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If Only I...

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I Only I...

Have you ever made a statement or had a thought like this: “If only I had a better car or a new car just like my neighbors do, boy, would my life be different.” Or how about this one: “If only I had a bigger house like the Jones’ do. Wow! what a difference it would make in my life.” Or: “If only I had a better job like Joe does, how much more fulfilled I’d be.” Or: “If only I had his personality or her looks, then I would be a success.” “If only I...,” a three word lie. It is a mirage called coveting. It beckons to your spirit. It causes stars in your eyes until they turn green with envy. It causes a disease called sin to race through your spiritual bloodstream, poisoning your perspective until you cease to have the mind of Christ. You become thankful for nothing because you continually desire just a little bit more. “If only I...” Let’s teach our hearts a new song in this lesson, something more in harmony with the music of eternity, as we examine God’s tenth commandment. It is the final of His ten principles for living. It is the sixth pillar that holds up the building of life.

We have been on the top of Mount Sinai with Moses now for quite a few lessons. We have looked and listened as a holy God laid down for sinful man ten principles for living. The first three reveal the essence of God the Father, the image of God the Son, and the expression of God the Spirit; three foundation stones upon which the building of life rests. The fourth commandment is the base or the foundation itself. This is illustrated perfectly by the Sabbath rest of God and fulfilled perfectly by the believer’s rest in God. Then we watched as God has raised up for Moses and for us six pillars. These pillars hold up the Christian life. These pillars are the pillar of authority, the pillar of life, the pillar of holiness, the pillar of honesty and the pillar of truth. We concluded in the last lesson that the truth was designed by God to set us free.

In this lesson we come to God’s final principle. This is one so basic to successful spiritual living that in it rests the

If Only I...

very issue of the nature of God and both His right and His righteousness when it comes to knowing what is best for us. The commandment itself is this and it is an absolute. We read,

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his oxen, nor his donkey, nor anything that is thy neighbor's. (Exodus 20:17)

It seems that God knows our hearts quite well. He also knows quite well the basic dissatisfaction in our hearts that yearns for something or someone more than what we have. God's simple order to us is this: Stop it. He underlines His attitude throughout scripture toward those who cannot be satisfied with what they have. We will begin in Psalm 10. Here we have a good illustration of how God feels,

The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

For the wicked man boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the one who is covetous who the Lord abhorreth (hates). (Psalm 10:2,3)

Isaiah 57:15 might be translated like this:

Thus says the one whose name is holy—whose residence is in the holy place, "I will dwell with the man of humility, he who has a humble and contrite heart, his heart and his spirit will I revive."

But the sin of the covetous man made Me angry, I punished him, and hid from him as he went rebelliously on his way.

That wicked man is like the troubled sea, it can't find a place to rest, it is turmoil that leaves mud upon the shore.

Even so there is no peace," says God, "to the wicked."

(Isaiah 57:15,17,20,21 paraphrase)

God despises a covetous spirit. He despises it because it is the antithesis of His kind of life.

Now what is coveting? How can we define it simply but sufficiently? There are several words in the Greek New Testament translated "to covet". Here are the four most important ones:

1- Epithumeo (ἐπιθυμῶ): "To fix the desire upon; to desire earnestly; to lust after". It is used in Acts 20:33, and in

If Only I...

Romans 7:7 where it is translated “lust”. In Romans 13:9, it is translated “covet”.

2- Zeloo (ζέλοο): “To covet earnestly; to envy”. It is used in I Corinthians 12 and 14 in a positive way as a healthy attitude to covet the right kind of spiritual gift.

3- Oregomai (ορεγομαι): “To stretch after; to reach after”. It is the word used in I Timothy 6:10.

4- Pleonexia (πλεονξια): This is the noun for “the will or desire to have more”. It is made up of two words, “pleon” meaning more and “echo” meaning to have more or to want to have more. It is used in one form or another in a multitude of references. Here are a few: Mark 7:22, Romans 1:29, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines covet this way: “to desire that which belongs to another”. The second definition is “to crave or wish for something excessively whether or not it belongs to another”. It explains covetous as excessively desirous or greedy. It is, in essence, the antithesis of contentment. Let’s review a definition of contentment: Contentment: “gracious satisfaction with your lot in life”. What, then, is covetousness? — “an unrest or dissatisfaction with your lot in life that leads to earnestly desiring that which is another’s, even at the expense of the other”.

If that is what coveting is, what is envy? How can we tell the difference between the two? I remember an incident when I was in business, when a young lady came rushing into our business to ask, “Whose car is that parked out in front?” Her eyes were a bright green. “That is just like the one we are looking for. Will he sell it?” The inference was of course, if he won’t, we’ll steal it. She was coveting the car. She was coveting something that belonged to another. She envied the owner because he had the car she was coveting. Do you see the difference? You covet an object or something you want, but you envy the one who has it. You don’t have to want to take it away from them to covet. You may be magnanimous enough to let them keep theirs until or unless you can have one just like it or just as good or better.

That is what it means to covet. It basically means that *you are not satisfied with what you have*. You see something that might bring you that satisfaction. Where coveting is concerned, God left very little in Scripture to our imagination. When He said,

If Only I...

“Thou shalt not steal” He didn’t elaborate. He didn’t say, “Don’t steal a ladder, or a pig or a suit of clothes.” He just said, “Thou shalt not steal.” He figured that we were familiar enough with stealing that we could understand the principle. But stealing is an act and coveting is an attitude. Attitudes are much more difficult to deal with, so God gets specific with Moses and says, “You shall not covet or earnestly desire any one of these things. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house, or his wife, or his servants, or his animals, or his field, or anything else he has.”

Let’s go through them quickly. He began by telling us that we should not be discontented with where we live. It doesn’t mean that if God blesses you and enables you to afford a bigger house or a newer house that you ought not to consider buying it. That is not the issue. It means that you are never to eye someone else’s house with envy and then come home to yours and see it suddenly as being inadequate. Have you ever had that happen? It means not to pressure your family into financial bondage in order to fulfill a desire that is aroused by comparing your home with someone else’s who just happens to own a showplace. You and I are called to be more than content that we have a place to live at all. Jesus had no place to lay His head. We are called to be thankful.

Why is it then that for so many the thought of moving back to that smaller house we used to live in is such an affront to us? Why is it that we suddenly deserve what we now have and even desire something better? Why is it that we can see a film of thousands of starving refugees living and dying in tents and go home and complain that our bedroom is too small or our living room is not shaped right?

I’ll tell you why. It is due to a covetous spirit. *If only I had a bigger house like they have.* God says, “No.” That thought is an affront to God. He wants you to be grateful for the house or the apartment or even the room that you have. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife. God tells us not to look at anyone who is not your mate and allow your mind to imagine, “Oh, to be married to him or her.” You are not to think about it, even if you have no mate or your mate rates a minus 20 on a scale of 1 to 10. God’s purposes are being fulfilled in you and as you crave the affections or the abilities of

If Only I...

another's mate, you sin against them and you sin against God. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

God adds another,

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's servants.

A man's servants were indicative of his station in life. Job is a good example of that. He was one of the richest men in all the world. He had a multitude of servants. They were a symbol of his station in life. Satan said, "Sure, Job loves you, God. Who wouldn't love You if You had given them all You have given him. Nice family. Great possessions. Good health. Lots of servants." So God gave Satan permission to strip Job of his family, his possessions, and his station in life. Job's response was this:

The Lord gave and the Lord hast taketh away; blessed be the name of the LORD. (Job 1:21)

What would your response be if you woke up tomorrow morning and suddenly found yourself in a whole new strata in society, a strata that you had always considered beneath you. What makes us think we always deserve to be just one step higher on the ladder of success? A covetous spirit. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's station in life.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's donkey or oxen. Now your neighbor may not have a donkey or an ox, but that is not the issue. Oxen and donkeys represented a man's resources: what he had to work with and travel with and bargain with. In today's society it would mean: Don't covet someone else's savings account or his business or his car or his investments. You are to be happy for him over what he has and grateful to God over what you have, but don't covet your neighbor's resources. It is a sin.

In Deuteronomy 5, God adds that *we must not covet our neighbor's field*. A man's field was usually his place of work. The larger the field, the bigger the job and the more successful the enterprise. You see, land has always been a premium commodity to the Jew. Even today they have to produce so much from so little. When they settled in the land, it was natural to covet bigger and better fields and less stony soil. Doesn't the grass always look greener on your neighbor's side of the fence? How seldom we stop to consider that it may be because he waters more than we do. How often we think we deserve that promotion. How often we think that we deserve that raise.

If Only I...

How often we think that we deserve that better job. We do this instead of praising God that we have a job at all. We fail to trust God to use the job we have to give us His perspective. We must not covet another's field, their field of livelihood or their field of service.

God sweeps through the panoramic expanse of human greed and draws a net around the rest of our envy, lest we conclude falsely that anything not named is not sin. He says, "Thou shalt not covet anything thy neighbor has." God says, "Do not covet, period." A spirit of covetousness is like a snare. It surrounds and entraps us like a vice. God's absolute absolutely condemns it.

Now to be sure that we understand the magnitude of the problem and God's attitude, He has underscored this commandment in nearly every book in the Bible. From the Word, there surfaces principle after principle after principle after principle about a covetous spirit. Let's quickly walk through the Scriptures to see what God has to say about coveting. We will narrow it down to eight basic principles.

Principle 1- Coveting is an internal problem. It is a matter of the heart.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: (Mark 7:21,22)

The problem isn't with what you see you don't have or what your neighbor has that you haven't. God will allow that to test you. The problem is one of a sick heart. In other words, it is a spiritual problem. You have to deal with it through the Spirit. Getting what you long for won't solve the problem. It will only increase your appetite.

Principle 2- A covetous heart is never satisfied.

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? (Ecclesiastes 5:10,11)

Now here is the same passage in the Living Bible:

If Only I...

He who loves money shall never have enough. The foolishness of thinking that wealth brings happiness!

The more you have, the more you spend, right up to the limits of your income, so what is the advantage of the wealth—except perhaps to watch it as it runs through your fingers!

Habakkuk 2:5 captures the same thought as it describes the arrogant Chaldeans and their greed as they collected many nations. But like death and hell, they are never satisfied. “If only I had that,” you say, “I would be satisfied.” No you wouldn’t. Whatever “that” is, would only whet your appetite for more. If you can’t appreciate and be grateful for a \$60,000 home, what makes you think you would be satisfied with one that cost \$160,000? Your heart would still be the same. You can’t satisfy a covetous spirit. You can crucify it, but you can’t satisfy it.

Principle 3- Coveting is not an end within itself. It is an attitude of the heart which, if left unbridled, will open the door for more overt violations. It will do whatever it takes to try to get what the heart deceitfully says it needs. You can see the list here. We learn from Proverbs 28:20 and Micah 2:2 that covetousness unchecked leads to *violence*. In II Kings 5:22 we see that it leads to *lying*. In Ezekiel 22:12 we see that it leads to *murder*. In Joshua 7:21 we see that it leads to *stealing*. In I Timothy 6:6-10 we see that in the Christian it leads to *apostasy, heresy and destruction*. Let’s read that Timothy passage:

Godliness with contentment is great gain.

[The reason] We brought nothing into this world, and we will certainly take nothing out when we go.

And so if we have food and clothing, we are supposed to be content.

But those of us that will choose to be rich will fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Therefore, the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have, through their coveting, wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But O man of God, flee these things;

(I Timothy 6:6-10 paraphrase)

Paul tells Timothy that a covetous heart that lusts after

If Only I...

many things will destroy him. It is like a huge snare that traps you into focusing on things rather than God. It will cause you to change your theology to fit your philosophy and thus rob you of all that is worth having. Paul's advice to Timothy was to put on his track shoes and run from these attitudes. They form the base from which all evil springs. So it isn't just our lust for things. It is all that lust leads to that destroys men. God says, "Stop it."

Principle 4- Don't build close friendships with those who have the disease of covetousness. It is a contagious disease. Read Proverbs 1:10-19 when you have time. It describes covetous people. It says that all they talk about is getting more and doing more. All their priorities are possessions and pleasure oriented, and before long, your priorities will be the same as theirs. Ephesians 5:3 warns not even to keep company with covetous Christians. You say, "That's tough!" It is true, but it is a tough problem. It eats at the very fiber of our commitment to Christ.

Principle 5- A covetous man or woman cannot lead the church of God. Check out this attitude in every candidate that you select. If they are covetous, their perspective will bend to the world's perspective. They will view spiritual progress through physical eyes rather than viewing physical progress through spiritual eyes. They will yield to the world's methods and the world's ways and search for success through organizations, accomplishments, budgets and boards. Moses knew that in Exodus 18:21 when Jethro instructed him to choose out able leaders among them. One of the qualifications was that they were to be men who hate covetousness. Paul underscored it in I Timothy 3 when he said,

And man must not be covetous or he cannot lead the church of God. (I Timothy 3:3 paraphrase)

Peter adds,

Feed the flock of God that is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by compulsion but by direction, not through a covetous spirit but with a mind that is ready to give instead. (I Peter 5:2 paraphrase)

Christian leadership demands a spirit which is not presumptuous with God but rather grateful to God for anything He chooses to do.

If Only I...

Principle 6- In the last days, Satan will intensify in the world and in the church a greedy and covetous spirit.

In those days, men shall become increasingly self-centered, covetous, boastful and proud.

(II Timothy 3:2 paraphrase)

The more the spirit of Satan permeates the world, the greater the lust for things will become. Things are advertised to satisfy, but when finally achieved or received, they leave a soul that is more empty than when they found it.

Principle 7- We must deal with covetousness. It is not something we can overlook and ignore.

Put to death once and for all your earthly desires including covetousness which is equal to idolatry.

(Colossians 3:5 paraphrase)

It is idolatry because what you covet becomes your idol and robs you of your affections, affections which were intended only for God.

Principle 8- God's substitute for covetousness is to satisfy yourself with His word.

[I] incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

(Psalm 119:36)

So this is what God has to say about the subject of covetousness. He has a lot to say about earnestly desiring more and more to satisfy the hunger in your life which only He, in essence, can satisfy. Satan's design, when first he appeared in the garden, was to produce covetousness. His logic was, "All the trees but one? Who said so? God is keeping something from you, Eve. You deserve the very best. You deserve it all. Look at that tree, Eve. Isn't it beautiful? Forget what God said and change your concept of God to correspond with how He can best satisfy you, Eve." Eve saw it and she took it and she ate of it and she died. God didn't want Eve to have everything. He wanted Eve to have everything that was good for her. He withheld from her what on the surface seemed to be a blessing, because He knew she couldn't handle the price tag it carried.

God has that same kind of love for you. He wants you to have everything you need and nothing you want that will destroy your fellowship with Him. Satan's lie is that whatever you want is good for you. "God wants you to have the very best," Satan

If Only I...

tempts, “so lust your very heart out and maybe God will give in. Wouldn’t any loving father?” So we desire the things we don’t need and move out in our own energy to capture them. We then wonder why they become idols. Our hearts turn cold. Our time gets so preoccupied with going after the things we covet that God’s priorities, one by one, slip into oblivion.

This is why God doesn’t want us to covet. He has already given us everything we need. All we need to do now is focus our undivided attention on Him. We need to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, knowing full well that all of these things proportionate to our real needs will be added to us. Satan is a liar. His biggest lie is to go after everything you want with a gusto, whether God gives it to you or not.

Isn’t this the lie Satan threw at Jesus in the wilderness? “Do you want more to eat, Jesus? Here is a rock, make a sandwich. Don’t you want more excitement in your life, Jesus? Throw yourself off the temple. God will rescue you and I will sell tickets and we will turn Christianity into a sideshow. Want more power, Jesus? More possessions? Just pay the price. Focus on me. Give your life to my objectives and you can have it all.” Jesus answered, “More to eat? Man does not live by bread alone. More excitement? You must not put God to the test. More power or possessions? The price is too high, Satan. It is written to worship the Lord alone. Who needs more food? Who needs more excitement? Who needs more power? Who needs more possessions? I have My Father. He is all I need.”

My friend, you have Jesus. He is all you need. He is all you will ever need. Satan’s lie is, If only I had that car, that house, that wife, I would be happy. The truth is that when you have Him, you have it all. The pages of Scriptural history are stained with the tears of those who believed that lie. Wasn’t it Eve who said, “If only I had that tree, too, then I could look God right in the eye.” If only I. Wasn’t it Lot who cried, “If only I had the best land. I will pitch my tent toward Sodom.” God gave him all the real estate he wanted and he lost his real estate of glory. Jacob cried, “If only I had my father’s blessing. I will do whatever it takes to get it.” Achan cried, “If only I had a few more possessions. No one will ever know that I had to steal to get it.” The rich fool cried, “If only I had security. I will build bigger barns and bigger bank accounts. No one can touch me then.” Judas cried, “If only I had a few pieces of silver.” Then

If Only I...

came his chance to sell his soul and he sold it. Simon, the magician cried, "If only I had that power." Festus cried, "If only I had more money." Demas cried, "If only I had more pleasure."

If only I... What a lie. Dear Christian friend, you do not need one thing more than you now have to be happy. You only need to begin to live in the fullness of the Spirit in the midst of a spiritual kingdom as the rightful heir of the Father. All kinds of spiritual riches are yours. All kinds of spiritual treasures are yours. These things satisfy. Moths don't ruin them and thieves can't steal them. No one can ever take them away from you. So what are you coveting for? A new sports car can't compete with that kind of happiness. However, that new sports car could come into competition with your affections and thus affect your happiness. A new house can't bring you that kind of joy, but the pursuit of a new house could rob you of the joy that is yours. When God said, "Thou shalt not covet," He had a reason. The reason was that it can destroy you, spiritually.

There is one more facet of this study that must be covered before we conclude the concept of coveting. This is the basic problem. The surface attitude is a covetous spirit. But the real root problem is an inability to trust the sovereignty of God. You can wrestle all of your life with covetousness and maybe slow down the outward manifestations of the disease, but like poison, it will show up somewhere else. If you covet, you are discontented. The degree to which you are discontented is the degree to which you are saying to God, "You haven't met my real need. You either don't know what is best for me, or you don't care what is best for me, or You are incapable of providing what is best for me." You may say, "That is not what I mean." Yes it is. If you don't believe that, ask any parent what his child is really saying when his child says that he doesn't like what is given to him or how he is treated. The issue at stake is the sovereignty of God.

This brings us to the truth about coveting.

Truth 1- The truth is that God knows what you need. Luke 12:30, even before you ask. We need to relax.

Truth 2- God will give you what you need. Philippians 4:19. He does it when you need it and it will be all you need according to His riches which never run out. We ought to relax twice.

If Only I...

Truth 3- He knows what you can't handle. Genesis 2:16-17.

Truth 4- He withholds from you what isn't best for you and what you can't handle unless you demand it. Numbers 11:18-23.

Truth 5- He always allows *you* to make the final decision. Genesis 3:6 and Numbers 11:33.

Truth 6- He may give you what isn't best for you if you demand it long enough, but you will suffer spiritually.

And he gave them their request, but sent leanness to their
soul. (Psalm 106:15)

The truth is that God is the one who designs and provides and executes the plan of life. God chooses by divine initiative some things in your life and God allows by divine permission some other things in your life. God then designs by divine determination both what He chose and what He has allowed to work together for your good and His glory. He knows what each of us needs. He knows what each of us can handle. He has, by that knowledge, designed for each one of us a personalized, unique set of circumstances that will best allow each of us to be a reflection of Him. Remember: His desire is character, His character. He often, then, limits from the human perspective, our success, our possessions, our attributes and our acceptance in order to best fit the life plan that He has custom designed for each of us.

We break out of His life plan for us when we covet. When we covet more possessions, we so cloud our vision that we miss the eternal treasures we have already been given. When we covet more success, we bypass the spirit of dependence that only failure in the world affords. When we covet more acceptance, we may lose the depth of our relationship with the only One who has always accepted us just the way we are. When we covet different attributes, we may miss the very strength, the very spirit that may spring forth from weakness. God says, "I have given you and your family just what you need, or at least all that you have asked for that I can safely give you. Through contamination of the world's philosophy, you just have to have more, when more might be the very last thing you need. More might be the straw that breaks the spiritual camel's back. More might cause your spirit to be compromised and you don't need more."

If Only I...

Perhaps the most crushing truth of all is the reality that not only do we not need more to satisfy us, we may, in reality, be better off with less. I'm not proposing that we all move into a convent and sell everything we have and give the money away. God may not be calling you to do that. He may be calling some to be greatly blessed so that you will have much to give away to the kingdom. Others He may be calling to a life of guarded properties, slowly increasing your possessions as you slowly increase your capacity to possess them. But the truth of the matter is this, that very few of us are really happier or more spiritually hungry than we were when we had seemingly nothing but Him, when we had to count on His grace every payday without the added comfort of savings accounts or stocks and bonds in case God just didn't come through.

The pursuit of possessions and power takes energy and time. I wonder if more of that energy were directed at knowing Him and sharing Him and working hard not just to get rich but working to honor Him while He does with the riches whatever He chooses, what our lives would be like. I do not know the answer for sure, but I do know that God chooses to prosper some more than others. Oh, that we could be content, each of us, in a little house with one car (or no car) and a lot of love, if that is what would best honor God in our lives.

You can covet power, position, possessions and people and die spiritually in the process. Churches can covet, too. They can covet buildings, numbers, converts, budgets, programs and talent. They, too, may prosper outwardly but die inwardly. The bottom line is

And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

(Luke 12:15)

Hebrews 13:5 adds:

So let all of your life be free from covetousness and be content with whatever things you have, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (paraphrase)

You have Jesus; what more do you want? You say, "If only I had a different wife. If only I had a different body. If only I had a different mind. If only I didn't have this defect. If only... If only... If only... What you are saying is, "If only God hadn't made a

If Only I...

mistake.” My friend, God can't make a mistake. God can't even let you make a mistake without using it for your good. You say, “If only I had a bigger house. If only I had a better job. If only I had a newer car. If only I had that new pink chair in the living room that I saw at my friend's house. If only I had that new dress I saw in the window at the store. If only I had that new camera with the zoom lens.” If only... If only... If only...

What you are saying is, “If only God would wake up and begin caring for me, I would be happy.” My friend, God never sleeps. God could not stop caring for you and still be God. If only He gave you all that you covet for, you might lose the joy of dependence and the fragrance of trust and the insight of your spirit into what your real needs are. If only.... If only.... If only... If only we would stop saying If only... and quietly say to God, “Dear Jesus, I have you, so I have everything I need. Give me no more things than I can handle, no more success that I can receive and remain humble, no more acceptance than I need to realize that I am accepted in you. Dear Jesus, take from my heart the tragic mistrust of your sovereign control of my life; a mistrust that cries out, “If only I...” and only give me more of Yourself.

IF ONLY I...

If only I had a newer car
My life would be just great.
If only I had nicer clothes,
Much better I'd relate.

If only I had a bigger house
My problems would be solved.
If only I had a better job
Would not life be resolved?

If only I had better looks
More people to impress.
If I were just a movie star,
I'd share my life the best.

If only, If only, If only
What a slap in God's dear face.
If only You'd do better, God,
At last I'd find my place.

If Only I...

God's heart must break each time we cry,
"If only I had more."
If only we had eyes to see
The life He has in store.

Not only do we *not* need more
Nor need the grief it brings,
Do not we sometimes turn from Him
When He allows us things?

What if only I had nothing
But His presence and His word.
Nothing else to cling to,
Would I not better know the Lord?

If only I had *fewer* things
To occupy my mind.
If only I could see one day,
They'll all be left behind.

If only I had the mind of God
And better knew His ways,
I'd never say, "If only I..."
I'd simply give Him praise.

And anything He chose to give,
How grateful I would be
If only Jesus only
Was good enough for me.

For Focus and Application

1- How does God feel about a covetous spirit? How do you know? Memorize Isaiah 57:17. What is covetousness the opposite of?

2- What is the difference between coveting and envy? Can you do both at the same time? Why does one feed upon the other? Why do both break God's heart? What is the root attitude about the nature of God that makes us covet?

If Only I...

3- What makes the commandment about coveting stand out when compared with some of the others? What did God do differently as He spoke to Moses?

4- The issue of coveting another's house seems to go back a long way? What does a house represent? Why are so many unsatisfied with where they live, even if where they live is beautiful by the world's standards? Will we ever be totally satisfied with things? How do you know? If you had a choice of moving back to the first house you ever lived in with a guarantee of spiritual treasures, or the biggest house you've ever seen without that guarantee, which would you choose? Why do you think God never gave His Son a home?

5- Why is coveting someone else's wife so heartbreaking to God? What does it say to God about His sovereignty?

6- What does coveting another's station in life indicate to God? How does Satan approach God about testing those whose station in life is above average? How do you know?

7- In today's world, many of these areas of coveting are intertwined. Coveting "our neighbor's field" is akin to wanting someone else's job, (usually without the pressures it provides or the labors it took to get there.) How grateful are you *to have a job*? If God sent you to Africa on a mission field, would you complain? What if he sent you to AT&T or IBM or the Air Force as *your mission field*? What right have you to be less than grateful? And He's *paying you to be there*? Praise God for your job. God's heart is broken when you compare it unfavorably with someone else's.

If Only I...

8- Why does God, having been so specific, add “or anything else” to this commandment?

9- Review the eight principles on pages 8-11. Pay special attention to:

Principle 2- “The covetous heart is never satisfied”. Apply that to your present situation. You think “If only I..., I would be happy.” God says, “No you wouldn’t. You would only want more.”

Principle 4- “Don’t build close friendships with covetous people”. You will become like your friends. Love them. Pray for them. But don’t get your spiritual support from them. You will begin to want the things they want.

Principle 5- “God’s leaders must not be covetous.” This principle, when violated, has caused churches to envy and covet, because their spiritual leadership set the example, and the concept of spiritual treasures gets buried beneath the world’s philosophy of success.

10- Pray through the truths on page 14 carefully. Surrender your life once more into the hands of a sovereign God. Now rest, and be thankful for *everything you have*.

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