**Tenth Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will emphasize that God desires for us to love, trust, and worship Him as He provides for us. His outline (or flow of the sermon) will be the following: (1) Definition of Coveting; (2) Disastrous Action of Men—At this point, he will show the progression of coveting (desire to discontent to disease of self to destruction due to unbelief) and highlight examples of coveting (consumed—Luke 12:13-21; conflict—James 4:1-3; choice—Mark 10:17-31); (3) Decisive Action of Jesus—The love of Jesus redeems us, including our desires, so that we love Him and love others. Pastor Aaron will call us to worship, love, and trust God.

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to cover all that is found within these questions in your community group. These questions will give you a grasp of what the text says and means so that we can think through how to apply the text to our lives.

**1. What is the context and meaning of the 10th Commandment?**

*The Ten Commandments are about worship, about knowing and following Jesus. In the tenth commandment, we are commanded not to covet, but rather we are commended to find contentment in Christ. The commandment forbids coveting, which is desiring/craving persons/things/abilities that belong to someone else. In the commandment, God knows what men tend to covet, as he calls attention to examples summed up by the following words (see Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21): persons, possessions, power, prestige. As the rest of Scripture indicates, we are all prone/inclined to covet, which leads us to love of self rather than to love God and love neighbor (for example, see the story of Achan in Joshua 7, the story of David in 2 Samuel 11; the story of Gehazi in 2 Kings 5; the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10). The tenth commandment unveils the heart motive in some ways that drives disobedience to the nine commandments that come before it. Apart from Christ’s redeeming and restoring work, coveters will experience physical and spiritual death for their ungodly desires, discontent, disobedience, and disbelief. Thankfully, we have a Redeemer and Restorer in Jesus who finds contentment in the will of His Father, who lays down his life for the sake of His neighbor, and who transforms the heart of those who believe in Him to walk in His way—the way of love for God and love for neighbor.*

*As you think about this commandment, ponder the following questions: What is coveting? How does coveting reveal itself in our lives? What types of questions can you ask to identify rather your heart is gripped by coveting? How does the sin of coveting impact our obedience or disobedience to the other commandments?*

*For passages related to the tenth commandment, see Genesis 3:6-7; 6:5; 12:10-16; Joshua 7:20-21; 2 Samuel 11; 1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 5:15-27; Proverbs 15:27; Micah 2:2; Habakkuk 2:9; Matthew 6:19-21, 25-34; 19:16-22; Mark 7:20-23; Luke 12:15; Acts 5:1-11; Romans 1:29; 7:7-10; 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:3, 5; Philippians 4:10-13; Colossians 3:1-2, 5; 1 Timothy 6:6, 9-10, 17-19; Hebrews 13:5; James 1:13-15; 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 John 2:15-17.*

*Philip Ryken writes, “To covet is to crave, to yearn for, to hanker after something that belongs to someone else. We covet whenever we set our hearts on anything that is not rightfully ours.” He continues, “What we are forbidden to covet is anything at all. We may not covet other people’s attributes: age, looks, brains, or talents. We may not covet their situation in life: marriage, singleness, children. We may not covet spiritual attainments, like a more prominent place of ministry in the church or wider recognition of our spiritual gifts. We are not allowed to covet anything at all. God’s law rules out every unlawful desire.”*

*Edmund Clowney writes, “The envy that this commandment forbids is not only a desire for something that belongs to someone else. It is our desire for anything that would draw us away from contentedly serving God wherever in his good providence he has placed us.”*

*ESV Study Bible: “When a person covets, he allows the desire for that which is coveted to govern his relationship with other people; this may become the motivation for murder, stealing, or lying either to attain the desired thing or to keep it from someone else. Because of the way that coveting values a particular thing over trust in and obedience to the Lord as the provider, it is also a breach of the first commandment, which the apostle Paul makes clear when he refers to coveting as idolatry (*[*Eph. 5:5*](https://www.esv.org/Ephesians+5%3A5/)*;*[*Col. 3:5*](https://www.esv.org/Colossians+3%3A5/)*).”*

**2. What does the 10th Commandment teach us about the character of God?**

*As we look at his commandment, we are reminded of three attributes of God’s character:*

*1- He is Provider—Just as God provides for and cares for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field (see Matthew 6:25-34), we can worship, trust, and love the One who provides for us. Scripture calls us to be content and to be thankful for what the Lord has given us (see Philippians 4; Colossians 3:15-17). When we covet, what does that reveal about our beliefs concerning God? How does a covetous heart reveal a heart that doubts God’s provision and questions God’s fatherly care?*

*2- He is Good—Along with being provider, we know that God provides for us and cares for us in the best way possible because He is good and He is wise. He knows what is best for us. He knows what we need. He knows how to lead us to know and follow Him. Through what we have (or lack of what we have), how can we see the goodness of God? Why ought we to praise God for His goodness and wisdom? How would this help put off a covetous heart and put on a contented heart?*

*3- He is Faithful—God’s faithfulness to His people is seen time and time again in the Exodus story—he redeems them from slavery, he provides for their needs through the plundering of Egyptians as they are leaving Egypt, he delivers them from their enemies, he cares for them in the wilderness with the manna, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud of covering by day, and preparing them to conquer the Promised Land. Even though they sinned, God continually demonstrates His faithfulness to them in keeping His promises. Ultimately, God demonstrates His faithfulness through the person and work of Christ. In Christ, we have forgiveness for our covetous hearts and we have a new heart that is empowered by the Spirit of God and the Word of God to walk in contentment, love, trust, and worship of our Lord and Savior. How have you seen the faithfulness of God at work in and through your life recently? How does remembering the faithfulness of God aide us in putting off a covetous heart and putting on a contented heart?*

*As you think about this commandment, what does it reveal to us about God? How do we see each and every one of the commandments calling us to worship Him, to know and follow Him? Why is it important for us to remember that each commandment is flowing out of His redeeming work, His relationship with His people?*

*Albert Mohler writes, “The commandments are addressed to us so that we will know what a covenant-keeping God requires of His people. They reveal the covenantal love and expectations of God. This is a word from the Rescuer to the rescued, from the Lord to His people. Here we see what God our Sovereign knows is good for us.”*

**3. How does the 10th Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

*As mentioned above, the tenth commandment reveals our covetous heart, characterized/demonstrated by our selfishness, envy, and greed. However, by the grace of Christ, He will forgive us of coveting if we repent/confess, make us new with a new heart if we believe in Christ, and empower us to walk in newness of life by the indwelling power of the Spirit and the transforming work of the Word. Ultimately, a love for God will lead us to put off covetousness and to put on contentment in Christ.*

*As you think about this commandment, where does coveting show up in your life? How does pursing a love for God help cultivate contentment in Christ? Why do we covet? Put another way, what are the heart motives or ruling desires behind coveting?*

*Philip Ryken writes, “We often want the wrong thing, in the wrong way, at the wrong time, and for the wrong reason, and this is what the tenth commandment rules out.” He continues, “God is all we need, and therefore all we ought to desire. To be even more specific, all we need is Jesus.”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “Violating the Tenth Commandment is actually a direct violation of the First Commandment. We are placing another god before us, the god of this object or the god of that consumer product or of this lifestyle or this or that aspiration. By God’s grace, and by the same defying power of Word and spirit, we exchange a lesser desire for a greater desire, a temporal desire for an eternal desire, a corrupting desire for a sanctifying desire.”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “The law makes us realize what great sinners we are, so we can understand what a great Savior Christ is.”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “As Christians, we read these commandments with the knowledge that, more than anything else, these commandments point to Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Understood rightly, these commandments lead, not to our despair that we fall short of them, but to our thankfulness for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ comes to save lawbreakers like ourselves. Thus, we see the commandments themselves as grace to us. But our confidence is not in our ability to keep these commandments, for we will surely fail. Our confidence is in Christ, whose perfect obedience fulfills the law.” He continues, “We are instructed by the law as we cling to the gospel of Christ.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “Much of our discontentment may be traced to expectations that are essentially selfish and more often than not completely unrealistic.” He continues, “We must learn to look away to Christ as the only source of true contentment, which is the antidote to covetousness.”*

**4. How might the 10th Commandment apply to our lives today?**

*As you think about applying this commandment, think through how it can be applied personally and corporately:*

*1- Personally—As you think about applying this commandment to your own life, how has this commandment (and the sermon on it) exposed or called attention to areas of your life where coveting has a foothold? Why is it that you covet the things that you do? What does that reveal about your beliefs about God, man, and Christ? As you think about putting off coveting, what are biblical strategies/ways that we can put off coveting and put on Christ (love for Him, contentment in Him)? What would mark/characterize a person who is walking in obedience to this commandment? Put another way, what would bearing fruit in keeping with repentance look like for one who has put off covetousness? How would that serve as a distinct witness to the power of the gospel and belief in Christ to the watching world?*

*2- Corporately—As a church, does covetousness show up in our body as a whole? How can we as a community group help one another grow in love for Christ, live in contentment, bear fruit in keeping with repentance?*

*One writer commented that a sign of a coveting heart is the thought, “if only….” For example, if only I had \_\_\_\_\_, then I’d be content in the Lord. If only I could \_\_\_\_\_, then I’d be better in service of the Lord.*

*Alistair Begg writes, “Our society thrives on materialism, cashing in on the sin of covetousness. Its modus operandi is to create within our hearts a longing for things we do not have. Not only a longing, but also an attitude of need and entitlement. We need it. We deserve it. Especially if someone else has it.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “Contentment means wanting what God wants for us rather than what we want for us. The secret to enjoying this kind of contentment is to be so satisfied with God that we are able to accept whatever he has or has not provided. To put this another way, coveting is a theological issue: Ultimately, it concerns our relationship with God. Therefore, the way to get rid of any covetous desire is to be completely satisfied with God and what he provides.” He continues, “Faith is always the answer to our discontent.”*

*Michael Horton writes, “It is not poverty or wealth that leads us to contentment and trust in the Lord, but the confidence that if God provided so richly for our salvation by choosing, redeeming, calling, adopting, and justifying us, and by sending His Spirit to cause us to grow up into Christ’s likeness, then surely we can count on Him for the less essential matters of daily existence.”*

*J. I. Packer writes, “Knowing the love of Christ is the one and only source from which true contentment ever flows.”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “Consumerism and materialism are as much a threat to our churches as any other heresy we might envision, any other sin we might understand. These sins come in to us with their false promises, and are so easily accepted by all of us.” He continues, “We are to desire Christ. We are to desire the glory of God. We are to desire fellowship with the one true and living God. We are to desire those things that are above. We are to desire heaven. And a part of what it means to desire heaven is to understand that there and there alone will our satisfaction be found.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “The desire for wealth is founded in the illusion that it brings ‘security.’ Ironically, it breeds anxiety.” He continues, “The heart that covets riches will also often crave popularity, power, leisure, and satisfaction.” He concludes, “Instead of coveting what God has given to someone else, we must learn to be contented in what our gracious heavenly Father has provided for us.”*

*Sinclair Ferguson writes, “If covetousness could be produced by programmed means (for example, “five steps to contentment in a month’) it would be commonplace. Instead, Christians must discover contentment the old-fashioned way: We must learn it. Thus we cannot ‘do’ contentment. It is taught by God; we are schooled in it. It is part of the process of being transformed through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). It is commanded of us, but paradoxically, it is done to us, not by us. It is not the product of a series of actions but of a renewed and transformed character. Only good trees produce good fruit—and here is the crux of the matter: How do we learn to be content? We must enroll in the divine school in which we are instructed by biblical teaching and providential experience.”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions in your community group. Also, please feel freedom to adapt the question or to create a question that will best help your community group “be doers of the Word” (James 1:22), for you know the stage and situation of your group members.

1. What is forbidden in this commandment? What is commended in this commandment? Where do you see coveting at work in your own life?

2. What does this commandment reveal about the character of God? How have you seen these attributes of God in your life recently?

3. How does coveting lead to other sins? Do you see a connection between the tenth commandment with the nine commandments before it? If so, how would you articulate the interrelationship between the commandments?

4. How do we cultivate contentment? What are reasons that we ought to be content? How do contentment and gratitude help us to fight covetousness?

5. What are ways for us to fight (or to put off) a covetous heart? How might an awareness of the life to come help us put to death a covetous heart? How might remembering our identity in Christ help us put to death a covetous heart?

6. How can we identify a covetous heart in our lives (or in the lives of others)? Why is it that we covet? What are the ruling motives/desires behind our coveting? How have you seen the progression of coveting at work in your own lives? What does our coveting reveal about our functional beliefs concerning God, man, and Christ?

7. In his sermon, Pastor Aaron will encourage us that love for God is the opposite of a covetous heart. How is this so? How does cultivating a love for God lead to contentment in Christ?

8. What marks/characterizes a person who is walking in obedience to this commandment? How do you see Christ at work redeeming your heart—your thoughts, your desires/affections, your will/decisions/behavior?

9. If you are struggling to facilitate conversation in your group or if you are looking to start conversation in your group, here are some questions to prompt conversation:

A. Question of Impression—What stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Why did it stand out to you?

B. Question of Application—How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

C. Question of Clarity—If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

D. Question of Reflection—How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week?

E. Question of Mission—How will you pass on what you have heard, learned, and applied this week to another believer this week so that they may know and follow Jesus? How will what you heard, learned, and applied this week equip you to share Jesus with an unbeliever this week where you live, work, and play?

10. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions,* Matthew Harmon gives the following questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like)

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing)

c. Look for God’s concerns (what thing/events/people he is concerned about)

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image

b. Look for the fallen condition

c. Look for how God’s people should live

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for

b. Look for sin to confess and repent

c. Look for promises and truths to believe

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others

B. Applying the Bible

a. What does God want me to think/understand?

b. What does God want me to believe?

c. What does God want me to desire?

d. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Put off coveting and put on love for Christ and love for neighbor.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—Mark 4; Jeremiah 18

2. Tuesday—Mark 5; Jeremiah 19

3. Wednesday—Mark 6; Jeremiah 20

4. Thursday—Mark 7; Jeremiah 21

5. Friday—Mark 8; Jeremiah 22

6. Saturday—Mark 9; Jeremiah 23

7. Sunday—Mark 10; Jeremiah 24

* **Vision Series/Journey of Discipleship Series**

1. August 19th—Worship

2. August 26th—Community (Acts 2:42-47)

3. September 2nd—Discipleship (Matthew 4:19-20)

4. September 9th—Multiply (Matthew 28:16-20)

* **Gospel of Mark Series**

1. September 16th—Mark 1

2. September 23rd—Mark 2

3. September 30th—Mark 3

4. October 7th—Mark 4

5. October 14th—Mark 5

6. October 21st—Mark 6

7. October 28th—Mark 7

8. November 4th—Mark 8

9. November 11th—Mark 9

10. November 18th—Mark 10

11. November 25th—Mark 11

12. December 2nd—Mark 12

13. December 9th—Mark 13

14. December 16th—Mark 14

15. December 30th—Mark 15

16. January 6th—Mark 16

* **Stand Alone Sermons**

1. December 23rd—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

2. December 24th—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*; John Currid, *Exodus*;J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; John Currid, *Deuteronomy*; Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*; Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*; Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom*; Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*; J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments*; Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*; Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)