

Thou shalt not covet

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Coveting has become so much a part of our national culture that we have begun to promote it instead of shun it. Multi-level marketing organizations routinely point to the material possessions of some person and then suggest that you can and should have what they do...and more! Success is measured by money and accumulation of material things. Goal setting is based on driving a prestigious car, gold jewelry, a Rolex watch, a bigger house, etc. Coveting is promoted as motivation.

What would Moses say? The last command of the ten was, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.” (Exodus 20:17)

Coveting means a strong desire for another’s material possessions. And we are not off the hook with the lame excuse that we don’t want THEIR house or car, we just want something similar or better.

Coveting is a strong emotional force. It was strong in the time of Moses when the only possessions a man had were a tent, a wife, and a couple of animals. The human mind seems endlessly inclined to think that the other person has more, and that we deserve what they have or better. The underlying theme of much advertising is to awaken the covetous inclination of people. Coveting is big business.

So when we get serious about abolishing coveting from our life and our culture as a motivational force, a goal, or as something desirable, there is resistance. When people are making money by exploiting your covetousness, they have a vested interest in downplaying it as sin.

How can we defend ourselves from covetousness? First, cease comparing yourself to another. Instead begin cherishing the good that you already have and are doing. Recognizing the good qualities that are ours opens our heart to receive more of the infinite blessings of God. God knows our human

needs and provides for them. But we miss the mark by focusing on the things rather than the source of good, which is God.

Second, measure success in terms of good done not possessions and money acquired. As Jesus said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matthew 6:19-21)

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