

5. Read Mark 10:17-27. How did this enemy destroy the rich young ruler when Jesus asked him to give up his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Him? Now ask yourself, if everything you owned were stripped away would you be content with Jesus alone? Would He be enough? Why or why not?

6. If you are not sure whether or not this enemy has begun to take Jesus' rightful place on the throne of your own heart, read over the following list and examine what your lifestyle is exposing about your heart.

A love for money and/or possessions can be seen by:
 - a. Worrying about it constantly.
 - b. My willingness to sin in order to obtain it.
 - c. Being involved in get-rich-quick schemes.
 - d. My being more concerned with getting money versus a job well done.
 - e. Responding in despair or anger when you have to pay your taxes.
 - f. Being stingy with your money and possessions.
 - g. Wanting more, more, more!
 - h. Being in debt because you spend more than you actually make.
 - i. Thinking of your money as your money and not from the Lord.
 - j. Not being willing to surrender it all if you had to.

7. John Piper once remarked in a sermon that "covetousness is desiring something so much that you lose your contentment in God or covetousness is losing your contentment in God so that you start to seek it elsewhere." As you contemplate this, do you think this is true or false in your own life? Why or why not?

8. Read Exodus 20:3, 17 and Col. 3:5. How is your enemy identified? In other words, when someone engages in this treacherous desire, what are they essentially doing? Why is God displeased with this?

Application¹:

When the enemy of covetousness (greed) begins to rear its ugly head; commit to using the Sword of the Spirit to fight the good fight! This week spend time reading through God's Word below and reminding yourself of the warnings and seriousness of being a coveter. Then end your time with prayer and ask God to help you, "Put covetousness to death!"

1. Covetousness Never Brings Satisfaction

Ecclesiastes 5:11, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money; nor he who loves wealth, with gain: this also is vanity."

Luke 12:15, "Beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." If the Word of the Lord needed confirming, there are enough miserable rich people in the world to prove that satisfied life does not come from having things.

2. Covetousness Chokes Off Spiritual Life

Jesus told the parable of the soils (Mark 4:1-20) and said that some seed fell on among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it.

Then he interpreted the parable and said that the seed is the Word of God. The seed sown among thorns is interpreted like this: "the cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."

A real battle rages when the Word of God is preached. The desire for other things can be so strong that the beginnings of spiritual life can be choked out altogether. This is such a frightful warning that we should all be on our guard every time we hear the Word to receive it with faith and not choke it with covetousness.

3. Covetousness Gives Rise to Many Other Sins

1 Timothy 6:10, "The love of money is the root of all evils." And James 4:2 says, "You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and wage war."

Covetousness is a breeding ground for a thousand other sins. And that heightens the warning to flee from it and fight it with all our might.

4. Covetousness Lets You Down When You Need Help Most

1 Timothy 6:7 (Piper 1988) "We brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out

¹ Adapted from John Piper. "Battling the Unbelief of Covetousness." *Killing Sin*. Minneapolis: Desiring God Ministries, October 1988.

of the world." At the greatest crisis of your life, when you need contentment and hope and security more than any other time, your money and all your possessions take wings and fly away. They let you down. They are fair weather friends at best. And you enter eternity with nothing but the measure of contentment that you had in God.

If you dropped dead right now, would you take with you a payload of pleasure in God or would you stand before him with a spiritual cavity where covetousness used to be? Covetousness lets you down just when you need help most.

5. In the End Covetousness Destroys the Soul

1 Timothy 6:9 "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction."

Resources:

- *The Greener Grass Conspiracy: Finding Contentment on Your Side of the Fence* by Stephen Altrogge
- *The Secret to Contentment* by William Barclay
- *Contentment, A Godly Women's Adornment* by Lydia Brownback
- *Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* by Jeremiah Burroughs
- *Discovering True Contentment* by Shelbi Cullen
- William Gouge on Covetousness
(<http://www.puritansermons.com/gouge/covindx.htm>)
- "The Ten Commandments" by Thomas Watson
(http://www.gracegems.org/Watson/ten_commandments12.htm)
- "Directions against covetousness, or love of riches and against worldly cares" by Richard Baxter (www.puritansermons.com/baxter/baxter28.htm)

"Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition." (Jeremiah Burroughs)