

Ten Commandments -- #10 Contentment

Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbor owns. (Exodus 20:17 NLT)

In this commandment God is addressing that basic human question we ask most days, "What makes me happy?" Many of us we could finish the sentence, "I would be happy if I just had" Whatever we use to fill in that blank is something that we are coveting and God invites us to let the false need we've added to the desire. There's nothing wrong with liking or enjoying nice things, for wanting what makes us comfortable or gives us pleasure. Those are legitimate desires God has placed within us. But, when we move to the place where we are not content until we have those things, whatever they may be, then we have moved into coveting and envying what others have.

God promises to meet our needs every single day of our lives. He uses the example of the birds to show us how He cares for what we really. **Look at the birds. They don't need to plant or harvest or put food in barns because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than they are.** (Matthew 6:26 NLT)

We are programmed on a daily basis to want more than we need. That's the whole idea behind advertising - to create need. We can't be happy until we own this or we'll be left behind if we don't get that. We need certain clothes to be successful in business. We have to be seen in certain restaurants in order to be noticed and admired. To be happy we need something just a bit better than what we currently have.

Unfortunately advertising only underlines what we've been like since we were born. As little kids we wanted whatever the toy was that the other kid had and we screamed and made a fuss trying to get it. At school we tried to wear the right clothes, and hang around with the "in crowd" in order to be okay as a person. One of the highest killers of teenagers is suicide - kids killing themselves because they don't believe they'll ever have what they need in order to be happy.

There is an old saying that defines happiness this way, **"Happy is the man who wants what he has."** The Bible says: **True religion with contentment is great wealth. After all, we didn't bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die.** (1 Timothy 6:6-7 NLT)

10	Do not be envious of your neighbour's house, or want to sleep with his wife, or own anything else he has.	Be content with your lot in life. Take full advantage of your opportunities. Rejoice with others
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One of the greatest human models of this concept was Mother Teresa. She owned one change of clothing and a bucket, and yet she lived with love and grace and generosity of heart that most of us are a long way from achieving. She learned that God loves us dearly and that if we will live to give and receive love, we will find that we have all that we need. **Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's.** (James 1:17 NLT)

We live in a world where financial security is hardly guaranteed. No one knows when a company president will walk to a microphone and announce that thousands of jobs are being cut. The stock market goes up and down and fortunes are lost as people hedge their bets. That's why we can only be secure when we place ourselves in God's hands, and do all that we can to serve Him today and trust that He will care for us. **Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.** (Psalm 37:3-5) There are some people in this life who

will attain great wealth and there are others who will have only a little. Both can be equally happy or equally unhappy. The amount of money they have or possessions they own are not the determining factors. We too must reject the lie that our happiness lies with what we have.

To follow God and keep this commandment, we need to seek God's heart and God's purpose for our lives. God has given us breath in this day in order for us to do good and to bless others. As we do that, we will receive what our heart truly desires. With Mother Teresa, but in our own way, we will find that to serve others in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, and share generously out of love and kindness will ultimately touch us most deeply. There's no employment that keeps us from that contentment and there's no employment on its own that gives it to us. We need to work hard to make the most of what we have but it's actually how we make use of the opportunities before us to do as much good as we can to as many people as we can as often as we can that will ultimately give us the satisfaction for which we long. St. Francis of Assisi had it right in his prayer when he said: "For it is in giving that we receive ..."

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What do I think I still need to make me happy?
2. How do I need to adjust my thinking and actions in order to allow God the opportunity to grow contentment in me and remove coveting?