



**Lecture # 15 Part 2**

# The Ten Commandments, The Laws Governing Man's Duty To Others (Part 10):

## Commandment Ten Concerns Man's Desires and Security— Never Covet, Exodus 20:17

### 2. (Exodus 20:17) Commandments, The Ten— Covetousness— Desire— Lust— Sin— Security: What is forbidden by this commandment.

Exodus 20:17 (BHS)

<sup>17</sup> “לֹא תַחְמֹד בֵּית רֵעֶךָ לְאִי־תַחְמֹד אִשְׁתֵּי רֵעֶךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתֹּךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וְחִמְרֹךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר פִּי רֵעֶךָ: פ”

“Lo tahmod bet re'ekha lo tahmod eshet re'ekha veavdo vaam-ato veshoro vahamoro vekhol asher lere'ekha”

Exodus 20:17 (KJV)

<sup>17</sup> “**Thou shalt not covet** thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.”

Exodus 20:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> “**You shall not covet** your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

#### “You shall not covet”? How is this commandment broken, violated?

Commandment ten concerns man's security. This commandment forbids coveting anything that belongs to our neighbor: his house, wife, servant, workers, animals, or anything else. A man should be able to live in peace and feel secure. He should not have to worry about someone coveting and stealing what he has. God wants man to feel secure and protected. God wants man to know that his wife and family, his property and possessions, his joy and anything else he has is secure and protected against the covetousness and theft of people.

1. The Hebrew word for *covet* (*hamad*) means “to desire, crave, want, long for, thirst for, yearn for, lust after.” *Coveting* is a neutral word; that is, coveting can be good as well as bad, legitimate as well as illegitimate.

a. The Bible clearly says that there is a legitimate covetousness, that God has planted within man certain inalienable desires, desires that we are entitled to, desires that are good. We all have legitimate desires for love, joy, and peace; legitimate desires to be secure, successful, fulfilled, and satisfied.

1. The Bible says that every good and perfect gift comes from God Himself. This being so, we should actually *seek after* and *covet* good and perfect gifts.



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### James 1:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”

2. The Bible says that the excellent qualities of life and the best gifts of God are to be coveted.

### Matthew 5:6 (NASB)

<sup>6</sup> “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

### 1 Corinthians 12:31 (NASB)

<sup>31</sup> “But earnestly desire [covet] the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.”

### Psalms 19:9-10 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

<sup>10</sup> They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.”

3. The Bible even says that God gives us the ability to get wealth and that we should work so diligently that we can actually earn enough to meet the needs of others.

### Ephesians 4:28 (NASB)

<sup>28</sup> “He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.”

- b. The Bible clearly says there is an illegitimate covetousness that man commits evil when he desires another person’s wife or property, or any other possession belonging to the person.

### Exodus 20:17 (NASB)

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

### Ephesians 5:3 (NASB)

<sup>3</sup> “But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”

### Colossians 3:5 (NASB)

<sup>5</sup> “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead [put to death] to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”



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2. Covetousness is an inward sin, a sin of the heart and mind: it is a *desire*, a *thought* within the heart and mind. This commandment differs from the other commandments in this very fact, differs rather significantly: covetousness is not the outward sin; it is the inward *desire* and *thought* that leads to the outward sin.

Remember, the first nine commandments dealt primarily with outward acts, with such acts as lying, stealing, and killing. But this tenth commandment deals with the **human heart**, with **inward feelings, desires, thoughts, and attitudes**. But note: the first nine commandments *also involved* the desires and thoughts of a person. Before a person ever lies, steals, or kills, the desire or thought to take such action arises in his heart and mind.

**The desire to do something always precedes the actual act.** A man commits immorality because he desires a person. A woman steals because she either desires the thing stolen or the excitement of stealing. In dealing with the first nine commandments, we discussed this fact, the fact that the evil forbidden was aroused first of all in the heart and mind of a person, that the evil was basically a heart problem.

This is the very reason God has covered coveting last, listed it as the tenth commandment. Coveting (**desire, lust, the covetous thought**) is the first thing that happens before a person commits the outward sin. The sin is *aroused* within the heart before it is committed; the evil act is *thought about* before it is done. This commandment underlies all the commandments: coveting—the desire or thought—takes place within the human heart and mind before any of the nine commandments are publicly or secretly committed.

**Before a person ever commits the sinful act, he desires and thinks about what someone else has; his.....**

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| a. house       | k. horse       |
| b. wife        | l. vehicle     |
| c. servant     | m. property    |
| d. livestock   | n. money       |
| e. clothing    | o. position    |
| f. appearance  | p. power       |
| g. personality | q. recognition |
| h. looks       | r. job         |
| i. promotion   | s. influence   |
| j. opportunity |                |

The list could go on ad infinitum. We commit the sin of covetousness when our *hearts and minds* are set on some possession, so set that we.....

- crave, long, and lust after it
- are consumed with getting it
- give ourselves over to pursuing it
- give top priority and first attention to it



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- e. focus our hearts, minds, energy, and time to securing it

Covetousness is being so consumed with getting something that we become gripped and enslaved by it. Our hearts become focused upon *a possession, a thing, something other than God*. This is the reason Scripture declares that covetousness is idolatry:

### **Ephesians 5:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup>“**For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.**”

**Thought 1. Maxie Dunnam** has an excellent application on this commandment:

“Most of us are guilty of looking at others, comparing ourselves to them, and seeing ourselves come out on the short end. We torture ourselves in this fashion, drive ourselves to depression by self-pity, thinking we deserve more. When we find ourselves jealous of what life is for someone else, dreaming of how happy we would be if we were in someone else’s situation, it’s a dead giveaway that we are falling into the subtle, seductive hands of covetousness.”

“How often do we convince ourselves that other people always get the breaks and not us? How recently have we thought that we were deprived of opportunity? We look at our peers, friends our own age, and see where they are in life, and we’re plagued with the notion that they had far more opportunity than we did.”

“You probably have not associated that with coveting, but whatever name you give it, it is exactly that, and it is destructive....”

“We convince ourselves that we have a sort of cosmic right to an equal share of the good things of life. That’s a fallacious idea, and it plays folly in our lives. There’s no equality to being in the right place at the right time.”

“There is no cosmic right that is ours to have an equal share of what everybody else has. If you’re prone to leaning in that direction, consider how you would feel if you were averaged out with the world’s two billion starving people. You see, we always want to be averaged up and not down.”