

## The Myth of More

Exodus 20:17

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This week I learned something brand-new. Most ads for non-digital watches have the time set to 10:10 to make us think of a smiling face. We're more likely to buy something that looks happy.

Capitalizing on our inherent dissatisfaction, the worldwide marketing machine spends approximately \$250 billion annually to make us unhappy with who we are, with what we have, with how we look, and with what we do. At its core, most advertising is designed to make us feel ungrateful about what we have and to feed our greed for what we don't have.

In the 1970s, the average person viewed between 500-1,600 ads per day. In 2007, an individual was exposed to approximately 5,000 ads daily. With the explosion of the internet and social media, studies now estimate up to 10,000 ads bombard us each day!

We're being sold stuff all the time...and it's not all that difficult to do because most of us are already dissatisfied due to our default setting of discontentment.

*One researcher summarized his findings: "Consumers encounter countless advertising images during the course of everyday life. Many of these images are idealized, representing life more as it is imagined than as it actually exists... repeated exposure to idealized images raises consumers' expectations and influences their perceptions of how their lives ought to be, particularly in terms of their material possessions. The result of both these processes, for some consumers, is discontent and an increased desire for more."*

In other words, advertising simply capitalizes on our coveting hearts.

In a post called, "How to Motivate Your Prospects," I learned about what ads are designed to do: *"As an advertiser, it is your job to create discontentment inside the psyche of your prospects and make them desire the change that you're offering."* One commentator offers this insight while admitting a disregard for the tenth commandment: *"Because producers covet consumers' money, they need to get consumers to covet their goods."*

While some advertising is altruistic, it's fair to say most advertising strives to influence us to spend money we do not have on things we do not need.

I'm reminded of something Will Rogers often said: *We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have, to impress people we don't like.*

In contrast to our culture of coveting, the tenth commandment dispels the myth of more.

Here's our main idea: *The key to not coveting what others have is to be content with what you already have.*

Let's review the summary statements we've been using to help us remember the 10 Commandments.

1. One God
2. No idols
3. Revere His Name
4. Remember to Rest
5. Honor Parents
6. No murder
7. No adultery
8. No stealing
9. No lying
- 10.No coveting

We'll finish our Written in Stone series next weekend with a message entitled, "Christ and the Commandments."

Let's read Exodus 20:17 together: ***"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."***

The Hebrew word "**covet**" is used both positively and negatively. The positive meaning is a "*strong desire or delight.*" The negative use refers to, "*An excessively strong desire to have something that belongs to someone else.*" In addition, it means to "*grasp for more; an inordinate, ungoverned, selfish desire so strong that it compels someone to violate another person's property.*"

One pastor conveys coveting this way: *“An overt dissatisfaction and discontent with what God has provided and a longing desire for what He has forbidden.”*

Whether a desire is good or not depends on the object of the desire.

- **Good desires.** The positive use of the word *“covet”* is used in Genesis 2:9 to describe the trees in Eden as delightful or *“pleasant to the sight.”* Psalm 19:10 says God’s Word is *“more to be desired...than gold.”* Some of us use the word “covet” in this good sense when we’re struggling with something and we say to a fellow believer, *“I covet your prayers.”*
- **Bad desires.** The negative use of this word is found in Genesis 3:6 when Eve found the tree *“to be desired”* and coveted what she was not supposed to have. Proverbs 21:25-26 says: *“The desire of the sluggard kills him...all day long he craves and craves...”*

In Joshua 7:21, Achan craved what he wasn’t supposed to have and when he got it, he hid it from others: *“When I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I **coveted** them and took them.”* Sadly, because he coveted, he brought defeat to a nation and death to himself and his family.

Ahab coveted Naboth’s vineyard and ended up murdering him so he could take his vineyard. David coveted Bathsheba, which led to the sins of adultery and murder. Judas had a covetous heart and later betrayed Christ.

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### **Characteristics of Coveting**

Let’s consider some of the characteristics of coveting.

1. **Coveting hits close to home.** The word *“neighbor”* is used three times to remind us how we’re related to others in community. We seldom covet those things far from us but it’s those things we see with our neighbors every day which are so alluring and enticing.

A year and a half ago, we traded in our 12-year-old minivan for a used Honda Pilot. We decided to get the basic trim model, with very few bells

and whistles. We really like it. That is until a couple weeks ago, when during dinner, I saw our neighbors pull out of their garage in a newer Pilot with a lot more features than ours. Beth must have seen coveting on my countenance, so she asked what I was looking at. I told her I was happy for our neighbors, and I wasn't coveting. She smiled and said, "*I never mentioned coveting.*" A couple days later, I circled back to this conversation and confessed to her, "*Actually, I was coveting.*"

2. **Coveting is strictly forbidden.** Two times we read: "***You shall not covet.***" This double negation is found only in this commandment. Because God knows how much we will struggle not to covet, He repeats it twice to reinforce its importance. Kevin DeYoung says this is "*no sweet, safe, little sin.*" This is underscored in Ephesians 5:3: "***...covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.***"
3. **The command against coveting is very specific.** God gives three detailed categories which represent all that a neighbor could have...and all that we might want.
  - **Property.** The word for "***house***" can refer to a neighbor's dwelling, the furnishings inside, and the land surrounding it. When these commands were repeated forty years later in Deuteronomy 5:21, we're also told not to covet "***his field.***" Micah 2:2 says, "***They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away.***" I guess that means we shouldn't covet our neighbor's lawn or landscaping.
  - **People.** The verse continues, "***...you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant.***" If we go back to the second giving of the law in Deuteronomy 5:21, we discover the prohibition against coveting a neighbor's wife is listed first. Listen to how careful Job is to make sure he is not coveting his neighbor's wife in Job 31:9 "***If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door.***"
  - **Possessions.** An "***ox***" was trained to work the fields, was a major part of a person's wealth, and was one of the specified animals for sacrifice. Oxen often represented the 12 tribes of Israel. A

“*donkey*” was considered unclean, but was also valuable, being used for transportation and the tilling of the ground.

In the event our coveting doesn’t fit into the categories of property, people, or possessions, God closes any lingering loopholes with the phrase, “*or anything that is your neighbor’s.*” While most of us don’t covet oxen and donkeys, we do crave bigger houses, nicer cars, and newer toys.

- 4. This command is unique.** To my knowledge, there is nothing like this command in other codes from other civilizations. I don’t know of any laws on the books that criminalize coveting. If there were, we’d all be in jail.
- 5. Coveting is an invisible sin.** With the tenth command, we move from actions to the realm of attitude. The other commandments (except for the first), deal with deeds, while the last one depicts our desires. This sin is hard to spot in others, and in our own hearts, because it deals with the internal, not external. It’s directed at what we *want* to have.

Philip Ryken writes: “*If God had not given us the tenth commandment, we might be tempted to think that outward obedience is all we need to offer.*” Francis Schaeffer once said, “*‘Thou shalt not covet’ is the internal commandment which shows the man who thinks himself to be moral that he really needs a Savior.*”

- 6. The prohibition against coveting may be the most often broken commandment.** The Apostle Paul had a problem with coveting according to Romans 7:7-8: “*...For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness...*”
- 7. Coveting is the root of all other sins.** At the root of every sin is the belief God has somehow not given us everything we think we need. Colossians 3:5 tells us to “*put to death what is earthly in you: covetousness, which is idolatry.*” Shai Linne writes: “*Whenever we break the tenth commandment, we’re also breaking the first commandment...if God were to judge you based on this one command*

*alone, is there anyone who would feel confident standing before a holy God?"*

- 8. Coveting comes with a warning.** When you sense coveting rising within, watch out. James 4:2: ***“You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel...”*** Sinful deeds start with sinful desires.

Ken Trivette shares about a Philadelphia woman who died in 1930 without a will, leaving an estate worth \$17 million. Even though she had only one known relative and less than a dozen friends, more than 26,000 people from 47 states and 29 foreign countries tried to claim her estate! In their fight for money, these coveting imposters committed perjury, faked family records, changed their own names, and altered data in family Bibles. As a result, 12 were arrested, 10 received jail sentences, two committed suicide, and three were murdered. Coveting can quickly consume us.

Once, Jesus was asked to tell a man’s brother to divide up their inheritance. Jesus understood what was really going on and called the man out for coveting in Luke 12:15: ***“Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*** Jesus strongly contradicts the values of our coveting culture. If you have a covetous character, no matter what you have, it will never be enough. Your stuff will never satisfy. Your relationships will never be good enough. You will always want something you don’t have.

I appreciate the perspective of one pastor: *“We in America have had more materially...than all the rest of the world and yet it has not made us more contented, but only more covetous.”*

### **Diagnosing Discontentment**

If you find yourself saying (or thinking) these words: *“If only I had...”* you may have a problem with discontentment. You may think if you had a better job, a better family, a better phone, a better church, a better car, a husband (or a better one), a wife (or a better one), more kids, less kids, or a better sports team to cheer for, then you’d be happy. Listen. If you’re not satisfied with what you have now, you won’t be satisfied should you get what you’re wishing you had.

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Here are six clues to see if you have a coveting attitude.

1. When you do a lot of grumbling and complaining (1 Corinthians 10:10).
2. When you become envious of what others have (2 Corinthians 12:20).
3. When you have a preoccupation with your possessions (Luke 12:16-21).
4. When you become stingy with what God has given you (Proverbs 28:22).
5. When God is getting your leftovers (Malachi 1:6-14).
6. When you love things and use people rather than using things and loving people (Romans 13:8-10).

I heard about a man who was tired of his friends owning nicer homes than his, so he went to see a realtor to put his home on the market and began searching for a new one. One day he came across a listing for a home that checked all the boxes. He excitedly called his realtor and said he wanted to schedule a walk-through. To which the realtor replied, *“Sir, that’s the home you already live in!”*

### **The Cure for Coveting**

The cure for coveting is to learn the secret of contentment as found in Philippians 4:11-13: ***“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 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. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”***

Even the Apostle Paul had to be taught how to be content. The word ***“secret”*** means to be initiated. Once you learn the secret, you’ll join a small club called contentment.

Paul chose to be content ***“in any and every circumstance,”*** whether he had a lot or he had little. This is a sweeping statement which covers every condition of life. The phrase, ***“have learned”*** means to discover by experience and to enter a new condition.

Beth and I enjoyed watching the latest season of Alone, which took place in the Arctic. The show tests the survival instincts of humans by pushing them to their limits in extreme conditions while isolating them from others. In Season 7, anyone

who lasted 100 days would receive \$1 million. I won't give a spoiler alert but one man, who was struggling with the horrible weather, lack of food, and missing his family, finally tapped out. As he contemplated missing out on a million dollars, he made this startling statement: *"I realized everything I want I already have!"* Then, he went home to his family.

How can you become satisfied in every situation so you can say, *"Everything I want I already have?"* You might want to lean forward to hear it because it's a secret: *God has so ordered the world and your personal circumstances that no matter what situation you are in right now, you have everything you truly need to be content.* It's a myth that you always need more.

Philip Ryken writes, *"Contentment is the positive side of the last commandment; it is the remedy for covetous desire...contentment means wanting what God wants for us rather than what we want for us."* Our deepest satisfaction can only come from God, not from a change in our circumstances. As C.S. Lewis once said, *"God cannot give us peace and happiness apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."*

Philippians 4:13 may be one of the most quoted verses in the Bible, and maybe the most misused as well: ***"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*** Sometimes this Scripture is used like a formula which allows us to do whatever we want to do. However, this passage is not speaking about winning at sports, or promoting positive mental attitude, or a self-centered "name it, claim it" theology. In context, the meaning is this: *I can be content in whatever circumstance I'm in because of the strengthening work of Christ in my life.*

Incidentally, the second half of Hebrews 13:5 is also a favorite for many of us and is also often quoted out of context: ***"I will never leave you nor forsake you."*** That is a fabulous truth, isn't it? But notice, in context, this promise is also connected to contentment: ***"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.'"***

Once you see the beauty of Jesus and allow Him to be your full satisfaction, knowing He will never leave you nor forsake you, there's nothing more you need. Let's pull these two passages together: *Because I have Christ and He has me and He will never leave or abandon me, I can be content in all things because of the strength He gives me.* When I constantly covet what I don't have, I'm saying I'm not trusting in the power, presence, and provision of Christ.

You can have everything you think you want and if you don't have Jesus, you have nothing. If you have Jesus, you have everything. *Unless Jesus is enough, you'll never have enough!* The reason many of us are discontent is we really don't believe Jesus is enough.

Beth remembers several times when she was growing up making comments to her parents about how rich somebody was because they had a nice car and a nice house. Beth's dad would gently correct her, saying something like this: *"They may have money. But we are rich in Christ."*

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### **A Contentment Course Correction**

Here are some ways we can correct our coveting and grow in contentment.

**1. Guard your heart.** Proverbs 4:23: ***"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."*** Be alert and attentive. Some of us need to have our desires reduced, not our possessions increased. F.B. Meyer put it this way: *"Contentment consists not in adding more fuel, but in taking away some fire."* Epicurus said, *"If you want to make a man happy, add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires."*

**2. Admit that places, possessions, or people won't ultimately satisfy.** Ecclesiastes 5:10: ***"He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity."*** At its heart, coveting is an attempt to improve upon God. Find your satisfaction in the Savior alone. Here's a practical suggestion. When contemplating the purchase of another possession, ask yourself this question: *"Is this a need or a greed?"*

About 30 years ago I heard Erwin Lutzer make a statement I've never forgotten: *"The key to contentment is not having everything you want, but wanting everything you already have."*

**3. Give your way out of covetousness.** Nothing cures greed like giving because coveting can't live in a generous heart. Acts 20:33-35: ***"I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel...remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"***

Speaking of giving...

I'd like to take some time to celebrate how God is using the generosity of His people at Edgewood in remarkable ways. I echo what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 8:3 about the Corinthian believers who continued giving during a famine: ***“For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord.”***

Edgewood exists to make disciples who make disciples by gathering, growing, giving, and going with the gospel, all for the glory of God.

## **2021 Financial Update**

Here are some highlights related to our *give* value at the halfway mark of 2021.

### **General and Missions Giving**

- Through the end of June, the generous people of Edgewood have given over \$1.1 million so far this year.
- We're on pace to receive an estimated \$2.1 million in 2021, which would be \$75,000 *over* budget.
- This amount does *not* include gifts that have come in directed to our building fund.

### **Current Cash Reserves**

- By God's grace, we currently have over \$700,000 in our reserve fund.
- We see our reserves as an emergency fund to cover several months of expenses if needed.
- The deacons worked hard to not allow this fund to go below \$400,000 during construction.
- All to God's glory, we did not need to use any reserve funds during Covid.

### **Building Loan Balance**

- We were initially approved for a loan up to \$5 million.
- Because of the surplus in the reserve fund and the generous outpouring on “Giving Weekend,” our initial loan amount was significantly less than this.
- Our loan balance one year ago was \$3.45 million. A year later, thanks to your generosity, it's down to \$2.65 million!

- Even though Grow Time officially ended in December 2020, \$90,000 has come in so far this year to help pay down our principal.
- Incidentally, our regular giving did not decrease during our building project, which often happens during building campaigns.

### **Projected Mortgage Payoff**

- Our original loan was for 20 years with monthly payments coming from our general budget.
- If no more Grow Time giving comes in, our current payoff will be in 14 years.
- Our projected payoff will be in nine years if we maintain our current Grow Time giving and surplus giving continues.
- If we're able to continue in this way, we'll realize a savings of \$800,000 in interest over the life of the loan.
- We'll be able to pay the loan off even sooner, and save more money in reduced interest payments, if more giving is directed toward the loan!

### **Missions Giving**

- Our missions committee and deacons are committed to increasing the percentage of giving to missions.
- Several years ago, approximately 11% of our budget was directed to domestic and foreign missions. Missions is currently at 12.7% of our budget. That means when you give to Edgewood, over 12% of your giving goes to support missions.
- We've intentionally raised our monthly support amount for our Go Team partners.
- We will continue to focus on our neighbors and the nations, particularly the least reached parts for the world.
- Here are just a few examples of how God is mobilizing us to live on mission cross-culturally:
  - Emma Janacek is serving in Mexico right now.
  - Shalom Warrington recently returned from orientation with Christar as she prepares to serve the unreached deaf community in the middle east.
  - Pastor Kyle is in Belize right now leveraging his relationships there to form partnerships for future mission trips (this is his tenth time there).

We've already sent a team to Belize and had to postpone last year because of Covid. We're planning to send another group next summer.

- Our missionaries in Vietnam recently reported your giving was used to help construct a church.

## **Pressing On**

- I want to thank those of you who have given, or are still giving, to Grow Time for our facility expansion and remodel project.
- I'm praying that God will mobilize more people to give so we can pay off our mortgage earlier.
- As God leads, you could add a designated amount to your regular giving, or you could make a one-time gift.
- One member put the building fund in her will, resulting in a gift of \$170,000 when she died.
- As always, all of this is for His glory and is contingent on Him blessing Edgewood and our people.
- As we continue to give to pay off our mortgage, this will free up resources for multiplied ministry and mission initiatives.

## **2021 Projects**

I want to also mention how your faithful giving has allowed the trustees and other Edgewood servants to tackle many needed projects this year. Here's a quick update.

1. Remodel and retrofit the children's restrooms on the lower level
2. Update the adult restrooms on the lower level
3. New signage on lower level
4. Roof replacement (insurance reimbursement)
5. Removal of diseased trees
6. Installation of a new digital sign by the south entrance
7. Landscaping on the south lot near the retention pond
8. Installation of soundproofing in the student center
9. Storm damage repair of the parsonage
10. Ceiling repair by the Welcome Center
11. Construction of interior wooden wall in the garage
12. Underground wiring replacement of retention pond

13. Life Center remodel (just started last week)
14. Kitchenette/serving area in Student Center
15. Bike rack by main entrance
16. Parking lot restriped
17. Concrete work

Let's come back to the ways we can correct our coveting and grow in contentment. I've mentioned three.

- 1. Guard your heart.**
- 2. Admit that places, possessions, or people won't ultimately satisfy.**
- 3. Give your way out of covetousness**

Here's the fourth, and most important...

**4. Earnestly desire Jesus Christ and be saved.** We need to redirect our desires, not renounce them. Jesus doesn't want less desire from us, but more! Matthew 6:33: ***"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*** If you're not a Christ-follower yet, what are you waiting for? Repent of your coveting heart and receive Jesus as the full satisfaction for all your sins.

Paul Harvey used to tell the story about how Eskimos would kill wolves. They would start by coating a knife blade with animal blood and allow it to freeze. Then the hunter would add another layer of blood, and another until the blade was completely concealed by frozen blood. Next, the hunter would fix his knife in the ground with the blade up. When the wolf discovered the bait he would lick it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. Then, he would lick faster and more vigorously until the razor-sharp edge of the knife sliced into his tongue. In his craving for blood the wolf would not realize his thirst was being satisfied by his own warm blood until the dawn found him dead in the snow.

Are you ready to kill coveting before it kills you? Repent of your sin and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord right now.

Don't become a servant to every advertisement you see...surrender to Christ right now...you may even end up smiling more.

**Invitation**

**New Members:** Alan and Kim Crane (Saturday)