

LEARNING TO BE CONTENT  
Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 10  
Exodus 20:17  
Rick Warren

Milton Bradley has a new game called Mall Madness. It's a board game like Monopoly. The description goes like this: Will you be the first to lose your money? You are let lose in a shopping mall with \$200. Go to it and spend it all. Empty your pockets first and you will win the game. When you've spent every cent your marker moves triumphantly into the winner's space labeled 'broke' and you win."

A recent survey of female teenagers discovered that 93% of female teenagers said that their number one favorite pastime was shopping. That beat out dating as the number one activity. One guy told me "If my wife doesn't go shopping at least three times a week, I send her a get well card."

Today we're going to wrap up the last in this series on the Ten Commandment. The Tenth Commandment says "You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor." In the next 60 days you are going to be deluged with Christmas catalogues and you will not hear the word covet used very often but you will see plenty of examples of it. This is the season of coveting we're coming upon. I don't know a more appropriate message to end this series as we begin the Christmas season than a message on coveting.

What is coveting? Covet: the uncontrolled desire to acquire.

The desire to acquire in itself is not bad. God put it in you. God made little squirrels and He gave them the desire to acquire nuts. And He made birds and He gave them the desire to acquire straw to build nests. And He filled the world with all kinds of exciting, wonderful, good, desirable things and He's give you the desire to acquire them. That in and of itself is not bad. But anything uncontrolled is a problem. God says there are some things that are off limits. They are not yours to want. They will harm you. So it must be controlled.

It is hard, in our culture, to want to be content with what you have. This morning I want us to look at the effect of always wanting more. The Bible says there are five very specific effects when I don't control this drive to acquire, this coveting.

1. Fatigue.

In our push to get more (and never in history have we been so pushed to get so much so quickly) we overwork and take on second

jobs. Everybody in the family works. It's the material rat-race and everybody's tired.

"Do not wear yourself out to be rich, have the wisdom to show restraint." It's dumb to wear yourself out just trying to get more.

## 2. Debt.

Eccl. 5: "The more money you have, the more money you spend." Coveting destroys budgets. We think the problem is I just don't make enough money. No, it's not that you don't make enough money -- you want too much. A lot of things we think are needs are really greeds. The average American puts \$1300 on credit for every \$1000 he makes. That's caused deficit spending and the only people who can get away with that are the government. And they won't get away with it forever. It doesn't work that way. So because we want more we get further and further in debt. It always costs more to have more. If the grass is greener on the other side of the fence you can bet the water bill's higher too.

## 3. Worry.

Eccl 5:12 "A working man can get a good night's sleep. But the rich man has so much that he stays awake worrying." When we focus on things we always inevitably worry. The more you have, the more you have to worry about. How am I going to protect it?

How am I going to save it? How am I going to invest it? How am I going to insure it? How am I going to avoid taxes on it? How am I going to keep from losing it? The more you have, the more you've got to worry about. The blue collar man works a hard day's labor, goes home, watches TV, loves his wife, goes to sleep, sound. The white collar man comes home with his briefcase, he brings his work home with him, he's frustrated, he's thinking about it all night, he tosses and turns. I read a study that said insomnia increases with income.

You add these first three together -- fatigue, debt, worry and you get the fourth one.

## 4. Conflict.

James 4:1 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the desires that battle within you?" Conflict comes when we're always wanting more. The number one cause of divorce is financial tension. Arguments over money, over possessions. When you have what I want there's going to be conflict over it.

God says, "Don't covet what is somebody else's." Don't covet somebody else's job, car, house, wife, husband. God says don't do it.

## 5. Dissatisfaction.

Eccl 5:10 "You will never be satisfied if you long to be rich. You will never get all you want." The Living Bible says "It's foolish to think wealth brings happiness!" Things can bring happiness for a while. But the thrill doesn't last. The excitement wears off. When you get something and open the package you think, Wow, this is great. But after a while it's not so great any more. You're bored with that piece of art or that furniture or that car. Why? Why don't things keep you permanently happy? Because things don't change. Human beings like change. If things don't change we get bored with them. That's why we have a thing called fashion or style. Because things don't change we get bored with them and we have to have something new. Pretty soon you have to redecorate, or remodel or repair or replace or at least rearrange it. Things don't give permanent happiness. I wonder how many of you are still thrilled about the Christmas gift you got last Christmas. You don't even remember what you got last Christmas! Things do not bring lasting happiness. It's a temporary thrill. And coveting is the number one reason for dissatisfaction in our world.

### What is the antidote to coveting?

The antidote to coveting is contentment. Paul says, "I've learned the secret of being content whether living in plenty or in want." Circle "learned". Contentment is something you have to learn. It does not come natural. I am not by nature a contented person and neither are you. It is not automatic. You have to learn to be content. It is an education process. One of the ways you learn it is by realizing the effect of always wanting more -- those five things.

## II. HOW TO LEARN CONTENTMENT

### 1. RESIST COMPARING MYSELF TO OTHERS.

Comparing always leads to coveting. II Cor. 10:12 "We do not dare classify or compare ourselves. It is not wise." That means it's dumb! If you're comparing yourself -- houses, cars, jobs,

looks, clothes -- it's stupid. It's not wise. God says you just create dissatisfaction.

How do you react when you see somebody with a nicer car? Do you say, "I wish I had that" or can you just be glad that they've got it. How do you react when you see somebody with a nicer house? or more beautiful furniture? One of the greatest lessons you can learn, learn to admire without having to acquire. I don't have to own everything to enjoy it. If the only things you enjoy are the things you own, you're going to be miserable a lot of your life. You can't own everything. Learn to admire without having to acquire.

Why do we compare? The Bible says don't do it. We compare because in our society the way we keep score is by possessions. We're insecure. We're always looking around and asking "How am I doing?" as if net worth and self worth were the same thing. They're not. Your net worth has absolutely no relationship to your self worth. You can be a millionaire and a jerk or be poor and be wonderful. Don't compare net worth to self worth.

"When we long to be rich, we are a prey to temptation. We get trapped. [Circle "we get trapped"] into all sorts of foolish and dangerous ambitions which will eventually plunge us into ruin." Things can control us. You can be possessed by your possessions if you don't watch out. People will sacrifice values, morals, integrity, all kinds of things in order to get more. They'll even sacrifice relationships to get an additional dollar.

Did you hear about the lady that won the lottery? She won 17 million dollars. She called home to her live-in boyfriend, "I've just won the lottery. I'm worth 17 million dollars. Start packing." The boy friend said, "Great, warm weather or cold weather," She said, "It doesn't matter as long as you're gone when I get home." They'll sacrifice relationships.

## 2. REJOICE IN WHAT I DO HAVE.

Appreciate what you've got and be grateful to God. Open your eyes. Ecc. 5:19 "If God gives a man wealth and property he should be grateful and enjoy what he has. It is a gift from God." Circle "grateful", "enjoy" and "gift". God says I want you to enjoy and be grateful for what you've got. It's a gift. You wouldn't have anything if it weren't for God. It's all a gift from God.

We get into a trap I call When and Then Thinking. When and Then Thinking says, "When I get \_\_\_\_\_, then I'll be happy." You fill in the blank. Wrong! No, you won't. You'll

be happy for a little while but it won't last because something else has happened. You've got to get the newer, bigger, better, more improved model. Next year it won't be so neat anymore. You've got to learn how to cut through that.

What are you waiting on to make you happy? When I get married then I'll be happy. When I get out of this marriage then I'll be happy. When I have kids then I'll be happy. You are as happy as you want to be. It's your choice. Forget the When and Then Thinking. Happiness is not getting whatever you want. Happiness is enjoying whatever you have. The fact is God wants you to enjoy what you've got. He commands you to enjoy what you've got.

2 Tim says God has richly provided us with everything for our enjoyment. God wants you to enjoy what you already have. Rejoice in it. God enjoys watching you enjoy what He's given you. You know that, if you've been a parent. I enjoy watching my kids enjoy what I've given them. God enjoys watching you enjoy what He's given you.

Prov. 15:27 "A greedy man brings trouble to his family." One of the marks of maturity is when you can say "enough's enough, I'm happy." There are two ways to have enough in life: get more or want less.

### 3. RELEASE WHAT I HAVE TO HELP OTHERS.

God doesn't want to just bless you for your own benefit. He wants you to share it, help other people with it. He's watching you to see how much you give away. I Tim 6:17-19 "Tell those who are rich, not to be proud and not to trust in their money which will soon be gone. Tell them to use their money to do good to give happily to those in need, always with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven -- it is the only safe investment for eternity." This is a very, very important verse.

First, who's it talking to? "Tell those who are rich". Who does that involve. If you're an American you're rich. I don't care if you're on welfare, if you're an American you're rich. In the world, the people in this room are in the top 2% of income of the world. You're rich, no matter how little you make, because you're an American. This verse is talking to us. The question is, Is it possible to be wealthy and not be materialistic? Yes.

It's possible to be wealthy and not materialistic. Materialistic is an attitude. You can be poor and greedy or rich and greedy. You can be poor and contented or wealthy and contented. It's an attitude not the amount that God's talking about here.

## Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 10

How can I be wealthy and not materialistic? As long as you follow the four precautions in this verse. If you follow these four things you can be as wealthy as you want and you won't be materialistic.

1. Don't become proud of your wealth. Don't think you're better than somebody because you've got more money than they've got.

2. Don't put your trust in money. Don't look to it for your security. Security is not in your bank account. Your security is in God. Bank accounts can be lost overnight in a million different ways. Don't put your security in money, no matter how much or how little you have.

3. Use your money to do good. Don't waste it. If you've got a lot of money, don't squander it. Don't blow it. Use it to do good.

4. Give cheerfully. The Bible says that the more we receive the more we are to give. Giving is the cure for the disease of materialism because it is the opposite. The root of materialism is the word "get" -- get, get, get, get... The opposite of getting is giving. So every time I give to somebody else, a friend, my tithe, ... I'm breaking the grip of materialism in my life. It's saying "I can get along without this." It's a spiritual victory every time you're generous.

God says, you do these four things and you'll be OK. You're handling it all right. The benefit: "You will be storing up real treasure in heaven." The Bible says every time you give away, you're storing it up. It's like you're sending it on ahead and God's taking an account of it. You're sending it on ahead, every time you give.

That reminds me of the story of the guy who died and got to heaven and saw his best friend drive by in a Mercedes. He asked St. Peter "What's that?" Peter: "The transportation you're given in heaven is based on how much you've given, sent on ahead.

That guy was very generous. He gave us a lot to work with. He's got a Mercedes." Guy: "What bout me?" Peter: "Well you weren't so generous." and he gave him a moped. He was kind of sad until about two weeks later he saw Pastor Glenn come by on roller skates.

What do you send on ahead? Acts 20:35 "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving." If you know that, that is a mark of maturity. If you don't know that it's a mark of immaturity. It's thrilling, as parents, when you kids grow up to a point that

they get more excited about what they're giving at Christmas than what they're getting. That's a mark of maturity.

It's true of Christians too. When you get more excited about what you give away than what you get, that's a mark of maturity.

When I see my kids share with each other, as a father, it melts my heart. When God looks down on you and sees you sharing what He's blessed you with other people who are in need, it blesses His heart.

#### 4. REFOCUS ON WHAT'S GOING TO LAST.

Give your attention to permanent values. Reorganize your life around eternal priorities. II Cor. 4:18 "We fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever." Everything you see is temporary. Nothing you see is going to last. Everything you see in the world is eventually going to decay or rust or wear out or fall apart -- it will eventually not exist, because all possessions are temporary. The only things that really last for eternity are things you can't see -- relationship to God, relationship to others, values, freedom -- things you can't see.

The worse thing about materialism is it clouds our vision of God. We begin to think that all there is really to life is just things and that's so wrong. There is so much more to life than just getting things. Our perspective gets warped.

Jesus told a story about it one time. He said there was a guy who was a real successful business man and had these barns full of wheat and stuff and had a bumper crop year. He said as a result the guy said "I know what I'll do. I'll just build bigger barns." It never occurred to him to share any of it. It never occurred to him to tithe on it. It never occurred to him that there might be other things he could do with it beside store it up. God said, "You fool." Thinking all there is to life is just getting more, moving up the ladder. You're not going to take any of it with you any way. You only get to use it 60, 70 years. If you leave too much of it to your kids, it will probably ruin them. So why are you beating yourself in the head to get more and more and more. There is more to life than things.

Luke 12:15 "A man's true life is not made up of the things he owns no matter how rich he may be." Culture says if I have a little I'm worth a little. That's not true. The cross says, you're worth a lot.

I think we need to do a periodic checkup and ask the tough question that says, "What am I really living for? Is the primary goal of my life just to get more? Is that the only way I'm keeping score in my life, by my balance sheet? What do I think about the most? What do I talk about the most? What do I spend time the most on? Happiness does not come from possessions, it comes from knowing your purpose in life. Why in the world did God make me and why am I here. What does he want to do with my life? Where am I going when I die? Purpose.

A funeral in Beverly Hills. A wealthy widow who was worth millions and millions died and people gathered around the edge of the casket and somebody sad, "It's so sad. She had so much to live for." The person next to her said, "No. She had so much to live on. She had nothing to live for."

What are you living for? Just trying to get more? It's not a good enough goal. I'd suggest you reexamine your priorities. What am I living for? What's going to happen when I die? All that wealth will do me no good at all. What I did with it here on earth will do me some good if I use it in the right way.

I want to challenge you to challenge the myth of having more will make me more happy. Each of us has to make a choice, is my life style going to be determined by culture or by Christ, by the Master or by Madison Avenue. What's really important?

If you want to break the materialism grip in your life, buying things we don't need with money that we don't have, take these four steps.

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Exodus 20:16 "You shall not covet...anything that belongs to your neighbor."

"COVET": the \_\_\_\_\_ desire to acquire

I. THE EFFECT OF ALWAYS WANTING MORE

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"Do not wear yourself out to be rich; have the wisdom to show restraint."

Pr. 23:4

- \_\_\_\_\_

"The more money you have, the more money you spend..."

Ecc 5:11 (LB)

- \_\_\_\_\_

"A working man ... can get a good night's sleep. But the rich man has so much that he stays awake worrying."

Eccl 5:12 (GN)

- \_\_\_\_\_

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the desires that battle with you?"

James 4:1

- \_\_\_\_\_

"You will never be satisfied if you long to be rich. You will never get all you want."

Ecc. 5:10 (GN)

(LB) "It's foolish to think wealth brings happiness!"

(Paul) "I have learned the secret of being content...  
whether living in plenty or in want."

Phil 4:12

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2 Cor. 10:12

"When we long to be rich, we are a prey to temptation; We get trapped into all sorts of foolish and dangerous ambitions which eventually plunge us into ruin."

I Tim. 6:9 (JB)

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"If God gives a man wealth and property .. he should be grateful and enjoy what he has... it is a gift from God."

Ecc 5:19 (GN)

"It is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else."

Eccl. 6:9 (GN)

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