

Living Together in God-Glorifying Community

Part 2

Deuteronomy 5:19-21

Series: *Loving God in Every Way*

Introduction: Take your Bible and join me in Deuteronomy 5 – Deuteronomy chapter 5.

We come back this morning – one last time to consider the 10 commandments. We didn't quite finish up last week in dealing with the 10th commandment. Before I read it and we dive into some further study of it, let me remind you of the big picture here. Moses is preaching this sermon of preparation to the people as they ready themselves to enter into the Promised Land. The heart of his message to them is to love the Lord their God in every way. He has redeemed them from the slavery of Egypt and He is about to bless them with great victory over their enemies. He had proven Himself faithful to provide and to miraculously protect. And now, they must, by faith, obey the Lord and enter the Promised Land and live according to His way in His land. And these 10 words, or 10 commandments, are the heart of that faith-filled obedience to the Lord. The first 4 commands are the core of how they are to love God, and the last 6 are the core of how they are to love one another. If they will walk by faith in the Lord in this way and live God's way in God's land, then they will have God-glorifying community. If they don't, it will be a disaster!

Well, the same is true for life in the Church. If we love one another as God has called us to, then we will glorify Him. If we don't, we will have constant conflict and trouble which dishonors the Lord whose name we carry to the nations. So, we rightly and humbly give attention to these 10 words which instruct us in how we are to live in love for our Lord and for one another. And we love one another as evidence of our love for our Lord, by obeying the 10th commandment. Which says this in Deuteronomy 5:21. . .

Imagine sitting in the doctor's office. You have setup this appointment because you have been experience a variety of symptoms that have told you something is not right. But you have no idea what it is. You know you're sick, but you don't know the problem, nor the cure. As you explain your symptoms to the Doctor, she prescribes a slew of tests to get more data to try and figure out what is going on. And after hours of testing and poking and prodding and scanning, you find yourself back in her office waiting for the diagnosis and the plan for treatment. As you listen to her explain the diagnosis it begins to click in your mind as to why you have had that pain and to why you have been feeling so tired and to why you have not felt like eating and to why you have been so irritable lately. All those symptoms make sense, and you are eager now for the prescribed treatment so that you can hopefully get to feeling better.

Well, this is what the Scriptures do in assessing and diagnosing our inner man, our spiritual man. They help us make sense of things we know are wrong, but we aren't totally sure what's

causing it. So, I want to explain to you the symptoms of your illness this morning. Let's look to the Spirit of God to tell us what the symptoms of our covetous hearts are so that we can see the illness for what it is and then begin to address it as prescribed. We know we should not break the 10th commandment, but how would we know if we are? Well, that heart sin comes out in all kinds of obvious ways. And when we see those symptoms of covetousness, we will be all the more eager to learn of the cure.

I want to warn you up front that we will be looking at a lot of passages in the process so that we can get the most accurate picture possible of where covetousness has taken root in the soil of our hearts and is producing fruit in our thoughts and lifestyles, and then as we seek a prescription for dealing with it in our hearts. So, what are the evidences of the breaking of this 10th commandment in our lives? How would we know this spiritual cancer exists?

I. Evidences of a Covetous Heart

a. *Lack of love for others – Romans 13:8-10*

- i. The first and most obvious symptom which points to a covetous heart is a lack of love for others. That is the overall truth that is at stake in the breaking of the 10th commandment, and so when we do covet we are not loving others as we ought to. But there is more here than that. Just listen to the words of Romans 13:8-10:
 1. ⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10 ESV)
- ii. If we look at our friend's stuff and our heart is captured with it and we set about on a determined course to obtain it, then we are no longer loving them and are now coveting their stuff rather than loving them as God has called us to. You simply cannot love your neighbor and covet their smarts or their looks or their friends or their house or their spouse or their car or their shoes, or their _____. Love and coveting simply can't coexist. So, you can work your way backwards here from a lack of love in your life for others. As you trace the stem of that sinful weed in the garden of your heart you will often find that greedy covetousness is at the root. You want something they have as an unbridled desire of your selfishness, therefore you cannot love them as you should. As an example of this, just think of Ahab and his coveting of Naboth's vineyard. He couldn't love Naboth and covet his vineyard at the same time. Lack of love is a symptom of coveting.

b. *Immorality & Impurity – Romans 1:24; Eph. 4:19*

- i. Another expression of covetousness is immorality and impurity. The greed and covetousness which easily thrives in us often plays upon our most difficult to control desires – our sexual ones. What God has given for a good

and healthy relationship in marriage is quickly distorted into lust for illicit and ungodly things. This is one of the immediate effects of our rejection of God as God which is described in Romans 1:24:

- i. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, (Rom. 1:24 ESV)
- ii. In describing the old man and hardness of heart which is true of those outside of Christ Ephesians 4:19 says:
 1. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. (Eph. 4:19 ESV)
- iii. This covetousness of heart can be readily seen in a persistent desire for ungodly and unholy sexual practice. These bodily desires for physical fulfillment become demanding gods enthroned over our will. They command our obedience as we let covetousness go unchecked in our hearts. And this leads us to all kinds of ungodly immoral and impure action. The longing look of lust at someone who is not your spouse. The immoral and suggestive text message. The looking at pornographic images in some form of media to feed these desires. The pursuit of an illicit relationship which is completely about you fulfilling your physical longings for intimacy of some sort. All of this is rooted in covetousness, and therefore is all evidence of a discontented and covetous heart. So, where you see immorality and impurity having any kind of voice in your heart or any kind of tread in your practice – it is here that you are displaying the covetousness of your heart. In other words, the problem with your impurity goes much deeper than just too long of a look or an immoral thought or an unchecked plan to hookup with someone. The weed roots itself down into the soil of covetousness and is fed by the nutrients of discontentment. Just think of David and his pursuit of Bathsheeba as an example of this immoral and impure fruit of his covetous heart.

c. *Distorted Generosity – 2 Cor. 9:5*

- i. The Scriptures also present a distorted generosity as evidence of covetousness. Do you remember how Paul urges the church in Corinth to be generous as they raise funds to help the church in Jerusalem? In chapter 9 of 2 Corinthians Paul reminds them of their promise to contribute to the needs in Jerusalem. And so he says this in verse 5:
 1. So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness. (2 Cor. 9:5 NAS)
- ii. It is difficult to know exactly what Paul meant by talking about a bountiful gift that was not affected by covetousness. He could mean that he desired them to give expecting nothing in return. Well, that would be covetous wouldn't it? To give to some great cause, but to really be generous only with the hope that you will be blessed with something great in return. That is not true generosity! That is manipulative greed!

- iii. Or Paul could be referring to how covetousness would prevent them from giving what they truly could in generosity. That is the most obvious idea here.
 - iv. Paul could also mean that the leaders of the church were demanding from others that they give so that they can meet the expectation of their promise. The leaders had promised a big gift for the Jerusalem saints, and now they were demanding generous gifts from the church family. Well, that's exaction which is driven by covetousness. We don't want to lose face with Paul or with those coming to collect the money, so make sure you give more! When our giving to the Lord is not from a cheerful heart which is abounding in thankfulness for all that God has done and is delighting to worship Him with the giving of a gift, then it is distorted generosity. And this distorted generosity breathes the oxygen of covetousness to stay alive. Just think of Acts 5 and the debacle with Ananias and Sapphira and how they gave a great gift to the church but they lied about it so they would look better. This distorted generosity was driven by covetousness in their hearts.
- d. *Lack of Concern for the Truth – Mark 4:18-19; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:3, 14; John 8:44*
- i. A fourth evidence of this covetousness is a lack of concern for the truth. This is what is said to choke out the Word of God in Jesus' parable in Mark 4 when he says that the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke out the word, and therefore the word proves unfruitful.
 - ii. In 2 Timothy 4 we are told that people will have itching ears and will accumulate for themselves teachers which suit their passions – or their coveting – and thereby they will turn away from the truth. They are not after the truth, they are after the attaining of their greedy desires. And so, they will look for authorities in the church who will teach them in line with what they really want.
 - iii. And the classic example of this is given to us in 2 Peter 2 where Peter describes the false prophets who will enter into the church. He says in verse 3 that “in their greed they will exploit you with false words.” And in verse 14 he describes these false teachers as having hearts trained in greed!
 - iv. Beloved, this is subtle and dangerous. When you start to let off of your concern for the truth you are being driven by a covetous desire for something self-serving and self-exalting. This is satanic and devilish. Do you remember how Jesus described Satan in John 8? He was countering the Pharisees and he said, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (Jn. 8:44 ESV)
 - v. Satan has always played fast and loose with the truth because his desires are not met when the truth is upheld and followed and proclaimed. And so, when we cease to pursue the truth of God and cease to hunger for that truth we too are compelled by desires rooted in covetousness which are anti-God and anti-truth.

c. *Fighting – James 4:2-3*

- i. The Scriptures also show us that a symptom of covetousness is fighting and quarreling in the church. So James 4 says this:
 1. ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (Jas. 4:2-3 ESV)
- ii. This is pretty simple isn't it? The autopsy of an argument between children or between adults or between a husband and wife or between a parent and adult child will often show the same thing won't it? This is the almost universal reality for our fighting and quarreling. One or both of us has a covetous heart and we want something we can't obtain so we fight to get what we want. Jude says that there will be those in the church in these last days who will follow their own sinful desires (that's covetousness), and they will be scoffers of others and will cause divisions in the church. This helps us know that where we see relational conflict in our lives the root cause is often a coveting heart.

f. *Idolatry – Ephesians 5:5*

- i. And then, one more evidence that the doctor of our souls, the Holy Spirit of God, gives to us in the Scriptures – and that is idolatry. The idols of our heart are evidence of covetous desires. So, in Ephesians 5 it says, “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.” (Eph. 5:5 ESV)
- ii. So, there you go, the truth about coveting is that it can be directly equated with idolatry. At the core of covetousness is the replacing of God as the central and most worthy One in our hearts. In His place we swap all kinds of temporal and downright ridiculous things. This is why I said to you last week that the command to not covet was a fitting conclusion to the 10 commandments. They start with the command to not have any other god in the place of the one true God. And then in the middle they call us to avoid all the ways we worship idols, and then they end with this overarching heart command – do not covet. Covetousness is idolatry at its core.
- iii. So, what do you idolize? What do you think about when you get the freedom to think about anything you want? What do you dream of having and owning? What do you obsess over online, seeking out as many websites as you can to help you learn about it and eventually obtain it? What are you chasing after? Fill in the blank of this statement: If I had _____, then I would be truly happy? Whatever you put in that blank your functional god, enthroned upon the desires of your heart. In fact, if in the blank, you put anything other than God, you are an idolater.¹

¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The 10 Commandments*, pg. 165.

- iv. And the answer to that covetous desire is never to get the thing in the blank. You know how that goes. You finally get the thing you've been coveting for so long, and now you are completely dissatisfied once again. That's why the rich rancher in the Prophet Nathan's parable to King David was not content with all of his sheep. He had to have the one sheep that his neighbor owned. Covetousness is idolatry, and idolatry is never satisfied when the demands of the idol are met. Now there are new demands given.
- g. So, you might be sick with the sin of coveting if you are struggling to love others as you should. You might be coveting if you are walking in impurity or immorality in your thoughts, words, or actions. You might be coveting if you have a distorted generosity that is not generous or is generous for self-serving reasons. You might be coveting if you are careless about the truth – just not all that concerned to know the truth and to be guided by the truth. You might be coveting if you are fighting and quarreling with others. You might be coveting if you are looking to something other than God to satisfy you in any given moment. Covetousness sits so subtly in the soil of our hearts and breathes life into so many of the sins which dominate and destroy us.
- h. So this sickness must be dealt with. But how? What is the treatment plan? How do we rid our hearts of this silent killer?

II. Prescription for a Covetous Heart

- a. Well, the cancer of sin has only one ultimate answer and that is the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the God-man, Jesus Christ himself. For us to be raised from spiritual death to spiritual life we must be given the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This one who never coveted, who never had an out of control desire, who never failed to love others, who never sinned against God in this, or any other way. To be positionally cleansed and made right with the thrice holy God of Heaven you need the substitutionary work of Christ. You need His righteousness to speak for you before the Judge of Righteousness. You need His death for your sins to speak for you before the God of Just Wrath. You need His resurrection from the grave to speak for you before the God of the living and the dead. You need the finished work of Jesus Christ to save you from your sin. Friend – if you are here this morning and the Spirit of God in this moment is saying to you – you need Jesus to save you! – then don't go another moment without believing in Christ. Fall before Him in confession and plead with Him for forgiveness of your sins. Look to Jesus and live and be made right with God through Christ.
- b. Beloved, if you are positionally right with God, you certainly still know the ongoing battle in your practice to walk worthy of this Gospel work of Christ. So, your heart was pricked by the diagnosis of the Spirit about covetousness. You see it in you and you know it takes grace-compelled and Christ-dependent effort to rid your heart of it more and more. So, what must you do?
- c. *Guard Your Heart*
 - i. Well, the first round of chemo for this cancer of your heart is to guard your heart. That is what Jesus tells his followers in Luke 12. Do you remember that conversation Jesus has with the man who wants Jesus to settle his dispute

with his brother over their inheritance? He tells the man that it is none of his business, but more than that Jesus presses down into the heart issue of the man when he says this in verse 15 . . .

ii. In this statement Jesus exposes to us the tendency of our sin-stained hearts. We lean into stuff like it somehow is the compilation of our lives. This is why we argue about inheritances and property lines and this is why we covet other people's cars and spouses and families and clothes and . . . fill in the blank. That is the nature of our sinful hearts. We think our value is found in the sum of our stuff. But Jesus exposes the truth. He tells us to guard our hearts by seeing our stuff rightly.

iii. *See Stuff Rightly – Luke 12:13-21*

1. The truth about your stuff is that it will all one day be meaningless to you and the true value of your life will then be exposed. *Read 12:16-21.*
2. So, to guard our hearts against covetousness we must see stuff rightly – as God sees it. This will kill the buying on credit things that we don't really need or could do without. This will kill the accumulation of things because it somehow gives us security to own more. This will kill the miserly use of money because some kind of false security is found in having a certain dollar amount in the bank account. Beloved, your heart is prone to trust in the abundance of your possessions. So, guard your heart by seeing stuff rightly.

iv. *See God Rightly – Hebrews 13:5*

1. You must also fight against covetousness and guard your heart by seeing God rightly. In Hebrews 13:5 the text says, "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"
2. There is so much more to say from this text, and from the book of Hebrews as a whole about the life of faith and how that keeps us from the love of money and stuff. But the tip of the spear truth is found in this verse. Our coveting and love of money is spurred along by a wrong view of God and therefore of His provision. The theological truth of this verse which keeps us from the love of money is the promise that God will never leave or forsake us. Contentment then is fanned into flame by a right view of the merciful and constant presence and care of God. Which means that the opposite is true as well. Coveting is pushed along by a forgetfulness of the constant presence and merciful care of God. So, when you feel your heart start longing for something you don't currently have and tempting you to believe that you would find more happiness if you just had that one thing – it is here that you need to bring the antidote of God's promise. He is enough. He is here. He cares. He will provide as the all-sufficient One what He determines is necessary for every moment. You need not longingly covet

something you don't yet have because you currently have God, and He is more than enough.

3. So, instead of that click on your computer screen which takes you to the website which feeds your covetous heart, you need to take that time to lay your heart before the Lord in prayer and remind yourself of His great and precious promises of nearness and provision. Fight the restlessness of anxious plotting and covetous hankering with the resting of soul in the greatness of your compassionate and good God. Guard your heart by seeing stuff rightly, and by seeing God rightly.

d. *Learn Contentment*

- i. The next part of the prescription for this sickness of heart is to learn contentment. So, guard your heart and learn contentment. That is the Spirit's direction to you to keep you from breaking the 10th commandment and spiraling into all kinds of other sins. This idea of learning contentment is worthy of its own sermon series, but let me put it before your heart from three texts with three quick truths about contentment.

ii. *The growth of contentment – Phil. 4:11-13*

1. In Philippians 4 we find the most fundamental and helpful text in all of Scripture about a contented heart. And that is *the* antidote to covetousness. You must guard your heart from coveting, but you must then replace that coveting tendency with an ever-deepening contentment from the Lord. And this contentment is something that must be learned. But it is not a point of information which you learn and add to your theological knowledge and then move onto other things. No, contentment is something you grow deeper into and never out of. From a Roman jail cell, Paul wrote to the Philippian church which had its beginnings from Paul and Silas singing in midnight in a Philippian jail cell because they had cast out a demon from a girl who was making money for some influential men. So, the Philippians had seen Paul in the greatest of need and had seen him contented in the Lord. And here he was in jail again, several years later. And the Philippian church heard about it and sent him money to help meet his needs. So, he is thanking them in the book of Philippians, but he can't help but also teach them as he thanks them. He says this in Philippians 4:11-13.
2. Paul has learned in any and every circumstance what the secret is to being without covetousness. He can face anything – even the martyr's death which is soon to come to him – because he has grown more and more in this contentment. And what is the secret to this contentment? It is the supernatural strength available to us in Christ. He has Christ, therefore, Paul has everything he needs. He doesn't need out of jail to be content. He doesn't need more food to be content. He doesn't need money to buy a blanket to be content. He doesn't even need health and

life in this world. He has already said in chapter 1 of this letter that for him, to live is Christ and to die is gain. He has Christ, therefore He is strengthened by Christ to face anything in this life and be sufficient in Christ. Beloved – you must grow more and more into this. It is possible to go your whole Christian journey and not grow much in contentment. It is possible to always be irritated and flustered by your circumstances and lack of provisions. It is possible to be in Christ and never learn the joy of possessing this rare jewel of contentment in Christ. He is sufficient and you can rest completely in Him and be sufficient in Him – whether you have plenty or are facing great physical need. This is the growth of contentment.

iii. The gain of contentment – 1 Tim. 6:6-10

1. Then in 1 Timothy 6 we see the gain of contentment. I know this is a quick-hitting overview of contentment, but you should desire to grow in contentment because we learn in 1 Timothy 6 that godliness with contentment is great gain. This is said in contrast to the false teachers who think that godliness is a means to great physical gain. In other words they think they can use the truths of God to bring about great personal advantage to themselves. And this is true – they can get great personal wealth through pedaling the wares of religion in the name of God. If that wasn't a successful model then it wouldn't keep being used. It does work!
2. But what the Spirit counters with in 1 Timothy 6 is that true gain is found in true godliness with the contentment that Paul described in Philippians 4. So, verse 6 says this . . .
3. You see the danger here of your discontented and covetous heart. It endangers your soul if it leads you to the love of money which has caused some to walk away from the faith. But for the Christian who is learning contentment in Christ they are free from the love of stuff and they are liberated by the strength of Christ to walk in a supernatural peace and joy in the Sovereign care of God. That is the gain of contentment.

iv. The goodness of contentment – 1 Tim. 6:17-19

1. Then, just look down briefly at verses 17-19 to see the goodness of contentment. If we grow in contentment and gain it more and more then this is how we can approach life. *Read 6:17-19*
2. In the midst of our present abundance of riches as Americans, we ought not set our hopes on those riches, but rather we must hope entirely upon God because riches come and go. We can enjoy what God has given, and we must be rich in good works as we use the abundance of money and stuff to serve others and to bless others. In this way we store up for ourselves treasures in Heaven which will be

to the praise and honor of God and which will prove to be true and lasting life.

Conclusion: So, beloved, has the Spirit of God diagnosed your heart sickness this morning? Have you heard his words during this spiritual check-up? Do you know the prognosis if you leave this coveting heart unchecked? Are you compelled by the grace of God to pursue this rare jewel of contentment of heart? Will you hear and heed the words of Christ to guard your heart against covetousness and will you follow the example of Paul to learn contentment in Christ alone? As C.S. Lewis once said, “He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God alone.”

Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! (Ps. 119:36 ESV)