

Exodus 20:17
October 26, 2014

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

All he ever really wanted in life was more. He wanted more money, so he parlayed inherited wealth into a billion-dollar pile of assets. He wanted more fame, so he broke into the Hollywood scene and soon became a filmmaker and star. He wanted more sensual pleasures, so he paid handsome sums to indulge his every sexual urge. He wanted more thrills, so he designed, built, and piloted the fastest aircraft in the world. He wanted more power, so he secretly dealt political favors so skillfully that two U. S. presidents became his pawns. All he ever wanted was more. He was absolutely convinced that more would bring him true satisfaction. Unfortunately, history shows otherwise.

He concluded his life ... emaciated; colorless; sunken chest; fingernails in grotesque, inches-long corkscrews; rotting, black teeth; tumors, innumerable needle marks from drug addiction. Howard Hughes died...believing the myth of more. He died a billionaire junkie, insane by all reasonable standards [Bill Hybels, "Power: Preaching for Total Commitment," Mastering Contemporary Preaching (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1989), 120-121].

Q: Why do you think so many people, including ourselves, fall for the "myth of more?" [Marketers/advertisers have our number! They are masterful at leading us to believe that we want whatever they're advertising. They can make it look like everyone else has it and THEY are happy!]

Transition: We are studying the 10th commandment that focuses on our propensity to covet. But before we explore this further, let's read the text and then let's make sure we know what coveting means. The rest of our hour will be exploring the reasons why God forbids coveting and a couple of ideas as to how to overcome coveting.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

Observations/Process Qs-

V.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."
- Q: What does coveting mean? [**chamad** means "to desire / to take pleasure in"]
- Q: Who is our neighbor? [**rea** means "another." Thus, our neighbor is anyone who is not you!]
- Q: What categories do you see in this command that we're not to covet? [Things, People, Animals, or Anything]
- Q: Here's the tension I bet most of us feel – Is it wrong to desire (not observe) nicer things? [If the answer is no, then how did we even become aware of nicer things? Are we looking at our "neighbor?" Or is it okay to desire something/someone as long as it is not possessed by another?]

- Q: So why do you think God made this law against coveting?

1. God forbids coveting because it puts my focus in the wrong place.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” 1 John 2:15 (NIV)

“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”
Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)

Then he 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." Luke 12:15 (NIV)

2. God forbids coveting because it invites a spirit of envy toward our neighbor.

The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Romans 13:9 (NIV)

Our attitude toward our neighbor is supposed to be love. It's hard to love our neighbor when all we notice is the better house, the good-looking spouse, and the nice things he/she has. Love is characterized by self-sacrifice not by self-gratification. Love rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep.

3. God forbids coveting because it leads to breaking all of God's commands.

Here's the worst example of this from the Bible: KING DAVID!

- * David broke the tenth commandment coveting his neighbor's wife.
- * That led to adultery, which broke the seventh commandment.
- * Then, in order to steal Bathsheba (breaking the 8th commandment)
- * he committed murder and broke the sixth commandment.
- * He broke the ninth commandment by lying about it.
- * This brought dishonor to his parents, breaking the 5th commandment.
- * He didn't put God first, breaking the 1st and 2nd commandments.
- * This dishonored God's name, breaking the 3rd commandment.

[J. Oswald Sanders, Bible Men of Faith (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 13].

4. God forbids coveting because it will destroy my spiritual life.

(Mark 4:18-19 NIV) Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

“The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry’” (Luke 12:16-19).

He had plenty and could have assisted so many others, but he failed to see beyond his own consumptive greed. “I’ll tear down what I have and build bigger and better.” How American he sounds! We should hear the Lord’s evaluation carefully.

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’” (v. 20).

Observation: When God commands us to “not covet,” He’s not only inviting us to “quit it,” but He wants us to strongly consider sharing and giving what we have to others. What if our focus was giving out of the resources God has given us versus dreaming about the better house or car or bank account?

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.”
1 Timothy 6:10-11 (NKJV)

LOOK:

Q: So how do we overcome covetousness?

- First, we have to learn contentment. Here’s a definition of ***CONTENTMENT = WANTING WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE***
- Second, adopt an attitude of giving out of what God has already given you.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (Ex 19–20)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

J. Do not covet (Eph. 5:3; Luke 12:15–21).

Toussaint, S. D. (1985). Acts. (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Eds.) *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. (Vol. 1, pp. 140)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

k. The 10th commandment (20:17)

20:17. This is a general safeguard against many other sins, particularly commandments six through nine. Israelites were **not** to long for, desire earnestly, or lust after what legitimately belonged to others.

These commandments are the fundamental statements of a good and wholesome society as ordered by the holy and righteous God. Though believers today are not under the Law (Rom. 6:15), they are under obligation to abide by the holy standards represented in the Ten Commandments. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament with added stipulations that are even higher than those in Exodus 20:3–17. The one not repeated is the command to keep the Sabbath; yet the first day of the week is to be set aside for worship in commemoration of the Savior's resurrection.