

“The Perfect Ten #8: Cultivating Contentment”
Deuteronomy 5:19,21 [Exodus 20:15,17]

Attention: In 1989, *Country Journal* polled its readers on their ten great wants. This was their list:

1. Good health
2. World peace
3. More money
4. A better environment
5. A chance to travel
6. More time
7. A better economic deal for all humans
8. Land
9. A house
10. Concern for the emotional well-being of people

As Noel Perrin pointed out, of the ten great wants of 1989 only three of them were for things that money can buy, one was for money itself, and six were for things no salesman will ever quote a price on, no store will ever sell at a discount.

[Topic: Materialism, Index: 1226]

In study of the 10 Commandments, we can see a progression that reflects God's priorities:

The natural man's priorities are commonly:

1. Possessions -- "providing for the family"
2. Relationships with other people.
3. Relationship to God.

Look at the 10 Commandments, however, & you can see this is the opposite of God's priorities.

- Commandments 1-4 are about Rel. to God
- #s 5-7, 9 concern Human Relationships
- #s 8, 10 concern Property - least important

Because as Jesus says in Luke 12:15 (NKJV) "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

In short, God wants to be glorified by His people being satisfied, and this comes by "Cultivating Contentment".

Last week we considered the 9th Commandment, so this morning we will consider mainly #8 and #10.

We will discover this when we understand What the Commandments forbid, [2] that they require the Attitude of God concerning these things and [3] By what means God makes His people content with what He gives them.

1. What do the Commandments forbid?

A. In Deu. 5:19, "You shall not steal," God forbids taking and using for ourselves that which He has given to others or kept for Himself.

1. People rob God: Mal. 3:8 (NKJV) "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings."

2. People rob others by cheating or swindling our neighbor, inaccurate measurements, fraudulent merchandising or packaging, charging excessive interest, cheating on taxes, taking credit for another's work, gambling, or any other illicitly acquired gain, violating a contract or idleness on the job or, for that matter, off of it.

3. The root causes of thievery are internal.

a. Unbelief and distrust of God as Provider.

b. The desire to have without working for it. A rebellion against God and work.

Eph 4:28 " Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

Adam, before the Fall, was given satisfying and fulfilling work. It is the sweat & drudgery of work that is the curse.

B. The 10th Commandment forbids desiring what is your neighbor's.

It does not forbid wanting for yourself what God wants for you. In fact, it is right to desire enough to keep us from being tempted to steal, and to enable us to give to others: Col. 3:5 (NKJV) "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

The danger is not in having the things of the world, but when the world gets into the heart.

ILL: A ship is wonderful & useful when carried above the water, but when the water begins to leak into the ship, it can bring death.

The 10th is the root of the other 9 Commandments because "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies". [Mat 15:19]

Trans: That sums up what commandments 8 and 10 forbid.

2. The Commandments require that we have the Attitude of God concerning these things.

A. They require that we regard money as a servant.

1. This involves an attitude toward money that credits God as the source. Deu 8:18 "you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth",

2. It sees money as a tool to glorify God. Heb 13:5-6 " Let your life be free from [the love of money] ; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

The 8th Commandment requires [Heidelberg Cat.] "That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, & treat him as I would like others to treat me" or [Baptist Catechism] "that we pursue lawful and useful work to provide for our needs and for those unable to provide for themselves."

It requires honest work (employee) for honest wages (employer), and giving and lending freely

It requires faithful money management as a key to God's wisdom: Luke 16:11 "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"

Financial freedom involves following God's way of Giving, Receiving & Spending.

- Giving: Luke 6:38 " Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your [lap]. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

- Receiving what we get as a trust from God.

- Spending with the discretion called for as wise managers. [sales resistance, best buy, avoiding debt, etc.]

B. The 10th Commandment requires "contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbor, and all that is his", and that we earnestly desire the right things.

1. Don't strive to get what someone else has, work to get your own! Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV) "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you.""

2. Desire the things that truly satisfy & endure: Mat 6:33 " But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you [as well]."

1 Timothy 6:6 (NKJV) "Now godliness with contentment is great gain."

This Commandment is not an invasion but a compliment. God is treating you here as a person with feelings.

Trans: So, having seen what these commandments forbid, and what they require, ...

3. By what means does God make His people content with what He gives them?

A. Begin by entrusting your life to Jesus Christ.

Our money is one of the things we trust in to "save" us. Salvation begins with repentance of trust in anything else.

- Give your money to God and don't trust riches.

- Even people with large incomes often find themselves in financial bondage because they do not trust God to be their personal Provider.

Faith involves trusting Christ to provide what we once thought we could provide for ourselves

1 Pet 1:18-19 "know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

If you are His possession, to fail to let Christ control your life is stealing what belongs to Him.

But if you are His, He is willing and wanting to give you all you need.

At times your Faith will be challenged. He does not promise to give all you and I think we need. Sometimes we must trust that what He has given is all we need.

B. Be aware of the dangers of coveting.

1. It is a subtle sin. It is disguised as frugality, industry, "good stewardship", and "being a good provider.

2. It can overcome all that is good.

-Faith in Christ. You can't serve God & money.

-Giving to others.

-Giving to Christ and his work. This applies to time & talents, too.

3. It is a mother sin. 1 Tim 6:10 "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."

It produces all the opposites of the fruits of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

4. It dishonors your Christian profession. People despise more a greedy Christian.

5. It shuts people out of heaven: Eph 5:5 "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

C. Exercise the opposite of the sin; the obedience

1. A person who is loving God will not covet anything except what God supplies: Psa 37:4 "Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

2. Soak yourself in God's Word & Prayer. Eve sinned when she weakened her hold on God's words.

When you fill yourself with God's Word, you will have an answer for the devil's temptations, as Christ did in the wilderness.

3. Cultivate gratitude and contentment

a. Glorify God for His gifts: 1 Th 5:18 "give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

b. Spend time and resources on being a blessing to others: 1 Tim 6:17-19 [HCSB] "Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy."

ILL: An ancient Persian legend tells of a wealthy man by the name of Al Haffed who owned a large farm. One evening a visitor related to him tales of fabulous amounts of diamonds that could be found in other parts of the world, and of the great riches they could bring him.

The vision of all this wealth made him feel poor by comparison. So instead of caring for his own prosperous farm, he sold it and set out to find these treasures.

But the search proved to be fruitless. Finally, penniless and in despair, he committed suicide by jumping into the sea.

Meanwhile, the man who had purchased his farm noticed one day the glint of an unusual stone in a shallow stream on the property. He reached into the water, and to his amazement he pulled out a huge diamond. Later when working in his garden, he uncovered many more valuable gems.

Poor Al Haffed had spent his life traveling to distant lands seeking jewels, when on the farm he had left behind were all the precious stones his heart could have ever desired.

[Topic: Covetousness Index: 2129-2130]

God wants you and me to Cultivate Contentment.

Action: Write down anything you have failed to give God, and take it to Him in Prayer this week.