



What Do You Want?

Deuteronomy 5:21: (NASB) *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*



Humans are emotional beings. As this is the case, we want things - we don't just have an instinctual magnetism towards certain things, we truly desire them. The Tenth Commandment said, "Thou shalt not covet." Does this mean that the seemingly inborn trait to desire is wrong - against God's Law? If it is wrong, then why is it built into each of us? Stay with us as we try to truly understand human "coveting" and the role it plays - or doesn't play - in our Christian lives.

Questions for consideration:

1. What does it mean to covet?
2. Is coveting bad?

1. What does it mean to covet?

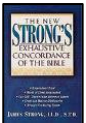


Merriam / Webster Dictionary

Covet: transitive verb

1: to wish for earnestly <covet an award>

2: to feel inordinate desire for what belongs to another



Old Testament:

Covet: Strongs #2530 chamad (khaw-mad'); to delight in

Covet: Strongs #183 avah (aw-vaw'); to desire, be desirous, long, lust (after).

Genesis 2:9: *And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is **pleasant <2530>** to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

Why does this next text use two *different* words for covet when the original in **Exodus 20:17** doesn't?

Deuteronomy 5:21: (NASB) *You shall not **covet <2530>** your neighbor's wife, and you shall not **desire <183>** your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

Coveting your neighbor's wife is put into a different category than desiring his sheep.



The Red Fire Engine, *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947)

- "I want a fire engine, just like the big ones, only smaller. It's got real hoses and squirts real water. I won't do it in the house, only in the backyard. I promise!!!"
"I see you are a good boy - you'll get your fire engine!"

Is it wrong to want something like the little boy in the movie? No...

Some guidelines for focusing our desires:

Proverbs 13:3-5: (NASB) ³*The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.* ⁴*The soul of the sluggard **craves <183>** and gets nothing,*

but the soul of the diligent is made fat. ⁵A righteous man hates falsehood, but a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.

2. Is coveting bad?

Let's look at the structure of The Ten Commandments from Exodus 20. This is the abbreviated version - each of the commandments is listed without any of their built in explanations.

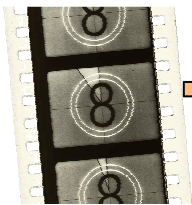
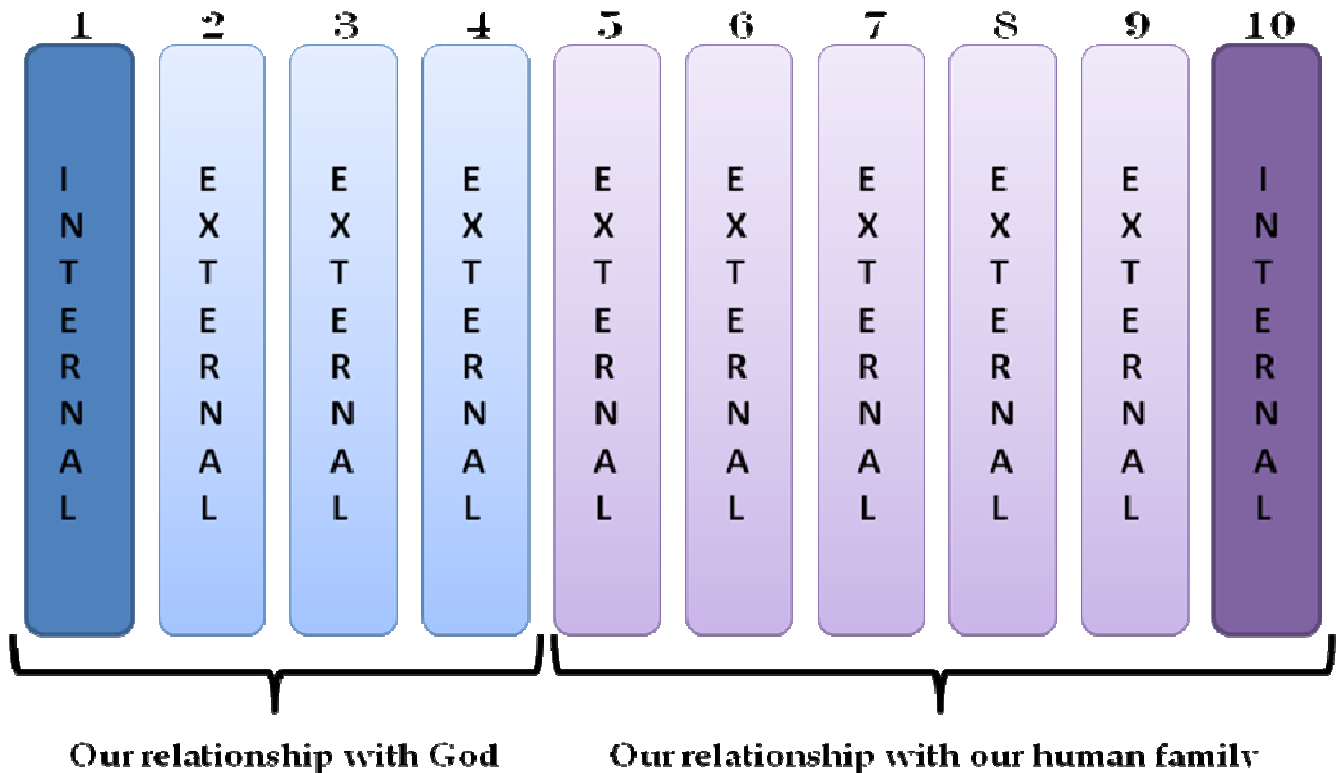


Observations:

- The first four commandments are all guiding our relationship with God;
- The second six are all guiding our relationship with our human family;
- The first commandment is an "internal instruction" - it is fulfilled within our heart and mind;
- Commandments 4-9 are external action instructions - their fulfillment can be seen;
- The tenth commandment is an "internal instruction" - it is fulfilled within our heart and mind.

So what we have is somewhat of a sandwich effect - surrounding all of our actions are the internal desires of our hearts and minds.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS



With all of this in mind, let's go back to the movies!



Ralphie with Santa Claus, *A Christmas Story* (1983)

- Hammond, Indiana in the 1940's. Nine-year old Ralphie Parker wants only one thing for Christmas: "an official Red Ryder carbine-action 200-shot range model air rifle with a compass in the stock, and this thing which tells time."

Was little Ralphie *bad* to want this gift? No, it didn't belong to anyone else. We are not to covet those things which *do not* or *should not* rightfully belong to us. Here are some examples:

Satan the original coveter:

Isaiah 14:12-14: (NKJV) ¹²How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! ¹³For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

Eve, the first human coveter:

Genesis 3:6: And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be **desired** <2530> to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.



Angels:

Genesis 6:1-2: (NKJV) ¹Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ²that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

Observations about coveting so far:

- To covet is to have a desire for something;
- God built desire into the human frame - therefore, it is not inherently bad;
- The Old Testament Law forbade coveting those things to which we have no right;
- Spiritual beings as well as human beings have displayed coveting - both good and bad.
- This is an eternal lesson for all beings.

One more visit to Santa's lap - this time it's Cindy Brady from the Brady Bunch - her mom is suffering from laryngitis and will not be able to sing in the Christmas program...



Cindy Brady with Santa Claus, *The Brady Bunch*

2 Samuel 23:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. ¹⁵David had a **craving <183>** and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" ¹⁶So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD; ¹⁷and he said, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

- Was David's desire for water wrong? (No...)
- Were the three mighty men wrong for bringing him water from the enemy's camp? (David didn't specifically ask them to risk their lives...)
- Was David's reaction wrong? (No, he was musing on his desires, and the men needlessly risked their lives.)

Part of the lesson is that our desires can get us into trouble.

What are good things that we *should* covet?

Psalms 19:7-10: (NKJV) *piece by piece...*

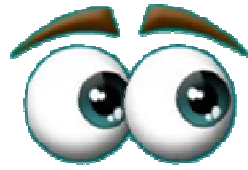
⁷The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; ⁸The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be **desired <2530>** are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

We still have not discussed just how coveting works...is it the same process for good coveting and bad coveting?



Notice the repeated pattern that runs through all of the negative examples of covetousness:

The OBSERVATION Stage:



Seeing something attractive

The THOUGHT Stage:



Holding and personalizing the image of that which is attractive

The RATIONALIZATION Stage:



Convincing yourself that you "deserve" that which you covet

Let's listen to another movie clip from *The Count of Monte Cristo*. It is set in early 1800's France. Edmon Dantes is a simple, honest young man whose best friend is the rich and arrogant Fernon Mondego, who is jealous of him and wants whatever he has.

 **The Whistle and the Pony, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002)**

Sometimes we can have an inordinate desire for something that should not be ours.

2 Samuel 11:1-4: (NASB) ¹Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.



Observation...²Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.



Thought...³So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"



Rationalization...⁴David sent messengers and took her...



Nathan's reproof of David:

2 Samuel 12:1-4: (NASB) ¹Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. ²The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. ³But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; And it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. ⁴Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.

In all three cases (the movie, the account of King David, and the parable told by Nathan) the stage has been set. There is an object of desire, there is a desire, and there is a thought process and a rationalizing process. What comes next is to the detriment of all.

This next clip is the result of Fernon's desire for Edmon's fiancée. He sets Edmon up to take the fall for a crime that he did not commit.



I'm not supposed to want to be you, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002)

- Why! Because you're the son of a clerk and I'm not supposed to want to be you...

Now, the last phase of covetousness is revealed:

The ACTION Stage:



Turning the inward sin of covetousness into an outward sin of action

2 Samuel 11:4-11: (NASB) ...he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. ⁵The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am pregnant. ⁶Then David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. So Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah came to him, David asked concerning the welfare of Joab and the people and the state of the war. ⁸Then David said to Uriah, Go down to your house, and wash your feet. And Uriah went out of the king's house, and a present from the king was sent out after him. ⁹But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰Now when they told David, saying, Uriah did not go down to his house, David said to Uriah, Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house? ¹¹Uriah said to David, The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in temporary shelters, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing.

Covetousness carried out only produces pain and sorrow:

2 Samuel 12:4-10: (NASB) ⁴...Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him. ⁵Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. ⁶He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion. ⁷Nathan then said to David, You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! ⁹Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have



struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

Back to *The Count of Monte Cristo*: After many years, Edmon comes back, having escaped prison and through a series of dramatic circumstances and the revealing of truth, is now facing Fernon, his former friend and betrayer.

 **Just Call it Mercy, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002)**

- *I want no more of this - just go - call it mercy - mercy, Fernon.*

2 Samuel 11:26-27: (NASB) ²⁶Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷When the time of mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house and she became his wife; then she bore him a son. But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the LORD.

2 Samuel 12:10: (NASB) Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.

Psalms 37:3-6: (NASB) ³Trust in the LORD and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. ⁴Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it. ⁶He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday.

If we trust in the Lord and are focused on Godliness, He will give us the desires of our hearts. If we thoroughly bring in the will of God, covetness will be far away from us.

Fernon just can't let it go and comes back one last time:

 **You have everything I have nothing, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002)**

- *You know I couldn't live in a world where you have everything and I have nothing.*

What is the best path for us to take when confronted with our own covetousness?

Psalms 51: (NASB) (selected verses) ¹Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice. ⁹Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹³Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. ¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. ¹⁵O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

King David made a public testimony of his sins.

It is important to have our desires set on the right things, and avoid coveting in the wrong ways for those things not rightfully ours.

*...So what do you want?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Vicki!) and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*