



Text: Exodus 20.17 || **Series:** 10 Ways to Be Perfect

Sermon #10: The 10th Commandment – Desires

Date: 8.18.2019

Good Morning Mercy Church! Today we are closing out our series on the 10 commandments. Next week we start a new series in the book of Acts that we are calling “You Are Sent.” Gonna look at the pretty wild story of the first church and my hope is that by seeing what God did, and knowing God doesn’t change, our confidence will be stirred in both the power of God available to us now and in the purpose God has for us. So, if you know people who need God, it’s a great series to invite them to. In fact we are adding a service at our Independence Campus and adjusting service times in hopes of making room here. So beginning next weekend our service times will be 9am and 10:45am at Both Independence and Providence Rd. So make sure you adjust accordingly.

Ok that’s next week. Now into this week. We are closing out the 10 commandments it seems like it has been a really formative series for us as a church. In talking with many of you I’ve been really encouraged by what the Lord has done through the series. We’ve been after one main idea the whole series:

10 Commandments Key: We do not obey to earn salvation from God, we are saved by Him and so we obey.

Exodus 20...our one chapter all summer...where all the 10 commandments are housed...It opens saying I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. It opens with a two verse Summary of the first 19 chapters of the book. And the order is real important. Because **obedience to God FOLLOWS deliverance by God**. You don’t obey to earn God’s acceptance or salvation...he saves you and then you obey in response. And the reason that is the key...is because understanding **that** is what makes the difference between a guilt based religion and a gospel religion.

1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”

they aren’t meant to restrict our joy and freedom, but to give us joy and freedom because grace always comes before God’s law. And so when we see them rightly, his commandments become access points into his love for us. Not burdens, but joys.

And you need to hear that because this last one is going to hit us all pretty hard I think. The 10th and final commandment is a very intentional, incredible bookend to the whole thing. Because this starts at what is going on down in your desires. Let’s look at it.

17 Do not covet your neighbor’s house. Do not covet your neighbor’s wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. -- Exodus 20:17

I love that this is how the commandments close because this one is so different right. I mean the other nine commandments start with our actions and then we saw them work their way down into our hearts. Murder – its an outward action. But to obey it you gotta deal with envy and hatred down in the heart. But not this one. It flips it all. God starts in your heart. Do not COVET what others have. He's not just Lord over your actions, **he's claiming to be God of your desires.** I believe its last because it's the last stand every individual makes before total surrender to God. Like you could work yourself to the bone to try and be a good person by obeying all the other commandments (*though Jesus says well when you really understand them, its impossible to do that*) but you could try to modify your behavior so that God will accept you and STILL hold onto your desires and be pushing back against God. And God says...I want your desires too. So I think it's the final commandment because its like the final step in our process of fully experiencing the **freedom of surrender** that comes from living under God's rule. And listen I'm telling you THIS is where real, gospel change happens ok. So that's where we are going.

4 parts: We are going to first see what coveting IS. Then: WHY is such a big deal. Third: how we know when we are doing it. And lastly how we fight against it.

What is coveting? First let me say a couple of things coveting IS NOT.

¹ DeYoung, Kevin. The 10 Commandments (Crossway Wheaton, Ill. 2018) 158.

Coveting is not anti-desire. That's important to hear. God does not equate all desire with coveting. In fact, there are plenty of times in scripture where God says it is good to desire things. There is the story of Sarah and Hannah that teach us desiring children can be a good thing. In the Song of Solomon we see the desire for sexual intimacy to be a good thing. Proverbs teaches us to plan and work hard in our lives so we might improve our position in life. Which means the desire for increased wealth & career advancement *can* be a good thing. It's good to desire a good house, a good spouse, not drive a clunker, etc.

Then there are the more obvious things like desiring more of God and his spirit. Obviously that can't be bad.¹ 1 Timothy Paul says if someone desires to be an elder or overseer, that's a good task. A good desire. So we can't just say the reading here is 'do not desire' things. That would be an entirely different religion. Christianity believes God designed us with desires and so we desire. We want. To try and rid yourself of desire would be something more like Buddhism. That says pain comes from unmet desires. So if you want to rid yourself of pain, rid yourself of desire. That's a sad life. And its not Christianity. Christianity says that 'desires' aren't the problem. Our problems come when we desire the wrong things, or desire the right things the wrong way. We are about to see that.

Coveting is not anti-ambition. It is GOOD for a Godly person to have dreams and ambitions to pursue in your life. To be the

very best at whatever you do. In fact I think that is God honoring. NOW ambition, without humility, **CAN** be coveting. We'll see that in a bit. But, this commandment also isn't a license to be lazy. You can't ignore studying for a test, fail it, and then drop the 10th like well I was coveting good grades so I decided to pass on this one. Not how this works. You are in the class. Make the grade, do the work.

Coveting is not anti-lament. I think this is important. It is ok to cry out to God when you are in a place of suffering and ask for God's relief. Isn't this what Christ did in the garden? "God let this cup pass from me." Isn't this Christ on the cross? "Father why have you forsaken me?" The Psalms are filled with "How long O Lord?" There is a rich, deep theology of suffering in scripture that allows for you to cry out to God for his mercy without breaking this commandment. And some of you actually today need to hear it is OK for your weary soul to be asking God for a change in your life situation. There is a holy way to do that.

So let's talk about what coveting is. The short version is that **Coveting is desire mutated into discontentment ...coveting is when your unmet desires and ambitions create discontentment in your soul.**

It's usually identified by specifically looking at what others have and feeling like you'd be better off if you had what they have. Let me show you what I mean by walking back through this commandment slowly and offering a little color commentary on it. Part of this list comes from Kevin

DeYoung's book *The 10 Commandments*.² I added some of my own in too.

- "You shall not covet your neighbor's house..."

- "They sure have nice stuff." "I'm tired of living in this dump." "It must be nice living in that fancy neighborhood." "Why can't I have an HGTV home?"

- "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife..."

- Wow, she's beautiful. Why can't my wife age like that? She's had how many kids?
- I wish I had married someone like her. I'd be so much happier with someone like her than with my wife.
- Look at her husband. He's always so friendly, so engaged with his kids. He's always helping around the house. He fixes things, not just breaks things. Why am I stuck with this guy when guys like that are out there?
- Single people wish all you married people would shut up. How did *she* get *him* when I'm out here. Why can't I get a girl like that?

- "Or his male servant, or female servant, or his ox, or his donkey..."

- My car is a piece of junk. I want his car.
- I want a nanny. I want a lawncare service. A housekeeping service.

- "Or anything that is your neighbor's."

² Ibid. 155

- All our friends take great vacations. We go to your parents in Greensboro and you call that TRAVEL.
- I wish my parents were more like their parents. Mine are lame.
- How bout this: I wish my kids were more like their kids. Playdates are secretly hopes that by being around them whatever it is they have will rub off on your kids.
- I wish I was smart like her.
- I wish I had his body or her body because my life would be so much better.
- I wish life came as easily to me as it seems to come to him or her.
- I wish I had a normal family. But I'm stuck with these weirdos
- I wish I was better at sports. I wish my kids were better at sports.
- Why is my life SO HARD when everyone else's life seems so easy.

Some of you are like...I've never coveted my neighbors oxen. SURE YOU HAVE. You get on Oxagram and you are like MAN...Look at her Ox. She posts pictures of that Ox ALL THE TIME. She and the OX always seem so HAPPY. I'm even jealous of when she posts about her Problems she has with her OX where she hashtags it #OXLIFE because I want to be authentic like her. And what you don't realize is IT'S AN ILLUSION! SHE DOESN'T REALLY CARE ABOUT HER OX! BUT SHE CRAVES YOU CARING ABOUT HER OX! And if everybody stopped liking her

and her ox...she'd be LOST! She's got the same problem you do and you are actually feeding one another's problems.

Coveting is desire mutated into discontentment. And discontentment is the breeding ground for all the rest of the sins in the 10 commandments. Lying, stealing, cheating, lust, refusing to rest, not honoring your parents, not submitting to God...it all comes from a place down deep in your soul where you are discontent with the lot God has put in front of you. That's why I'm saying this isn't just a tag-on 10th commandment, its more like the culmination of all 10 of them because it reveals, more than any other, what is really going on down in your heart. And God is after your heart! The bible has another word for that mutation: Idolatry.

The way I heard one pastor describe idolatry a long time ago is when a good thing becomes a god thing. When it mutates from desire to preoccupation and obsession. That's coveting.

It's when I look at other pastors and their churches and I think to myself: If only I had that facility. Oh mercy the Lord has wrecked me this week about this. I have been discontent down in my soul with our facility situation. And because I have been discontent, I've been missing the incredible blessings from God this situation is. Let me explain...I was looking at it seeing

We've got one we have to move in and out of every weekend. And one that needs a new A/C unit like TODAY or those attending our 11am service might actually bake. And yes I'm not saying we shouldn't fix this stuff. We need better facility

situations. But I have been pre-occupied by it. I have been mad at God about it. I've drifted to believing that IF WE HAVE good facilities, then Mercy will be successful. Which REALLY means Spence will be successful...which means all the glory will go to...SPENCE.

And I'm driving around CLT looking at buildings like 'My Precious' and its terrible. Some of ya'll are like...my pastor has issues. YEP. I go to any retail store and I ask questions like...how many square feet ya'll got. Dude is like "yeah that's a weird question. This is office depot man. You need printer ink or a desk chair?" And in doing that...you know what I've let slip away? The incredible gift the Levine Center has been to us, and the INCREDIBLE unity our church has built through setting up and tearing down every week there. I've just forgotten the incredible gift Providence Road was and is to us and the story of faithful saints who entrusted it to us. That's what coveting does!

See this is WHY coveting is so bad. It moves Jesus out of the place he's supposed to be in and replaces him with something else. If I just have _____, then I'll be ok. And when we pause and say out loud what is happening internally it sounds Silly right? but that's how coveting works. It does its greatest damage to you in the silent internal monologue of your heart and mind. It creates a discontentment that causes you to look away from what God HAS given you & how he has blessed you and to long for what others have. It says God...you are not enough for me and your gifts are not enough for me. It is the fruit of believing the lie of the enemy.

Last week we said the reason we lie to others is actually because we are believing a lie ourselves. **The lie behind our lies is we cannot trust God.**

The evidence we feel we cannot trust God is that feeling of discontentment we carry around with us.

Now because we are talking about something internal that is harder to measure, let me show you how you can know if you are coveting. Some questions to ask yourself. Then we'll talk about how to find victory over it. **The Symptoms of Coveting**

you hurt others to get what you want. While this may involve actions, those actions come from an attitude or approach to life. Listen if you have a "do whatever takes to get ahead" attitude, it can result in actions that harm others. Maybe its that you work way too many hours each week and you don't INTEND to hurt your family but your absence and preoccupation with work is doing exactly that. I know because this is me. Again for me: I COVET Mercy's success and I'm preoccupied with it. And the result is working long hours and even when I'm with my family I'm thinking about work. Maybe that's you. Maybe you are like those James talks about stirring up trouble:

What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you? 2 You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. -- James 4:1-2

Your passions are waging war within you because you want something you cannot seem to get. And that passion becomes coveting when it blinds you to the fact that the others around

you are PEOPLE. Human BEINGS. Made in God's image! And you are willing to mow over them to get what you feel you need.

You are unwilling to give up what you already have. Again there is nothing wrong with working hard and building up wealth. The problem is when we grip it so tightly that it becomes a source of soul level security to us. When we aren't willing to bless others because it may take away from our security blanket or safety net. The Rich Young man in the gospels comes to mind here right. He comes to Jesus and says what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus starts listing off the back half of the 10 commandments....don't murder, honor your parents, don't steal. But Jesus leaves off the 10th. And the guy says "great I've done all that." And Jesus says well one more thing: Go sell all you have & give it to the poor. Then come and follow. Jesus knew this guy's heart. He coveted retaining his wealth & status. He couldn't POSSIBLY take a STEP backwards let alone step all the way into poverty. So he couldn't follow Jesus.

And maybe that's you. You'll follow Jesus riiiiiiight up until it gets sacrificial. But that's where it stops. What if right there in your possessions & wealth is the last stronghold keeping you from experiencing the joy available to following Christ? Are your possessions starting to possess you? Again there is nothing NECESSARILY wrong with accruing wealth. God gives us good gifts to enjoy and on top of that Plenty of Christians use their wealth as a blessing. BUT...Jesus warns us about riches for a reason. Because they become a powerful source of coveting. are they keeping you from obeying Christ?

You complain more than you rejoice. This is a tough one because I bet if I ask you if you complain regularly you will say no. I bet *maybe* 2% of the people in church today will own having a complaining spirit. This is a blind spot. This is one you gotta get an outside opinion on. And the people closest to you are the best judge of this. If you live with roommates, ask your roommates. If you are married, ask your spouse. A good way to try and test this is to look at your life and see how much you say 'if only.' If only my salary was a little higher. If only we had kids. If only our wedding could be here. If only we could afford that house. If only she would pay attention to me.

Another way to test this is to evaluate how you consume social media. Social media seems to be here to stay in some form and Im here for it. I'm trying to learn how to use it responsibly to be a net benefit to myself and the world. But Some of you are suffering from a bad case of what Joey Schwartz calls Instagram Scrolloisis. Your screen has become a coveting window. You need to set it down until you can look at it while FULLY content with your own life. This is why God says in 2 cor 10.5 to take every thought captive to obey Christ!

You chase your desires in secret. Man I feel like this might be for many of you. If your desires have mutated here's how you know: you don't let others know how much you want to satisfy them. If you are coveting your neighbor's wife...you probably don't tell your neighbor. Hey man...I wish I had your wife. No, you long for her or for him in secret. And you look up images online to temporarily satisfy this mutated desire. Ya'll this is almost ALWAYS what happens when people come to me to confess sexual sin. It started in the dark and it stayed in the dark for a while. The way counselor David Powlison says it

is that things in a secret garden always grow mutant. It's true for all forms of coveting. You check your bank account constantly because you covet financial security and if those close to you knew how much you obsessed over your finances they'd be surprised. This is what an idol does. It convinces you that the darkness of secrecy is a safe space to pursue your desires.

SO quick look ahead to what you need to do: You need confession! Which is why you need community. How many times in this series have I said "Man you better get some Christians in your life that are following Jesus and lock arms tightly with them!"

How to fight against coveting

I want to take our last few minutes to talk about how we fight against coveting. See the antidote to coveting is what scripture calls contentment. Listen to the apostle Paul

11I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. 12I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me -- Philippians 4:11-13

Paul isn't saying he's able to make free throws with Jesus. I can do all things! He's saying I have such a deep contentment in the soul with who I am in Christ that my SITUATIONS and my CIRCUMSTANCES don't get to dictate what kind of person I

am. God has saved me, a wretched sinner, So I will rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS. And trust he is with me as he promised. And that all death can do is quicken a glorious eternity with Christ. I've told you before this CONTENTMENT is what frustrated Paul's oppressors. They threaten to take everything from him and throw him in jail unless he stops preaching. He says well, to live is Christ. So I'm good and can't stop. They say well then we'll kill you. He says "well to die is gain."

See the call "not to covet" is a call to contentment. Not to complacency, but to contentment. And scripture, especially Paul, seems to hold contentment as the spiritual secret to joy in this life.

Ok I told you in the first sermon I've been looking at a book by the brilliant theologian J.I. Packer called *Keeping the 10 Commandments* and really, I recommend it to you. Here's how he says we grow in contentment.

Know the love of Christ. - This is first and there is no second without this. See you have to understand the 10 commandments have always been pointing us here. The law of God helps us see that we aren't able to keep the law of God. It's written that way and the New Testament says that very thing just to make sure we know. It reveals our need for help. And the love of Christ is seen in that he rescues us from the guilt we have under the law. From the twisted, corrupted mindsets we walk in. From the self-harm and others harm we keep committing even when we don't want to. In Christ there is redemption & freedom & Power to walk in a new way of life. And he says...ABIDE IN ME & IN MY LOVE and then you

will bear fruit. THEN you will experience contentment. The road to contentment STARTS at the cross and the empty tomb. So immerse yourself there. Puritan Thomas Watson's book *The Art of Devine Contentment*, he says, "The secret of finding contentment is getting heaven in your heart through faith in Jesus. ...Spiritual things, those satisfy, and the more of heaven that is in us the less that earth will ever content us."

Praise God when worry rises. Jesus diagnosed one mortal enemy of contentment - worry. And as a veteran of worrying I can tell you this will quickly choke out the peace of the soul Christ gives you. So Jesus said

31 So don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. -- Matthew 6:31-33

Worry is a form of coveting. It's the mutated desire for control you can't seem to get. And the antidote: Praise God Anyway. Let go from my job: I'm gonna praise God anyway. Can't find a spouse: I'm gonna praise God anyway. Didn't get into my first choice school: I'm gonna praise God anyway. THE CANCER IS INCURABLE: I'm GONNA PRAISE GOD ANYWAY. That's not blind faith, that is saying GOD AND HIS GOODNESS ARE BETTER THAN WHATEVER IT IS THAT WOULD LEAD ME INTO WORRY & FEAR.

Remember the promised presence of your Lord. I think this is a promise we Christians often either undervalue or just flat out forget in the day to day of life. That Jesus is still Emmanuel. He is still God with us. That's the promise to us Christians. God said he will remain actually right here with us for our entire lives. He will guide us and sustain us. Do you live that way!? Jesus goes so far to say to his disciples...IT IS BETTER that I LEAVE. John 16.7.

7 Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth. It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Counselor will not come to you. If I go, I will send him to you. -- John 16:6-7

Do you believe that? That **THE SPIRIT INSIDE YOU is actually BETTER Than Jesus beside you.** I mean IMAGINE if Jesus was with you as you walked through your daily life. You have a problem and he's right there to fix it you know. A/c breaks in august...Jesus is like I command the winds. Run out of ice and drinks at your party...Jesus says I've been there before. I got you.

And the great news is Jesus says the Spirit...his presence inside of you...is even better than that.

And that's what we have. Packer says **"To realize the promised presence of one's Lord, who both orders one's circumstances and gives strength to cope with them, is the final secret of contentment."**³

Church, God is with you. Guiding you, comforting you, restoring your, conforming you away from sin and to the

³ Packer, J.I. *Keeping the 10 Commandments* () 104.

image of Christ. GOD IS WITH YOU CHURCH! That creates contentment in the soul, joy in the soul, that nothing else can. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you. 6 Therefore, we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? -- Hebrews 13:5-6

Here's how I want to close out our time today. I want to guide you through a way to respond to the 10 commandments.

A response to the Commandments: 10 Prayers of Repentance

10 Prayers of Repentance

1. Do not have other gods besides me

God, I confess that I have worshipped gifts instead of the Giver and turned good things into gods.

I repent of my idolatrous heart and choose to worship you alone.

2. Do not make an idol for yourself

God, I confess that I have worshipped a false version of you, one formed after my sinful desires and not your infallible truth.

I repent of my pride and choose to worship Jesus, the image of the invisible God.

3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God

God, I confess that I have been casual with your name and misrepresented it.

I repent of my irreverent heart and choose to honor and glorify your name.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy

God, I confess that I have rejected your gift of rest.

I repent of my weary self-reliant heart and choose to receive the soul-rest you offer me in Christ.

5. Honor your father and mother

God, I confess that I have dishonored my parents and other authorities you have placed in my life.

I repent of my rebellious heart and choose to honor my parents and godly authorities in the fear of you.

6. Do not murder

God, I confess that I have torn down people who are made in your image.

I repent of my angry heart and choose to seek the good of my brothers and sisters, for the glory of your name.

7. Do not commit adultery

God, I confess that I have chosen my desires over your design for sex.

I repent of my lustful heart and choose the greater pleasure of obeying you and following your design for sex.

8. Do not steal

God, I confess that I have taken from others in order to benefit myself.

I repent of my greedy heart and choose to live generously, just as you have been generous with me.

9. Do not give false testimony

God, I confess that I have lied and misrepresented the character of Jesus, who is the Truth.

I repent of my deceitful heart and choose to speak the truth in love.

10. Do not covet

God, I confess that I have been discontent with the life you've given me.

I repent of my covetous heart and choose to believe Christ is enough for me today.

1. Do not have other God's besides me – God I repent from where I've allowed other things to take first place in my life. I choose to worship you only. You are my God. **Matthew 6:37 – Love The Lord Your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your strength.**

2. Do not make an idol for yourself – God I repent from where I've worshipped a false version of you. You are not made in my image, I am made in your image. You are God and I do not get to decide what you are like. Today I set my mind on Jesus and submit to him, the image of the invisible God. **15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. -- Colossians 1:15**

3. Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God – God forgive me for where I have been casual with your name and for where I have misrepresented it. I pray now as Jesus taught me **"Hallowed be your name." – Matthew 6:9.**

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it Holy – God forgive me for where I have rejected your gift of rest. I turn from where I've sat in your seat. I will receive the soul rest you offer me in Christ and I will receive the body rest you call me to in the sabbath day. **Hebrews 4:9,11 Therefore, a Sabbath rest remains for God's people...11 Let us then make every effort to enter that rest.**

5. Honor your father and your mother – God I repent from where I have rebelled against and disrespected my parents and other authorities you placed in my life. I will seek to honor my family, and the family of God, through reverence,

obedience, and gratitude. **1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. Ephesians 6:1**

6. Do not murder – God I repent from where I have sought to tear people down who are made in your image. I commit to seek to use my life to promote human flourishing. Scripture?

7. Do not commit adultery – God I repent from where I have chosen my desires over your design for sex. I repent from choosing my way and I choose your way. I believe what I crave in sex I can find in you. Thank you for your forgiveness and for making me a new person in Christ. **17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come! -- 2 Corinthians 5:17**

8. Do not steal – God I repent from where I have taken from others in order to benefit myself. I trust my treasure is in you. **21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. -- Matthew 6:21**

9. Do not give false testimony – God I repent from where I have been casual with the truth. I recognize every lie I tell is ultimately a lie about you. And I turn today from the lie behind my lies: That I cannot trust you. I trust you today and I commit to speak truth in love. **25 Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. -- Ephesians 4:25**

10. Do not covet – God I turn from being discontent with the life you've given me. I recognize I have everything I need in Christ to be content in all circumstances. I choose to believe

Christ is enough for me today. I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me -- Philippians 4:13