



BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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SERIES : "10 DUMB WAYS TO MESS UP OUR LIVES"
Study 9, December 11, 2005

"Determining our Worth by Someone Else's Possessions"

INTRODUCTION

TO THE SERIES

10 Dumb Ways To Mess Up Our Lives a fresh look at the 10 Commandments (See Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) Note that they are not the Ten Suggestions! They are not arbitrary religious rules. They are not outdated curiosities that belong to an ancient and less sophisticated society. Whilst their introduction has a specific context, the 10 Commandments are not bound to a particular culture or time or nation.

They continue as the basic moral laws of creation for all people. If followed, they produce a healthy society by fostering proper relationships with God and with others. If ignored, they produce a mess in both our individual lives and our society as a whole.

Our task in this series is to understand what they mean and how to follow them in our lives and circumstances.

TO TODAY'S STUDY (The last in the Series) : You shall not covet Ex20:17

C9, "Do not steal" is concerned with our actions. C10, "Do not covet" concerns the desires and intentions of the heart. The Hebrew word translated as "covet" in English, literally means *"to lust after."*

Of course, not all "desire" is wrong. The object of our desire becomes wrong when :

1. It belongs to someone else.
2. It becomes the driving force of my life.
3. I can't be happy without it.
4. I'm willing to sin or spiritually compromise to get it.

When our desire becomes an obsession, when we push aside the priorities of God's Kingdom, when we are prepared to go to any length to be satisfied, then we have **CROSSED THE LINE** from a healthy desire to a destructive covetousness.

C10 actually brings us full circle to the first command. Note how Paul identifies *"evil desire and greed"* (coveting!) as idolatry

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Col3:5

... why so? Because that thing we are prepared to do to any length for becomes the centre of our life - the place where only God rightly belongs.

So we are back to C, *"You shall have no other gods before me."*

A. A BRIEF BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK

1. THE ORIGINAL SIN

When Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable she took some and ate it. Gen3:6

Eve's disobedient action **FOLLOWED** an internal thought process. She just had to have! the one thing that God had forbidden.

Actually, the battle had really been lost just before this. Recorded in v1-4, Eve doubts God, changes his words and then believes that God does not have her best interests at heart and that she must act to make up for God's lack of care. God was **DETHRONED** in her mind before the coveting began.

2. THE BASE OF ALL SIN IN PRINCIPLE

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were obsessed with a cold legalism that saw everything in terms of people's obedience to the countless number of rules and regulations that governed everyday life.

If sin can be likened to a disease, that's like putting a bandaid on a festering sore. This command enshrines in God's law the principle that Jesus saw as basic

Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body.? But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart and make a man 'unclean.' ... evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These make a man 'unclean,' not eating with unwashed hands. Mt15:17-20

And if the problem is internal, then God's solution is INTERNAL : a new birth and a transformed mind. (Jn3:3 cf 2Cor5:17 and Rom2:1 cf 2Cor3:18)

3. THE SOURCE OF ALL ACTUAL SIN

Not just a principle with possible dire consequences; our thought patterns actually PRODUCE the acts we see as justifiable "under the circumstances."

Each one is tempted by his own evil desire ... after desire has conceived it gives birth to sin. Jam1:14

What causes fights and quarrels ... Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something, but don't get it. You kill and covet but you cannot get what you want. Jam4:1-2

B. A PHILOSOPHICAL REALITY.

"Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Life is more than food and the body more than clothes. Lk12:15, 23

When we are so desperate to add something to our life - particularly something that someone else has - to give ourselves worth, meaning, purpose or security, we have committed three basic errors.

1. First, that the measure of a life consists in EXTERNALS.
2. Second, that our WORTH is judged against someone else' belongings.
3. Third, we were made to fill our life with stuff! We were made for a far greater PURPOSE. While the ownership of "stuff" may temporarily fool us, the hunger will continue.

I consider everything as loss for the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Php3:8

C. AN ANTIDOTE FOR COVETOUSNESS

The cure for coveting? A Good Dose of CONTENTMENT

Godliness with contentment is great gain. We brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out of it. People who want to get rich fall into harmful desires that plunge men into ruin. The love of money is the root of all evil. Some, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1Tm6:6-10

I have learned to be content. I have known need and plenty ... I have learned the secret of contentment. No matter what my circumstances, I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Php4:11-13

Some steps along the way :

1. DEVELOP an Attitude of Gratitude : Php4:6-8, 1Th5:16-18
2. AVOID Comparison with others ; it kills contentment : 2Cor10:12; Ecc4:4-6; Jn21:18-22
Substitute being pleased for them.
3. PRACTICE Moderation and Generosity : 1Tm6:17-18; Pr21:17; 2Cor8:1-7, 9:6-8