

This is What the Heart Looks Like // #10 “Thou Shalt Know that God is Enough” // Exodus 20:17

If I remember correctly from college, it is right here in the next few weeks that most of you college students start having your 1st exams... the best exam story I've ever heard was about a student who took an ornithology class over at UNC... you know what ornithology is, right? The study of birds. Well, this kid really needed a good grade in this class, so when it came time for the midterm exam he studied like a fool. He mastered the bird: mating habits, the calls; colors, where the birds lived. The professor comes in for the exam, turns out the light, and puts up 1 slide on the screen with about 30 different pictures of bird legs and says, “Identify these birds by their legs. That’s your midterm exam.” That was it. Well, this kid didn’t know anything about the bird legs... so he raised his hand and said, “Seriously, that’s it?” Professor said, “Yes. That’s it.” He said, “Well, how are we supposed to know to what legs go with what birds? Who cares about their legs?” Professor said, “Legs are a very important part of the bird.” Kid said, “Well, that’s not fair. You didn’t tell us we had to know those.” Professor said, “Well, that’s the exam. Deal with it.” Kid says, “Well then, I quit. I’m dropping this class. This is absurd.” Gets his stuff together. Professor says, “It’s too late to drop. If you drop now, you get an F for the semester.” Kid says, “Fine, fail me,” and starts walking out the door. Professor says, “Well, what is your name?” Kid says, “You tell me, man...”

I don’t think that story is true... but here’s what I want you to remember about the commandments. The commandments serve a lot of purposes in our lives, but 1 of the primary ones is that they are like a test to show us the state of our hearts. They reveal to us how off, how warped our hearts really are. These commandments are like a mirror that is supposed to absolutely shatter the idea that we are good people. Have you experienced that these past few weeks? What does this mirror tell you about your heart?

Well, if you haven’t seen that, then this commandment is your last hope of getting an accurate picture of your aberrant heart.

- The Apostle Paul said (in Romans 7) that he had almost deceived himself into thinking he kept the commandments until he came to this one. He had interpreted the commandments as behavior guidelines, things that if he’d do, he’d be ok. But this one, Paul said, wasn’t about behavior, it was about the desires of his heart. It showed him that even when he made himself obey the commandments like a good little religious boy, his heart wanted all kinds of things that were offensive to God. This is the command that drove the Apostle Paul to Jesus.

The 10th commandment: ***“You shall not covet (covet means to really wish you had, or be unhappy without) your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, (which in our terms would be like an SUV) or his donkey, (which would be like a smaller car) or anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Exodus 20:17)***

Covetousness is when you crave something you don’t have, and you feel unhappy that you don’t have it, or you resent other people for having the thing that you want. It’s more than being like, “Hey dude, nice car,” or “nice wife,” it’s when you feel a sense of dissatisfaction because you don’t have something someone else has—someone else’s job, their success, their money, their family, their body, their looks. And so you live in a state of discontentment... trying to figure out how to get that thing, and secretly resenting other people who have it.

Martin Luther pointed out that covetousness is simply the command against idolatry (the 1st commandment) restated in psychological terms. (*In fact, Paul says that directly twice in his letters, once in Eph 5 and once in Col 3¹*). Remember, we learned that an **idol = whatever your heart most loves** (what it delights in); **what it depends on** (whatever you feel like you have to have in life), **and what you obey** (whatever your behavior is controlled by). Whatever those things are that you love and crave most, you will covet. You'll be discontent without them, and so you'll long for them and resent others when they have them and you don't.

The opposite of coveting is contentment—being happy with what you have, because God is God and His presence is what you most love. You delight in Him and are satisfied in Him and so you're content with whatever situation He's put you in, and you trust in Him to provide everything else you need.

Coveting was behind the very 1st sin... Eden. Eve coveted the fruit of the tree.

- She had access to every tree of the Garden, but she wanted that one... Can you imagine how awesome Eden was? Eve wanted more... that's how coveting works.
- God was not enough for her; she didn't trust God for what He'd given her, and so she longed for other things.
- Listen to this... very important: **The command against idolatry bookends the rest of the commandments...** because it is the heart of all the commandments. If you keep the 1st and 10th commandment, you'll obey all the others.

The NT uses a very interesting word for the concept of coveting... *epithumia*. It's a word that unfortunately gets lost in its English translation. It often gets translated as "lust..." When I say "lust" you say... "sex" (just wanted to make you say sex in church?) But it's more than sexual lust. In Greek it means "a craving," "a desire that drives us." It's a craving after something we feel like we just have to have. Something we have esteemed to be essential to life and that we can't live without.

It doesn't have to be a bad thing... a lot of times it's a good thing. But it becomes a God-thing and so turns into a bad thing. Peter, Paul, John and James all use *epithumia* to describe the essence of what is wrong with us (in the transcript.)²

Let me tell you a story that will put all this in perspective. It's a story that you might have never heard in the Bible, but it just so plainly puts on display how coveting works. It's kind of a disturbing story, so be ready...

2 Samuel 13 (if you have your Bible...) It's the the story of Amnon, David's oldest son.

- Since he was David's oldest son, he was the heir apparent. Well, Amnon had a huge crush on one of his step-sisters... which, sounds a little Tennessee, I know... but you know the way they did things back then was David had several wives, so this was a girl from one of David's other wives and it wasn't considered gross back then.
- Well, Amnon really wants her, and I mean bad. He'd gone all Jonas brothers "Burnin' up" on her. *High heels... red dress...*

[13:1] ... and Amnon, David's son, loved Tamar. [2] And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.

(1) Coveting makes us "sick" with desire

¹ Eph 5:5; Col 3:5.

² David Powlison, "Idols of the Heart," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13.2 Winter 1995, 36.

- Amnon wants her so bad that he's made himself sick.
- You ever felt like that about something? You just want it so bad it makes you sick? Or you're sick with worry that you might never obtain it? Or you find yourself getting envious in others...
- Something you look at and say, "You know, I've just got to have *that*."
 - We often give these desires sanitized names, like "goals, dreams, needs, our destiny, our deepest longings," etc.³ But what it is, is craving, epithumia. Coveting.
- Usually, there is nothing wrong with the thing we're desiring, it's just that we've put an incredible weight on it, and we couldn't imagine being happy without it. It's become a god to us, and we're driven by it.
- You can covet what you don't have (by thinking you couldn't be happy without a certain thing, or resenting that others have it and you don't); **Get this... you can also covet what you already have.** Is there something in your life you're sick with worry about losing? Something you hang onto for dear life?
- For Amnon, what he needs is Tamar. Maybe you've got somebody like that in your life. Or maybe it's just being married in general. You can't imagine being happy in life single.
- For many of you, it's probably money.
 - You couldn't be happy in life making only what you make now. I know we'd all love to make more... working for that, and nothing wrong with that. But is the good life always about 10K more? *Ohh... if we can just get there...*
 - Here's another question: Do you find yourself constantly looking at what other people have (the houses they live in; the places they eat; the vacations they go on) and being jealous of that?
 - Or, here is a way to get at this one: Are you in credit card debt? That is a dead-sure sign of coveting. Because in order to get the lifestyle you want you have to spend more than you make. We ought to rename Visa and American Express "Coveting cards."
 - Or, here's another one: Are you a generous person? A sure sign you covet is that you're not generous with your money. Of course you couldn't give your money away. Money is the way to get all the things you really want in life... so how could you give it away? Or, if you do give it away, you do so grudgingly. You put your tithe in the offering plate and you say, "I hope you appreciate this. You better bless me."
 - Are you worried financially about the future? Chances are, you covet money. Like Amnon, are you sick with worry
- What is it that you covet?
 - Somebody else's marriage? Do you ever sit around and really wish you were married to someone else, and fantasize about leaving your marriage, or having a secret affair, or the premature death of your spouse—so you could remarry and not feel guilty?
- Maybe what you covet is a close family...
 - You're always worried about your family.
 - Let me ask this: Do you constantly feel hurt and let down by family members?
 - Do your kids complain about you trying to control them? You might be a coveter.
- A lot of people covet reputation or success
 - Are you irritated that you've been overlooked so many times for opportunities? Do you find yourself looking at people bitterly and saying, "Well, why did *they* get that opportunity? I'm totally more qualified than they are."
 - Do you resent people that are more successful than you? You always trying to tear them down a little bit... to show people that they really aren't that special.

³ David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 149.

- Or, how about this... Do you constantly chafe at the fact that you aren't given credit for things?

You might be a coveter! *Epithumia*: a driving, controlling desire for something you can't live without. What is that for you?

For Amnon, it is a naked Tamar. So, he and his other cousin Jonadab come up with a plan... he fakes sick and when his dad comes to see him he says, "Could someone bring me some chicken soup and biscuits?" His dad, David says, "Sure, I'll send your mom right it." But then Amnon says, "You know, I really love Tamar's biscuits. Could she come in and make some for me?" David says, "Sure."

[7] Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house and prepare food for him." [8] So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough and kneaded it and made cakes in his sight and baked the cakes... but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out everyone from me." So everyone went out from him.

So, Amnon says, "Tamar, I'm really too sick to get up and come over there to the table... could you bring them over here to my bed?" And so she does so, [11] But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." (those words should just never go together, should they?)

[12] She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me... do not do this outrageous thing. [13] As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel.

Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." She said, "Hey, we could be girlfriend and boyfriend. We can go steady." But it's not enough. He wants her *now*.

[14] But he would not listen to her, and being stronger than she, he raped her.

(2) Coveting drives us to make devastatingly bad choices

- Amnon does something here that is not only wrong, it's just stupid. He knows he can't get away with it. Coveting drives us to make stupid decisions.
- Some of you, your lives are being ruined by your desire for money
 - I already mentioned credit card debt...
 - Some people will never really follow Jesus because of their love of money... The rich young ruler in the Bible turned his back on Jesus... We have people in this place who won't do what the Bible clearly tells them to do, tithe... because they hold onto their money like it's their lifeblood.
- Some of you, your craving for success or recognition is killing you
 - William James... actually used a curse word... "bitch goddess." To get her, she requires you alienate your family—working long hours. Then she takes your health. Then she takes your integrity. And when you're lying on your death bed she's not going to be anywhere around. You'll be all alone... no family, no God.
- Some of you girls are making terrible relationship decisions because you covet the attention of a guy!
 - You are with a guy you shouldn't be with. Doing things you shouldn't be doing.
- Some of you so crave the approval of others that you do really dumb things just so people will think you're cool. You're obsessed about what people think about you. You'll do anything to be accepted by them, to be thought of as cool.

So, (2) Coveting drives us to make devastatingly bad choices

This story keeps getting worse.

[15] Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up! Go!"

Girls, could I just make sure you see this? I don't mean to play daddy, but there is something here you need to see...

- You think that giving in to that guy will earn his love... but that's not how it works. When he is coveting your body, after he's used it for his desires, he'll grow bored with you or despise you. He may say all kinds of things about how he feels about you, above how he loves you, but they are not true. If he loved you, he would wait for you... he'd submit his desires to what is best for you. If he really loved you, he'd wait to have sex with you. Right now he looks at you like a pack of cigarettes... you smoke what's inside, and then throw away the package. That's what happened to Tamar.

Everybody write this down... **(3) If we ever do obtain what we covet, it disappoints us and we begin to hate it**

- C. S. Lewis said there are 2 kinds of really unhappy people in life...
 - First, there are those who have realized that they're never going to have what they most want, and so they give up, they get bitter in life. They get cynical.
 - But there's another kind of unhappy person... and that's the person who has obtained what they are seeking in life, and it's left them wanting more.
 - So, 2 kinds of unhappy people. Those who've realized they will never get what they desire; those who have gotten what they desired and found out it doesn't do for them what they thought.
 - *Most of us live in a middle ground between those 2... never quite having obtained what we want, but still thinking it is possible.* That's the illusion. We always think it is right around the corner, but we never quite get there.
 - An idol is like heroine. It's nice at first. It gives you a high, but then you want more, and it controls you and kills you.
- Again, where do you think the elusive, happy contented place is?
 - "If I can ever be where I don't have to worry about making ends meet and have a little extra cash just to enjoy life."
 - "When I don't have to work so much"
 - "When I get married"
 - "When we have kids"
 - Seminary guys... "When I finally get a big church"
 - When I've finally written something that has made a mark in my field.
- Are you content with where you are right now? Could you stay that way? If not, you're coveting.
 - Can I tell you what is wrong with most marriages? Most marriages were established on coveting. You got married because you thought that being with that person could fix you. You were lonely, insecure... This person rescued you.
 - Katy Perry has that song... Teenage dream... she talks about "When I found you, you brought me to life... I finally found you, my missing puzzle piece; I'm complete..."
 - For those of you like, "Well, I don't like that new-fangled music... Alabama... "There's no way I could make it without you..."
 - What I would write on your heads if I could... This person cannot meet your needs.
 - Want to know how to find happiness in marriage? Realize you were created for God.

- Find your soul's refuge in God, not in reputation or money or Tamar or romance... when you do that, you'll actually be able to start to enjoy life.
 - C.S. Lewis had a great statement on this... he said in life there is the 1st thing (God) and then there are 2nd things (marriage, family, career)... If we keep the 1st thing first, we'll find we really enjoy the 2nd things; but if we put 2nd things first, not only will we lose the 1st thing, we'll also start to hate the 2nd thing.
 - The Christian life is paradox... If you crave comfort, you'll find misery. If you crave love, you'll find loneliness. If you crave significance, you'll find only rejection. If you crave control, you will find only chaos. If you crave reputation, you will receive humiliation... But if you crave Jesus, not only will you will get him, along the way you'll find happiness, love, meaning, order and glory just thrown in.⁴
 - *That's why Jesus said, "He who loves his life will lose it. He who loses His life will keep it." "He who loves his life (covets it and seeks it and hangs on to it for dear life) will lose it. But He who loses His life to hang on to Jesus will keep it."*

That's what happened to Amnon... Literally. Absalom, Tamar's full brother, found out about what happened and he murdered Amnon. Amnon, because of his coveting, lost everything.

So, coveting is the root of your problem; it destroys your life. So how can you change your heart? Again, realize you were created for God, and get to know Him. Realize that He is better and more lasting than anything the world can offer you.

- God is better than money because God owns all the money and He's our Father and He promises to give us whatever we need.
- God is better than sex. Jesus never had sex and He was the most full and complete human who ever lived. Sex simply shadows our intimacy with God. Sex points us to relationship and a pleasure that will make sex seem like a yawn.
- God is better than human love. You and I have never been loved and cherished like we were when the Son of God went to the cross to rescue us. All human companionship, all human love will let us down. Nothing can give us the safety and tenderness that He can.
- God is better than pleasure. He is the source of all pleasure. In His presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- God is better than earthly power. There is no greater power you can have than to know that you belong to God and that He sovereignly directs all things for His purposes and your good.
- God is better than popularity. Fame is a pipe dream if you are only known by a bunch of people who are nobodies. But to be known and honored by the God of the universe, that is better than the approbations of millions of little no-account earthlings.⁵

As A.W. Tozer said, *"The man who has God for His treasure has all things in one."*

John Piper says, "And on and on it goes... everything the world has to offer, God is better and more abiding. There is no comparison. God wins, every time."⁶

So, ponder the superiority of God, and the power of covetousness will break.

⁴ Adapted from David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 161.

⁵ <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/09/03/having-god-is-better-than-money-sex-power-or-popularity/>

⁶ John Piper, *ibid.*

Think about all those things you desire in relation to death. If you seek all those things, and you get them, and then you die, you lose everything. But God is a treasure to us that lasts forever, it is a Kingdom that cannot be shaken. God gives us a treasure that is better than anything life can offer and that death cannot take away.

Let me deal with a quick objection...

“Pastor, this sounds a little unrealistic. Just be happy in God. That’s great, but I also have bills to be paid. I can’t just write Bible verses on my bills and mail them back. And I don’t want to be single. And I need to eat. You telling me I should just starve and be happy with Jesus?”

Great question: There was a story right around the time of these commandments where God taught them about coveting. The children of Israel were hungry, and they started to complain that they wanted to go back to Egypt where they could have fish and meat and the good life... as slaves, but that was just a detail.

So, God sent them manna... Frosted mini-wheats that fell from the sky and fed them day and night.

The point of this whole thing to them was, God knows what you need, and He’ll supply it. He created you. He knows you have bills, and that you have desires to get married and have a family... do you trust Him to meet those needs?

But there is another lesson from the manna, too. In the NT, John 6, Jesus refers to the manna and says, “That was a picture of me. I am the bread of life from heaven that will satisfy your souls.”

And when he does that, what you’ll find is that sometimes you can do without the physical bread. Doesn’t mean you’ll enjoy being without the physical bread, just that God’s presence to you is so satisfying that sometimes you can stay satisfied with Him even when your body is craving physical bread.

The best example of this is Jesus Himself. When he was tempted in the desert, he fasted for 40 days with nothing to eat. When Satan came and tempted him, saying, “If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread,” Jesus quoted a verse from the story of the manna, saying, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by the Words that come from the mouth of God.” In other words, He says, I can do without physical bread for a time, when God chooses it, because my soul is fortified and satisfied and pleased in God. It doesn’t mean I like doing without them, but I can do it when God asks me to because He is enough.”

You see, I say this because maybe you are in need right now. **Financially, things are tough.** You don’t have money to do a lot of the things you’d like to do. (It’s not that you’re wanting to blow a lot of money, it’s just that there are some simple, enjoyable things you can’t afford to do.) **Your body is in pain,** and you covet health. **You don’t want to be single.** Didn’t God say it “wasn’t good” for us to be alone?

For a time, God may have you “fast” from something you could really use or enjoy. During this time, God want you to feast on Him where you can say, “God, you are good. You are better to me than money, food, romance, children, health, prosperity, friendship, or success. You are enough. I trust you. You’ll get me through this.”

That’s it! We are the end of the 10 commandments.

So, here’s how we need to end this series: What do these commands reveal about your heart?

- Are you an idolater?
- Do you ever entertain rival conceptions of God?
- Do you ever not properly bring honor to God’s name?

- Does your life demonstrate total trust in God by giving him what he asks... a day of rest and 10%?
- Have you always been submissive to authority?
- Have you valued the lives of others and loved them like your own?
- 7th command: we learned that God's design for sex is the one that blesses our partner the most and glorifies him most. Have you lived sexually in a way that fits with God's plan? Or has it been about taking what you need and desire over what God wants?
- Have you lived a life of generosity and giving, or one of exploitation and taking?
- Have your words been characterized by honesty and blessing?
- Have you always been content in life, satisfied with God and the place He's given you in life, or have you lusted after other things?

1 John 1:8, 'If we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us.'

If you look right at the end of Exodus 20, when these commandments are given, you see a terrible scene,

[18] Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off [19] and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:18–19)

The people recognized how badly they failed this test, and knew they could never stand before God. God is so holy that no sin can be in His presence.

We are fully corrupt. He is infinitely perfect.

So what is our hope? See what they wanted? Vs. 19: Someone to stand between them and God. They asked Moses. Moses couldn't do it; Moses had sin of his own. Moses was a great leader, but he would sin and not even be allowed to go in the promised land.

The law points us forward to Jesus. Jesus would come and live a sinless life in full obedience to the law. Yet, at the end of His life He would be punished, crucified for our sins. He would receive the penalty we incurred from breaking these commandments. Theologians call it the great exchange: He took our sin and put it away forever.

1 John 1:8–9, 'If we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

Faithful and just. I love that word "just." God's forgiveness of me is justice, not mercy.

- I used to think when I'd break one of these commandments over and over... I wonder if God will forgive me, and I'd plead... "God, please, please, please forgive me." And sometimes I felt like He did, and sometimes I felt like He didn't. I probably need to make up for it. Prove myself, then God will forgive me. I had this idea of Jesus up in heaven going, "God, please forgive J.D. Just give Him one more chance. Come on, God, be merciful." That's not how it works. Jesus demands my forgiveness because it is justice. Jesus paid it all. Jesus is saying, "This sin cannot be laid to his charge because I have already paid for it."

You're a lawbreaker. Your heart is consumed with these sins. And there are only 2 ways to pay for that. You can attempt to atone for it yourself, which you'll never be able to do, or Jesus, who lived a perfect life and then took your penalty, can pay it for you.

It's a gift... entirely, that you must receive.

Have you ever received it? I want to give you a chance to do that right now...

- Prayer: "Yes, Jesus, I receive."
- Every week of this series, I've given you a chance to respond. If you've done that in the last 10 weeks, I want you to come clean and testify. Either today, or previously... I want you to stand up.
- Fill out the card...
 - Baptism... why you should be baptized. This is how you show it. It's not optional. If you've received Jesus, and you meant it, surely you'd be willing to make that statement to everyone. Right? If you believe that Jesus died on a cross for you, and you wouldn't even make this public statement for him? Surely if you've received Jesus as Savior you'd be willing to obey Him here. So, check that box and let us follow up with you so you can be baptized next week. Next week we're going to open it up to anyone who wants to be baptized, but I want you to let us know so we can get you prepared for it. So, check that box now.

Romans 6:23

This is not just a decision you make... it leads to baptism, getting involved... you'll hear more about that later. Let me now talk about baptism...

Notes:

Many of you are bitter in your relationship to God because he hasn't given you what you wanted

Our idols both covet what we do not have and hold on for dear life to what we do have.⁷

The essence of sin is in your desires. Desiring things that you think you must have to be happy and secure. We give it sanitized names, "Goals, felt needs, dreams, demands, longings," etc.⁸ Nothing wrong with these drives and desires, but they drive us and consume us... we couldn't be happy without them.

These commandments end here because the core of our sin is a worship problem. We worship our way into sin, we must worship our way out. It's all an idolatry problem. Weight. *What has the most weight in your life?*

The law is not a thermostat that can change the temperature of your soul, but a thermometer that can tell you the temperature. The law can diagnose your heart but not heal it. What has it shown you about your heart?

- Bryan Adams, *Summer of '69*... talks about the days when he was a young artist dreaming about making it big, and that those were the best days of his life. "The best days of my life were when I was living under the illusion that where I am now would be the best days of my life." I was

⁷ Powlison, "Idols," 46.

⁸ David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 149.

young, full of dreams, and under the illusion that success would be awesome. Now I'm here, with success, and I wish I could go back to the illusion."