

I. **INTRODUCTION.**

- A. God knew that lack of contentment would be a major problem for people. So, that's where His tenth instruction for happy living originated. [p. 185]
- B. After He gave us all His instructions about how we are to behave, the Lord finishes "the Code of Ethics with a principle about how we are to think (Ex. 20:17). [p. 186]
- C. While the principle of putting God first supplies the motivation for obeying all the others, the tenth principle of not coveting supplies the explanation of why we disobey all the others. Take King David, for example. He ignored
  - 1. The EIGHTH principle when he stole another man's wife.
  - 2. The SEVENTH principle when he committed adultery with her.
  - 3. The NINTH principle when he lied about his affair with the woman.
  - 4. The THIRD principle when he took the Lord's name in vain.
  - 5. The SIXTH principle when he arranged for the murder of Bathsheba's husband.
  - 6. The FIRST principle because God wasn't the center of his heart through the whole business.
  - 7. The TENTH principle was ignored first! [p. 186]
- D. David ignored seven of God's ten instructions for happy living. Why? Because he ignored the tenth principle first, he ignored six more! Out of his discontentment, he had an unhealthy desire for his neighbor's wife. [p. 186]
- E. What is coveting? The meaning of the word used in the text is simply "an enthusiastic desire," and it was originally morally neutral.
  - 1. Hedonism says, "You only go around once in life, so grab for all the gusto you can."
  - 2. Buddhism takes the opposite approach saying that all desire is evil. "The problem with the world," they say, "is desire. So learn to quench desire."God however has never stood for either of these extremes. In fact, He has placed certain desires within us. [p. 187]

II. **THE CAUSE OF COVETOUSNESS: RESENTMENT.**

- A. The root of coveting is dissatisfaction with God's allotment of things. We resent what we think is the unfairness of God (maybe with the unfairness of life) and because of that internal resentment, we act in some way that dishonors God. [p. 188]
- B. One reason Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son was for the benefit of the elder brothers of His day, the Pharisees. He wanted them to see that they "were being eaten up inside by their resentment of the attention that God gives to the lost. They didn't believe that "sinners" deserved God's love, but they felt that they had earned it. [p. 189]
- C. Of course, it would be hard to find any modern day "elder brothers"... or would it? Church growth experts say that almost always when an existing church tries to make changes designed to reach the lost in its community, the strongest criticism comes from people within the church who feel that, since they are the once who have given that congregation their time and money, the congregation should be focused on meeting their needs and not some stranger's. Resentment can rear its ugly head anywhere--even among God's people. [p. 189,190]

III. **THE CONSEQUENCE OF COVETOUSNESS: ESTRANGEMENT.**

- A. Why are there wars in the world? Why are there so many fights in the world? Why is, there so much violence, tension, and discord in the world? Why so many divorces? Why so many fractured families and friendships? James says the answer is quite simple: we want what we can't have; so, we fight and quarrel about it. [p. 190]

- B. Coveting turns goods into gods. Covetous is idolatry because it places a substitute for God, a false god, in our hearts. Charles Spurgeon once said, "I never knew a covetous man to be converted." Why? A covetous heart has no room for God (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5-6). [p. 191]

#### IV. **THE CURE OF COVETOUSNESS: CONTENTMENT.**

##### A. What Do I Think about Most of the Time?

1. This question is important, because what we think about is what we desire, and what we desire is what we will become (Col. 3:1-2; Mt. 5:6). [p. 192]
2. G.K. Chesterton put it this way, "There are two ways to get enough; one is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less and less." [p. 192]

##### B. How Good Am I at- Rejoicing with Others?

Did you realize rejoicing with others is a command? See Rom. 12:15. It is not always easy to rejoice with those who rejoice. We can either rejoice with others at their blessings or be ruined by resentment of their success. [p. 193,194]

#### V. **DEFEATING THE DISEASE.**

- A. The only way the Bible teaches to remove resentment is to cultivate contentment. Godliness is what we strive for when we seek to live by principles one through nine. Contentment, however, is what we are shooting for in number ten. The Bible says that the formula for living a truly rich life, a life of character, is to walk consistently by God's pattern and power, accompanied by an attitude of inner satisfaction with His will for our lives (1Tim. 6:6-8). [p.194]
- B. Contentment is not inherited. Contentment is a discipline of the mind, and it's developed through practice and prayer (Phil. 4:11-13). [p. 195]
- C. What is the cure for coveting? Contentment. The key to defeating the disease is learning to be satisfied with what God has given us and not needing more than that to be happy. If we don't learn contentment, we will learn covetousness. [p. 195]
- D. Learn the Difference Between Wants and Needs.
1. Paul tells Timothy that if he just has food and clothing, he is content. The word in the Greek that is translated "clothing" here many also include the idea of shelter, so, giving us the benefit of the doubt, we'll include that, too. But, think about it for a minute. How many of us can honestly say we believe our needs are that simple? [p. 195,196]
  2. "Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want, but the realization of how much you already have." [p. 196,197]
- E. Learn the Difference Between Temporary and Eternal.
- The story is told that an American Jew visiting the land of his parents went to see the famous teacher Rabbi Chaim. When the American entered the home of the rabbi, he was amazed at the stark living conditions there. All that Chaim had was a table, a bench, and a little pallet. Appalled, the American asked, "Rabbi, where is all your furniture?" The Rabbi responded, "Where is all your furniture?" The tourist said, "I don't have an furniture with me. I'm just traveling through." To which the rabbi replied, "So am I." This is just a temporary home for all of us, isn't it? See Lk. 12:15 and 2Cor. 4:18. [p. 197]
- F. People of character do not envy others' temporal blessings. People of character desire eternal blessings, so they are willing to face internal issues. It makes sense, doesn't it, that God's law is the only law in history against coveting. How could man police such a law? How could we know what is inside another? But God knows our hearts, and He wants our hearts to belong only to Him. [p. 198]

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Lessons Twelve & Thirteen)

### LESSON THIRTEEN: RETURN TO THE SUMMIT.

#### I. A HOLE IN THE MORAL OZONE?

- A. "There is a hole in the moral ozone, and it is probably getting bigger," says the head of the Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics, a nonprofit, Los Angeles based group devoted to character education. According to the institute, an "unacceptably high" number of 15 to 30 year olds are willing to steal, lie, and cheat at work and in school. [p. 203]
- B. "We're creating a society where cheaters prosper, and you can't honestly tell children that honesty is the best policy" contends the institutes executive vice-president. [p. 204]
- C. The fact is, God's solutions to the world's character crisis are still valid. His principles have not failed, we have just failed to apply them. [p. 204]

#### II. BEGINNING THE JOURNEY BACK.

- A. "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" See Mk. 12:28-31. Why did Jesus give - two answers when He was asked for the most important one? The reason, I believe, is that there is such a connection between the two that they are inseparable. It is only in showing our love for others that we show our love for God. [p. 205,206]
- B. The beginning point is not our love for God, but God's love for us.  
Before God gave us an ethic, He rescued us from bondage. Grace always comes before law. God always approaches us in love first. [p. 206]
- C. We respond to God's love with devotion.  
Devotion means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. It means to be completely, totally, sacrificially devoted to God. [p. 206,207]
- D. Our gratitude to God is expressed in love for others.
  - 1. To love God is to make whatever matters to God, matter to us. And what matters to God is people. It is in loving one another that we express our gratitude to God for His love (1Jn. 4:10-11). [p. 207]
  - 2. If we try to love our neighbors as ourselves, we won't have the energy or the desire to live by our standard. For the fact is, most people don't deserve that kind of love. The only way we are going to be able to consistently live a life of loving others as ourselves is to be motivated to do so by God's incredible love for us--a love which we don't deserve either. That's why God's ten principles begin with our relationship to God, then address our relationship to others. I will always put you last until I learn to put God first. [p. 209]

#### III. SELF-DECEPTION.

As the old cartoon character, Hambone, used to say, "There ain't no use trying to talk to God when you're not speaking to your neighbor." See Mt. 22:40 and Rom. 13:8-10.

#### IV. HOW FAR DOES IT GO?

- A. Just exactly who is my neighbor, and where do I draw the line? See Lk. 10:25-37. [p. 211,212]
  - 1. The robber's ethic: What's yours is mine, and I'll take it.
  - 2. The priest's and Levite's ethic: What mine is mine, and I'll keep it.
  - 3. The Samaritan's ethic: What is mine is yours and I'll share it. [p. 213]
- B. God expects from His people of character a love so overwhelming that it makes doing the unthinkable a way of life. [p. 214]
- C. Living lives of character means being willing to give up any source of security, any tradition, or any personal preference for the sake of the people in the ditch. The only way we can love God is to love

what matters to God, and what matters to Him are the people He created and those He wants to recreate. [p. 215]

## V. HOW FAR ARE YOU SAVED?

- 'A. The quality of character that God desires requires more of us than just keeping a checklist of dos and don'ts. He requires of us the practical everyday living out of our love for God and for our neighbor, because rules alone have never been enough to keep us from sin. [p. 215]
- B. His Principles Are the Path.
1. Go back and look at the principles again:
    - a. Put God first.
    - b. Take God as He-is.
    - c. Respect what is holy.
    - d. Seek rest with God.
    - e. Make your family a priority.
    - f. Respect human life.
    - g. Keep marriage sacred.
    - h. Keep "things" in perspective.
    - i. Tell the truth.
    - j. Be content.

These are absolute values that express God's nature, that express His character. They are standards that are not going to change. Instead, they will provide a firm foundation for life. [p.216,217]
- C. His Amazing Grace is the Motivation.  
Remember that God had to stoop down to reach for us when we were in the ditch, and Jesus -left His comfort zone to rescue us when we didn't even know we were at risk. [p. 217]
- D. His Holy Spirit is the Enabler.
1. We can't live God's ethic without God. We can't do it on sheer grit and determination. We must allow God to do the work of recharactering in us. If we'll let Him, God will write His law in our minds and put it in our hearts, as He has promised. [p. 217]
  2. When we surrender to Jesus Christ, confess His name, and are born again, God sends His Holy Spirit to live in us and to begin the recharactering process (Rom. 5:5b). [p. 217]

## VI. FACE TO FACE.

- A. The Sinai Summit is still in session. God alone waits at the top of His mountain, hoping that you will come up to meet Him face to face. Like Elijah, you can hear Him whisper gently, "What are you doing here, my child?" And you must answer. [p. 218]
- B. A return to God's values can solve America's character crisis. And many are ready to join you in the journey back to the summit at Sinai. It's a journey that begins in your heart... and it begins today. The Lord of grace and love is waiting to meet with you there. [p. 219]

End of study on the Ten Commandments.