6-7](#), we read about the way covetousness destroyed Achan and his family.⁶

⁶ [Joshua 6:17-19, 7:1, 19-26.](#)

19. Pastor Gary used the illustration of covetousness being like a tree that has five deep roots, including:
- a. Envy
 - i. [1 Peter 2:1](#) - *“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.”*
 - b. Jealousy
 - i. [Galatians 5:16](#) - *“... live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”*
 - ii. [Galatians 5:19-21](#) - *“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, **jealousy**, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (Emphasis added)
 - c. Greed
 - i. [Luke 12:15](#) - *“[Jesus] 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.’”*
 - ii. John Wesley ⁷ gave wonderful counsel to combat greed, when he said, “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.”
 - d. Lust
 - i. [Romans 13:14](#) - *“... clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”*
 - e. Discontentment
 - i. [Philippians 4:11b-13](#) - *“... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*
 - ii. It’s worth noting that contentment is not a call to laziness, as if the implication is that ambition or achievement are wrong.
 - iii. We need to find our identity and our contentment in Christ.
 - iv. We should work hard and be satisfied wherever God has us or wherever he takes us.

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.

⁷ <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/>

2. Read [Exodus 20:17](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their “I’ve been guilty of coveting _____” experiences.
4. How have you experienced the Lord’s blessing you with the “*desires of your heart*”?
 - a. Read and discuss [Psalm 37:4](#) and [Psalm 103:4-5](#).
5. Do you think it’s okay to entertain coveting thoughts?
 - a. Read and discuss [Mark 7:21-22](#) and [Psalm 139:2, 4](#).
 - b. Do you agree with Pastor Gary’s statement that coveting is a silent killer because it often goes unnoticed until it’s too late?
 - c. Have there been times in your life when you spent an inordinate amount of time dwelling on something or someone to the point that you acted upon it?
 - i. What were the short-term and long-term consequences of your actions?
6. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences with playing the comparison game.
7. Review (See #16 above) and discuss some of the ways we can violate the 10th Commandment.
8. Do you think you have a grateful and thankful spirit?
 - a. Share examples of the ways you demonstrate a grateful and thankful heart.
 - b. Read and discuss the account of Achan in [Joshua 6-7](#). (See #18 above)
9. Read and discuss the quotes Pastor Gary shared from Boris Becker, Halle Berry, and Tiger Woods.
 - a. “I had won Wimbledon twice before, once as the youngest player. I was rich. I had all the material possessions I needed. It’s the old song of movie stars and pop stars who commit suicide. They have everything, and yet they are so unhappy.” - Boris Becker, commenting on being at the top of the tennis world in the 80’s, yet on the brink of suicide.⁸
 - b. “Beauty? Let me tell you something - being thought of as a ‘beautiful woman’ has spared me nothing in life. No heartache, no trouble. Love has been difficult. Beauty is essentially meaningless and it is always transitory.” - Halle Berry⁹

⁸ <http://bible.org/illustration/tennis-star>

⁹ <http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,675350,00.html>

c. "Money and fame made me believe I was entitled. I was wrong and foolish." – Tiger Woods ¹⁰

10. Provide an overview of the five roots of covetousness: envy, jealousy, greed, lust, and discontentment. (See #19 above)

a. Read and discuss [1 Peter 2:1](#).

b. Would others say you are a jealous person?

i. Read and discuss [Galatians 5:16; 19-21](#).

c. Have you experienced being in the grip of greed?

i. Read and discuss [Luke 12:15](#).

d. Read and discuss [Romans 13:14](#).

e. How often do feelings of discontentment surface in your life?

i. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:11b-13](#).

11. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: find freedom and release from the covetous roots of envy, jealousy, greed, lust, and discontentment; refrain from playing the comparison game; understand the good news that God wants to spare them from the insatiable appetite of dissatisfaction; to find their joy and fulfillment in the ultimate prize of knowing Christ and making him known.

i. You shall have no other gods before me

ii. You shall not make for yourself an idol

iii. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God

iv. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

v. Honor your father and mother

vi. You shall not murder

vii. You shall not commit adultery

viii. You shall not steal

ix. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor

x. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

¹⁰http://www.searchquotes.com/quotation/Money_and_fame_made_me_believe_I_was_entitled._I_was_wrong_and_foolish./191102/