

**Exodus 20: 17 – The Ten Commandments, part 10, “You shall not covet.”<sup>1</sup>**



**Main point:** Be at peace with what you have.

**Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.**

**Background:** The Ten Commandments are God’s laws of love. God saved his people from slavery in Egypt, and then God defines the relationship: I love you, and this is how you love me back.

Exodus 20:1-16

- The first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other God before me.” God says: You’re my number one, because I saved you and made you my special people. Therefore, make ME number one for you!
- The second commandment: Don’t make an image of me. Don’t try to create me in YOUR image, to do what YOU want. Trust me and follow me as I am.
- The third commandment: Don’t use my name in vain. Wear my name well, reflecting Me.
- The fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day. God provides!
- The fifth commandment: Honor your mother and father: made in God’s image; legacy of respect continues because they gave us life.
- The sixth commandment: Do not murder. Don’t be life takers, literally and figuratively.
- The seventh commandment: Do not be unfaithful. Keep your promises.
- The eighth commandment: Do not steal. Trust God, and build up treasures in heaven, things that cannot be destroyed.
- The ninth commandment: Don’t bear false witness. Don’t lie; keep God’s language of truth.

**Study:** Exodus 20: 17: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

1. *So: What is the tenth commandment? What does “covet” mean?*
  - a. To want what someone else has.
  - b. Rephrase: Don’t be jealous of what your neighbor has that you don’t have.
2. *Review: Who are the commandments about?*
  - a. The first four are about our relationship with God; vertical.
  - b. The rest are about how we treat others; horizontal. This one, like number 9, specifically names “your neighbor.”
3. *What is the list of things that God says not to covet?*
  - a. Your neighbor’s house
  - b. Your neighbor’s wife
  - c. Your neighbor’s male servant or female servant
  - d. Your neighbor’s ox or donkey
  - e. To sum up: “anything that is your neighbors”
4. *I wonder why the commandment includes this list, rather than just the last part about “anything”?*

---

<sup>1</sup> Some material gratefully borrowed from Fellowship Monrovia: <https://madeforfellowship.com/>

5. *What sorts of things can we covet?*
  - a. Material things: homes, clothes, cars, shoes, books ....
  - b. Non-material, intangible things: talents, gifts, relationships, looks ....
6. *What is the condition of the heart when we're jealous? What are we spending our time on?*
  - a. Pained; ugly; obsessed; preoccupied; greedy; unhappy; "my day/life is ruined"
  - b. Thinking about self; "I have to have it"
7. *Who is in control when we feel that way: You or the thing you want?*
8. *Our world encourages this sense of comparison, greed, "the grass is greener." What's the opposite of those feelings?*
  - a. Peace; satisfied; focused on others; generous
  - b. CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:12-13: The apostle Paul speaking to his friends in Philippi, from jail...

<sup>12</sup>I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. <sup>13</sup>I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

9. *What, or rather Who, does Paul look to for strength to be content? Why?*
  - a. Paul looks to God! Because God does and will provide everything Paul, and we, need.
10. *When we covet, when we're unsatisfied with what we have, when we're discouraged by what we don't have ... what are we telling God?*
  - a. "You're not enough; I don't trust you to provide for me; I want more than what you're providing for me." MORE MORE MORE!
11. *So: How do we learn to be content?*
  - a. Rather than focusing on what we don't have, focus on what we do have.
  - b. Trust God to provide all we need.
  - c. Enjoy to the fullest all that you have, all that you CAN do, right now.
  - d. Live in the present, not in the future of "if I only had..."
  - e. Practice: **count your blessings!** Right now, what are your blessings?

This commandment, as with all the others, is about LOVE. God says, I took you out of slavery in Egypt. I'm going to take good care of you. Trust me. If I haven't provided it, you don't need it. I love you!

Summary of The Ten Commandments: A love letter! An invitation to *love*, not a burden of law. It's a beautiful invitation to relationship with God, who says, "I love you; here are 10 ways for you to love me back."

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

## The Ten Commandments

**Exodus 20: 1-17:** And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath ...

<sup>7</sup> “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain ....

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates....

<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”