

Thou Shalt Not Covet - Is It Wrong to Want?

Ephesians 5:5: (NASB) *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.*



When God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, they were in a specific order. Did you ever wonder why the last commandment was to not covet? To covet in its most basic sense is to have a strong desire for something. What was there about the human propensity to want that God saw fit to leave it as the final thing to remember? Because wanting spiritually good things is good, we must assume that all coveting cannot be bad. The key here is figuring out where to draw the line. Are there degrees of goodness or evil attached to what and how we covet? Fortunately, the Bible

provides us with ample evidence so we cannot only perceive where the line is, but we can also learn how to stay away from it.

There are two main words for “covet” in the Old Testament:

Covet: Strongs #2530 *chamad*; to delight in

Covet: Strongs #183 *āvaḥ*; desire, be desirous, long, lust (after)

God built perfect humanity to be drawn to beauty and goodness:

Genesis 2:9: (NASB) *Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is **pleasing <2530>** to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

God built desire into humanity. It is appropriate and necessary to have delight.

The tenth commandment: Inappropriate coveting is an internal sin of the heart, just as breaking the first commandment of having no other gods but Jehovah God is a sin of the heart.



Who is my neighbor? Is a movie star my neighbor? There are entire industries dedicated to just watching what they have, reporting it back to the rest of us who are enticed by their lifestyle. Yes, they are our neighbors.

Please see last week's CQ Episode 1138: **Do I Treat You as My Neighbor?**

Notice the several aspects of coveting listed:

Exodus 20:17: (NASB) *You shall not **covet <2530>** your neighbor's **house**; you shall not **covet <2530>** 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.*

We will cover what each of these represent as we go. In the tenth commandment, God is proclaiming what NOT to set our hearts upon. It is not wrong to want things, but it IS wrong to want THEIR things.

The New Testament gives us a pointed look at coveting and the consequence it holds for a Christian:

James 4:2: (NASB) *You **lust <1937>** and do not have; so you commit murder. You are **envious <2206>** and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.*



Lust: Strongs #1937 *epithumeo*; to set the heart upon,
i.e. long for (rightfully or otherwise)
The King James Version translates this word: desire, covet

Envious: Strongs #2206 *zeloo*; to have warmth of feeling for or against

Ephesians 5:5: (NASB) *For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or **covetous** <4123> man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

Covetous: Strongs #4123 *pleonektes*; holding (desiring) more,
i.e. eager for gain (avaricious, hence a defrauder)

Dictionary.com:

avaricious: adjective

having or showing an extreme greed for wealth or material gain

Every time this word covetous is used, it is always in the company of the worst kind of sins. Coveting is on par with idolatry and immorality. It really bookends the first commandment not to have any gods other than Jehovah.



Our theme text, Ephesians 5:5, stressed that if we do not overcome, we will not receive the inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

There is a repeated pattern that runs through all **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 one's self that you "deserve" that which you covet.
- The Action Stage: Turning the inward sin of covetousness into an outward sin of action.



I'm an emotional person and I believe we emotional people can be more susceptible to feelings of coveting. I find at times, I go down the wrong road in my thinking, and I say to myself, "What are you doing?" I have to reset and refocus. Prayer is the best way for that. Discussing my improper thinking with the Lord in an earnest way is very humbling, but the sooner I do it the better. We are ALL vulnerable. It helps me to be sympathetic with others.

This is still in the thought stage - before the rationalization and action stages.

COVETING CORRECTION



For a Christian, there are several areas of life where coveting presents extreme hazards to our faithfulness.

We need to know what they are so we can avoid them.

It is obvious that coveting is really easy to do. We need to know how to stop it.

Now that we know the depth of the issue, how do we manage the specifics of the coveting battle?

Fighting against negative coveting requires fighting the battle on two fronts. First, we need to realize the kinds of things we are liable to covet. Next, we need to have an alternative direction for our desire in which to move. We need to raise our longing up to a humble, God-pleasing level. Godly humility is a higher standard of living.

Here is the pattern that will run through all **POSITIVE EXAMPLES** of covetousness:

- **The Observation Stage:** Seeing something *spiritually* attractive.
- **The Thought Stage:** Holding and personalizing the image of that which is attractive.
- **The Reframing Stage:** Accepting godliness as a complete replacement for earthly desire. This is just another way of saying we re-settle into our contentment. Reframing is the opposite of rationalization. It is stepping up instead of stepping down.
- **The Action Stage:** Turning the inward focus of spiritual growth into outward actions. Coveting can be good in a godly way.



COVETING CRISIS:



To covet your neighbor's house is to deeply desire his or her life for your own.

It is to want to be who they are and to experience what you perceive they experience.

Exodus 20:17: (NASB) *You shall not covet <2530> your neighbor's house...*



Coveting is a unique commandment because it takes place in your mind. If you keep quiet about it, no one actually knows you are coveting. It is a secret sin, a feeling that you **MUST** have whatever it is you are missing. Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV) *says the heart is deceitful...and desperately wicked.* It might be well-concealed and something we need to examine. We alone have to discover this sin, and then we are responsible for dealing with it. It is personal.

Where did coveting first begin?

Satan was the original coveter:

Isaiah 14:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations!* ¹³*But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.* ¹⁴*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*

Satan had been given a level of responsibility, but it was not enough for him. Satan was coveting the almighty power of God.



Do I want someone else's life?

Julie: Speaking from a woman's point of view, there are many women who have normal, and I would say, instinctual desires to be married and want to have children. In some, the need is so great that it is all-consuming, and they want either a partner or a child at all costs. It makes it difficult for them to be looking around and seeing everyone paired off or pregnant. They definitely want what others have. When is this a natural desire and when does this become coveting someone else's life?

There is nothing wrong with a natural desire to want a family, as long as we keep that desire appropriate. If someone looks at a mom with a newborn and says, "That should be me, I want that child. I could be a better mom!" Then they have gone too far.

If we have a desire and are hurting, we need to bring it before God. We can be sad for ourselves without being jealous of others.



Do I think I could do better than my spiritual brother or sister can with their opportunities?

Examples: "They should have called on me in the Bible study to answer that question. I can explain myself better." "I can't believe they picked that brother to lead the witnessing opportunity when I have more leadership ability than they do."

It is all right to desire an opportunity, but we should not be looking at what someone else is engaged in and think, "I should be that person. I'm better." When we make those comparisons, we are demeaning someone else.

1 Timothy addresses all the coveting issues in the tenth commandment:

1 Timothy 6:1-2: (NASB) ¹*All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.* ²*Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because*

they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.

Let's put these verses in today's context: Be the best employee you can be and the best boss you can be. Do all things as unto the Lord. We should accept the work we are given and do it with godliness.



Reframe your thinking!

Wholly embrace your state as the providential placement God has given you.

This magnifies God's name and does not detract from His glory.

What we covet becomes our goal. We will sacrifice for our goal. We covet what we value most. We need to set our godly values and eliminate what is not in line with them. This is not always easy to do because emotion drives coveting.

1 Peter 5:6: (NASB) *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.*

Remember the process for building godly coveting; especially the **Reframing Stage: accepting godliness as a complete replacement for earthly desire.** Reframe it in a godly perspective.



To covet your neighbor's spouse is to desire their greatest earthly attachment for your own.

Exodus 20:17: (NASB) *...you shall not covet <2530> your neighbor's wife...*

Matthew 5:28: (NASB) *but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with **lust** <1937> for her has **already committed adultery with her in his heart.***

To desire what is not yours and what cannot be yours because of solemn promises before God is a dangerous game to play.



Do I ever think of or dwell on someone else's spouse as a desired personal partner in any way?



There can be online relationships where there is no physical touching, but one could think, “There is an emotional connection; he understands me.” An online relationship can go against the Scriptures.

Adultery is a great example of coveting being self-centered because you will obtain what you want regardless if it is at someone else’s expense. The collateral damage caused is not relevant as long as you get what you want.

Coveting does not have much to do with knowing right from wrong. It is a heart problem, not a head problem. It becomes a decision - fueled by emotional desire - for the wrong things and whatever it takes to get them. There is an old song with the lyrics: “If loving you is wrong, then I don’t want to be right.” This is the kind of dangerous, God-insulting attitude coveting creates.

Proverbs 4:23: (NASB) *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life.*

Coveting can minimize and demean our spouse. It puts them aside from our affections. When we marry, we vow to cherish our spouse. When we cherish something, we protect it. We are not protecting the relationship when we start coveting someone other than our spouse.

As Christians, we can adulterize our relationship with God and Christ.

James 4:4: (NASB) *You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

We must have complete fidelity and loyalty to God. We can cheat on our commitment to God by having our covetous desires go in different directions.

1 Timothy 6:6: (NASB) *But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.*

Some phrases we can recite to keep strong in our relationships and with the Lord:

- ♥ I love my life!
- ♥ How blessed am I!
- ♥ I truly appreciate all the Lord has given me!

COVETING CORRECTION



Reframe!

Be abundantly clear as to right and wrong.
 Wrong thoughts are damaging.
 Wrong covetous covenant-violating thoughts
 are disastrously destructive for all.



Contentment is NOT settling for something. Contentment is the adoring appreciation of God's gifts.

2 Corinthians 10:5: (NASB) *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*

The key to dealing with covetousness is *taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*

Remember the stages of building godly coveting:

Observation, Thought stage, Reframing and Action.

We are in deep weeds when we covet another's life or another's spouse! God grieves at such thoughts.

**So far, we have seen some of the biggest coveting challenges.
What do some of the others look like?**

It may be comforting to rationalize what we desire of our neighbor's as, "Well, at least I'm not desiring *everything!*" The interesting part of how we are instructed to handle the sin of coveting is that it is not separated into degrees. Essentially, coveting ANYTHING of our neighbor's is just wrong.

recap
recap

The idea of not coveting your neighbor means not coveting what is committed to someone else. Does the instruction not to covet our neighbor's wife mean it is acceptable to covet a single person while we are married? No, absolutely not, as that would be fornication and equally heinous.



To covet your neighbor's servants is to desire to have the status that they possess.
Having servants in ancient days showed stability and success within a family structure.

Exodus 20:17: (NASB) *...you shall not covet <2530>
...his male servant or his female servant...*

We have many listeners around the world who perhaps even covet something like living somewhere else. People might be resentful that we were born in the United States and get to enjoy certain freedoms that are not readily available elsewhere.

The tip of the neighbor's iceberg often looks very nice. — Roy A. Ngansop

No one has it all - we all need God and Christ. Most people are dissatisfied with their lives, rich or poor. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, until you get there and realize it is a swamp.



Even within our Christian fellowship, we can be fighting *perceived* status battles:

1 Corinthians 12:14-16: (NASB) ¹⁴*For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵If the foot says, because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body, it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear says, because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.*



Am I insecure and wanting what others have?

Often, we perceive someone else's life as a life of ease that we want. *Wouldn't it be easier if...? If I could only...! Oh, I wish...!*

The Apostle Paul in **Romans 7:7-12** (NASB) said how important this commandment is because *sin...produced in me coveting of every kind*. If Paul had a problem with coveting, we need to pay attention to the warning signs.



Do I desire the spiritual status or opportunity of another?

Here is a hypothetical situation: A young sister in Christ desires to only marry a minister like her best friend did because she wants that status. Does she really know what she is desiring? A minister has many responsibilities: preparing and participating in Bible studies once or twice per week, counseling the brethren, performing funeral and wedding ceremonies, taking care of their own family responsibilities, and on top of all that holding a full-time job. This sister thinks she could do a better job as a minister's wife than her friend. What is her motivation? Is it to serve the Lord and be a good spouse, or is it the status of being the wife of a minister?

Lesson: *Do I want what I want so I can serve the Lord or to be noticed while I serve?*



Julie says: Let me flip this question. You are both ministers in your own local congregations. You have studied the Bible for decades and have been speaking on biblical subjects here at Christian Questions weekly for over 22 years. How do you keep from being the **OBJECT** of others coveting your opportunities and status? You're on a pedestal and others could get covetous, jealous and resentful.

Rick resents the thought of being put on a pedestal as a dangerous place to be.



Leadership is servanthood. We are not higher and should be in many ways lower. We should not want a perception of being higher than others. Run away from that inappropriate desire. It does not belong in the church.

This next idea was presented to me by the furniture in the room of our weekly Bible study I lead, and I took it as a symbolic reminder. We all sit at tables, and my table is lower than everyone else's. It happened to be the available table. When I sit lower, it reminds me that I am here to serve. I have been sitting at that lower table for years. Every Sunday I remind myself that I get to serve. I get to be in the lower position - what a blessing!



1 Timothy 6:7-8: (NASB) ⁷*For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.*

COVETING CORRECTION



Reframe your thinking!

Remember that all we have we were given
and the only status that matters is
our status in the eyes of God.



CHECKUP time!

"God, where do I stand before You?"

Let's not forget the pattern that runs through all **POSITIVE EXAMPLES** of covetousness:



- **The Observation Stage:** Seeing something spiritually attractive.
- **The Thought Stage:** Holding and personalizing the image of that which is attractive.
- **The Reframing Stage:** Accepting godliness as a complete replacement for earthly desire.
- **The Action Stage:** Turning the inward focus of spiritual growth into positive outward actions.

This is how we take coveting and make it godly.

1 Corinthians 12:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷*If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.*

1 Corinthians 13:4: (NASB) *Love is patient; love is kind and is not **jealous** <2206>; love does not brag and is not arrogant.*

When we are in the body of Christ, we are to play the role we are given. If God has called you to be the spleen, then be the spleen! All parts are important.



COVETING CRISIS:



To covet your neighbor's ox or donkey is to desire the success in business that your neighbor maintains.

Exodus 20:17: (NASB) ...you shall not covet <2530>...his ox or his donkey.

Simon the sorcerer coveted the genuine success of the apostles:

Acts 8:9: (NASB) Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great.

Acts 8:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹saying, Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.

Simon wanted the praise from the people to feed his ego because he desired the attention, and likely the financial gain that came with it.

We might covet something from someone because we want their status or success.



Am I dissatisfied with my income-earning ability or business prowess?



Years ago, I worked in a cabinet and countertop shop for many years. I started out on the production line, making countertops with the guys in the shop. People talked about the boss being this or that, and how if they were running the shop, how different it would be, etc. I worked my way up and ended up being the General Manager, working with the boss. I hear what the boss says about the employees, how if they would only do this or that, I pay them good money, and so on. Each side was looking at the other thinking, if only I could do "this," it would be better.



Am I looking at what another brother or sister accomplishes and wanting their opportunity?

Things are rarely what they seem.

The appearance of effortless service comes ONLY as a result of practice, pain and perseverance, all of which must result from the right focus and activity...The path to a Thrilling Mountaintop passes directly through the Tedious Valley of experience.
- Rick's sermon, "Redeeming the Time"

Anyone who has ever accomplished something great has had to put in hard work. When we covet, we do not necessarily see that hard work; we see the glitter at the end. But that glitter is actually sweat.

Our Christian walk must have a sense of urgency. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:14: (NASB) *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* We cannot be complacent, breaking the tenth commandment by coveting because it wastes our time. It takes our energy away from our focus.

If you have a covetous heart for what others have, you do NOT have an urgent heart towards the vision. You can't have both. - Rick's sermon, "Redeeming the Time"

Spending our time coveting means we are not spending our time intensely progressing. Coveting demands full attention. Growing spiritually mature demands full attention. We cannot have two contrary things that demand full attention. Joshua 24:15: (ESV) ...Choose this day whom you will serve...



To watch Rick's PowerPoint sermon, *Redeeming the Time*, please go to our YouTube page and search "redeeming the time" at ChristianQuestions.com/youtube. This can also be found on the CQ App and at ChristianQuestions.com as a Bonus Video.

1 Timothy 6:9-10: (NASB) ⁹*But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.* ¹⁰*For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

We have to be careful within the context of the gospel. Do not look at money and physical abundance as blessings we should pray for, like with the Prosperity Gospel. It can promote coveting, which destroys spirituality. Such thinking minimizes the true cost of discipleship, which is all about self-sacrifice.

There is nothing wrong with desiring to do well in life and working towards it. We can look at our neighbor as inspiration and as a mentor.

COVETING CORRECTION



Reframe your thinking!

Focus on the fact that your opportunities are unique, and your faithfulness can only come through developing that uniqueness according to God's will.

We are individuals called by God to Christ with different opportunities. We are to be thankful for what we have been given.

1 Timothy 3:1: (NASB) *It is a trustworthy statement: if any man **aspires** <3713> to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he **desires** <1937> to do.*

It is a good thing to desire to be an *overseer* (minister) if we really want to teach and support the brotherhood. Serving is investing ourselves in others. In doing that, God will bless us for serving Him. It is not about status or success.



Coveting seems to be a lot more insidious than we thought. It is like that bad penny you just cannot get rid of.

**We have seen coveting in very specific terms.
Is it still a problem when it is more generalized?**

No matter how large or small, coveting ANYTHING of our neighbor's is ALWAYS a problem. The key to understanding the breadth of this issue is realizing that coveting, by definition, crushes our godly contentment. We cannot be contented with God's will and desiring our neighbor's experience simultaneously.



To covet anything of your neighbor's is to dwell on a basic dissatisfaction with your own life and focus your attention on what someone else has.

Exodus 20:17: (NASB) *You shall not covet <2530>
... anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

Coveting reveals a lack of contentment.

When I realize that God makes His gifts fit each person, there's no way I can covet what you got because it just wouldn't fit me. - William P. Smith

We are blessed with what we have even if what we have is small, or difficult, or full of trial and trauma right now. It is still God's providence and we should not covet someone else's life instead of ours.

In our Christian environment, many of our issues with one another are connected to coveting. James gives some raw, hard truths:

James 4:1-3: (NASB) *¹What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures <2237> that wage war in your members? ²You lust <1937> and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious <2206> and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures <2237>.*

This is the point: they did not ask, and when they asked it was the wrong question. We will never get the right answers with an improper motive. James is powerfully letting them know how much they need to change. He uses another word connected to coveting:

Pleasure: Strong's #2237 *hedone*; from *handano* (to please); sensual delight; by implication, desire

James warns of a progression - they lust, and so commit murder; they envy and so fight; they ask with a wrong motive so that they can get a sensual delight. We have heard that marijuana is a "gateway drug," which means by using marijuana there is a higher likelihood one would move on to harder drugs. Coveting is like a "gateway sin." Many sins begin with coveting and spider



cracks into different sins. Men will not take something from their neighbor that they did not first covet.

There is nothing wrong when we desire to make our lives better, but we cannot look to take it from someone else and have degrading thoughts about someone else because we want what they have. These spider cracks spread and splinter to make our foundation unstable.



Do I have obsessively covetous thoughts about anything that has to do with my neighbor?

Negatively coveting anyone else is God-insulting. It shows a lack of appreciation and contentment in the blessings that we have been given. Let us remember the stages: **Observation**, **Thought**, **Reframing**, **Action**. Warning bells should be going off all over the place during that thought phase, so that we can **REFRAME** RATHER THAN **RATIONALIZE**. Rationalization leads to situations from which it is really hard to crawl back.

When we covet that which is our neighbor's for ourselves, we take something that we began by appreciating and we break it into a thousand pieces. It is no longer "appreciation." It has now turned evil and dark. The sin of covetousness is as deep and devious as sins of immorality. We cannot take this lightly!



Am I engaging in conflicts with the brotherhood, like the Apostle James is speaking about, that can be traced back to my own covetous nature?

We need to be careful not to discourage our brethren from their service to God. If we see someone working hard and busy for the Lord, we should not tell them to take it easy or suggest another service we think is better for them. This can happen when we may feel we are being inadequate in our own service.

We all have different abilities, talents and strengths and we should not be comparing ourselves with others. What better way to stop someone else from making us look bad, than by encouraging them to stop what they are doing! How concerned are we really for their well-being? Or, is this person showing us up, and we want them to stop looking so good to everyone else?

This is about status and perception in the eyes of others. We might want to be recognized with a higher status and perception. We might want others to slow down their service so we can catch up. We need to really look at our motives. Are we saying God's providence in our lives is not good enough? *The status that we should be concerned about is from above, not in anyone else's eyes.*

To avoid dark coveting, we need to reframe it:

1 Timothy 6:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹*But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.* ¹²*Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

You man of God is a heavy title to hold when you are secretly coveting. When we are called a *man of God* like that, we need to stand up and be accountable

for being a *man of God*. Otherwise, we are taking God's name in vain. Pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness are all ways to avoid coveting what somebody else has, or what somebody else is doing or how somebody else is perceived.



Reframe your thinking!
Covetousness is a “thinking” sin.

To stand for Christ is to stand
in support of and love for the brotherhood.
Our battle lies in choosing to serve God
through Christ and put self away.

That is where the battle begins. It is not about my brother, or what they have, what they do, how they are perceived, how successful they are, how famous they are and my desire to have what they have. My battle is about choosing to serve God through Christ and putting self away. It has nothing to do with anybody else, their success and their standing before God or before the brotherhood.

Remember we read James 4:1-3 where he really pounded the brotherhood about the fact that their pleasures were what was driving them. They were not asking the right type of questions because their questions were driven by their lusts.

James tells the brotherhood how they should appropriately act:

James 4:6-10: (NASB) ⁶But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. ⁷Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

These are all parts of the healing solution. Let's focus on *let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom*. We need to feel heartbroken for where we went wrong in order to *want* to change. This is so easy to say, but not simple to do. The depth of the sin of coveting requires deep contrition. Coveting is a BIG sin and we need to put it into perspective.

It is good to have our passions in a good place. We need to have a passionate godly desire to build up the brotherhood to spiritual maturity:

2 Corinthians 11:2: (NASB) For I am *jealous* <2206> for you with a godly *jealousy* <2205>; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

Jealous is one of the words for coveting! Paul said he was desirous for them to be godly in everything they did as a group, as the brotherhood. He wanted to present them to Christ with purity. This is the kind of desire we should be looking to develop. We need to bend all our personal desire towards fellowship, godliness and self-sacrifice.



Jesus, in his final night on earth as a man, showed his most beloved followers, the apostles, his deepest desire:

Luke 22:14-15: (NKJV) ¹⁴When the hour had come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. ¹⁵Then he said to them, With fervent **desire** <1939> I have **desired** <1937> to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

The word for *fervent desire* is the same word that is translated *lust*. It is a deep longing from which coveting can emerge. Jesus shows us how to have that kind of desire drive us to want to be with, to build up, to protect and to help those of like precious faith.

Remember *thou shalt not covet* is the tenth commandment. It is the tenth commandment because it is a commandment of the heart. God finished with the command to watch what is in our hearts because what is in our hearts will dictate what we do. All the previous commandments have coveting as a part of them. We need to make sure we do not covet that which is inappropriate for us, that which belongs to someone else - their position, their family, their success, their status, whatever it may be. Instead, truly desire the blessing of God and His eyes looking upon us saying: *Yes, you are going in the right direction.*

*So, thou shalt not covet - is it wrong to want?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on August 24, 2020

Ep. 1140: Does My Church Leadership Have it Right?

Bonus Material and Study Questions!

Envy is the art of counting the other fellow's blessings instead of your own. — Harold Coffin

Several other texts that enhance our understanding of how to manage covetousness:

Ephesians 5:1-12: (NASB) ¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ²and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. ³But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For 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. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the



wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them; ⁸for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹(for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; ¹²for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

Romans 13:8-14: (NASB) ⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. ⁹For this, YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF. ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. ¹¹Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. ¹²The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

Romans 7:7-8: (NASB) ⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, YOU SHALL NOT COVET. ⁸But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

Violating the last commandment is always a result of the violation of the first commandment, thus the following statement by Jesus:

Matthew 22:34-40: (NKJV) ³⁴But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵Then one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, and saying, ³⁶Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? ³⁷Jesus said to him, you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

Humbly seek spiritual gifts, selfless love being the height of godliness:

1 Corinthians 12:31: (KJV) But **covet earnestly <2206>** the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 13:4: (KJV) Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity **envieth <2206>** not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

1 Corinthians 14:1: (KJV) Follow after charity, and **desire <2206>** spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

Use your Christian liberty for godly ends:

Galatians 5:13-18: (NKJV) ¹³For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! ¹⁶I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.



Live the selfless love that you sought and live a forgiven life:

1 John 3:18-23: (NKJV) ¹⁸My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. ²⁰For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. ²²And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

Live a “nevertheless” life - that’s what Jesus did:

Matthew 26:36-42: (NRSV) ³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, sit here while I go over there and pray. ³⁷He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. ³⁸Then he said to them, I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me. ³⁹ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want. ⁴⁰Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. ⁴²Again he went away for the second time and prayed, my Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

Luke 22:43-44: (NRSV) ⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

Matthew 26:43-44: (NRSV) ⁴³Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.

Christian Questions Weekly
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CQ Rewind Show Notes and
Study Questions

Text

CQREWIND

to **22828** to get started.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1139: Thou Shalt Not Covet - Is It Wrong to Want?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1139-covet>

See:  **CQ Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What do the words for “covet” and “covetous” mean? What does the Bible teach us about their consequences? (See Genesis 2:9, Exodus 20:17, Ephesians 5:5, James 4:2)
2. The negative examples of covetousness follow what pattern? How does that differ from the pattern of positive examples? How can we make our coveting godly? (See 1 Corinthians 12:17-18, 13:4)
3. What does it mean to covet another’s house? Give practical examples in our daily life. What must we do to reframe this thinking? (See Isaiah 14:12-14, 1 Timothy 6:1-2, 1 Peter 5:6)
4. What does it mean to covet another’s spouse? How can we see this in our lives? What can we do to correct ourselves in these situations? (See Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 5:28, 2 Corinthians 10:5, 1 Timothy 6:6, James 4:4)
5. What does it mean to covet another’s servants? How can we see this within our Christian fellowship? How can we reframe our thoughts? (See 1 Corinthians 12:14-16, 1 Timothy 6:7-8)
6. What does it mean to covet another’s ox? How can this hinder our spiritual life? How can we make this covetousness positive and spiritual? (See Acts 8:9,18-19, 1 Timothy 3:1, 6:9-10)
7. What does it look like to be generally covetous of our neighbors? How can we avoid this dark coveting? (See 1 Timothy 6:11-12, James:4:1-3)
8. What does the Bible teach us about how Christians should act? What can we learn from Jesus’ deepest desire? (See Luke 22:14-15, 2 Corinthians 11:2, James 4:6-10)
9. Have you ever experienced the negative form of covetousness? How did it affect your life? How did/will you overcome it?
10. What will you do to cultivate positive, spiritual covetousness in your life?