

CCC LEARNING TO BE CONTENT Part 10

Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 10

Exodus 20:17

Milton Bradley has a game called Mall Madness. It's a board game like Monopoly. The description goes like this: Will you be the first to lose your money? How it is played you are let lose in a shopping mall with \$200. Go at it and spend it all. Empty your pockets first and you will win the game. When you've spent every cent your marker moves triumphantly into the winner's space labeled 'broke' and you win." A survey of female teenagers discovered that 93% of female teenagers said that their number one favorite pastime was shopping. That beat out dating as the number one activity. One guy told me "If my wife doesn't go shopping at least three times a week, I send her a get well card."

Today we're going to wrap up the last in this series on the Ten Commandment. The Tenth Commandment says "*You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.*" In the next 90 days you are going to be deluged with Christmas catalogues and you will not hear the word covet used... but you will see plenty of examples of it. What is coveting? Covet: the uncontrolled desire to acquire. The desire to acquire in itself is not bad. God put it in you. God made little squirrels and He gave them the desire to acquire nuts. And He made birds and He gave them the desire to acquire straw to build nests. And He filled the world with all kinds of exciting, wonderful, good, desirable things and He's given you the desire to acquire them. That in and of itself is not bad, but anything uncontrolled is a problem. God says there are some things that are off limits. They are not yours to want. They will harm you. So it must be

controlled. It is hard, in our culture, to want to be content with what you have. This morning I want us to look at the effect of always wanting more. The Bible says there are five very specific effects when I don't control this drive to acquire, this coveting.

1. Fatigue. In our push to get more (and never in history have we been so pushed to get so much so quickly then the days that we live) we overwork and take on second jobs. Everybody in the family works, which in itself is not bad, unless the reasons are we have gotten caught up in the material rat-race and everybody's tired; everybody is fatigued, from it. God's word, the Bible says, "*Do not wear yourself out to be rich, have the wisdom to show restraint.*" What is God trying to tell us here, He's saying, it's dumb to wear yourself out just trying to get more, more, more... The second effects when I don't control this drive to

acquire, this coveting, that the 10th Commandment talks about is;

2. Debt. God's Word says, "*The more money you have, the more money you spend.*" Eccl. 5: Coveting destroys budgets. We think the problem is I just don't make enough money, if I only could make a little more then everything would be okay, No, it's not that you don't make enough money -- you want too much. A lot of things we think are needs and I just got to speak the truth to you in love here is they really aren't needs... they are greed's. So because we want more we get further and further in debt. It always costs more to have more. If the grass is greener on the other side of the fence you can bet the water bill's higher too. The 3rd effect when I don't control this drive to acquire, this coveting, that the 10th Commandment talks about is;

3. Worry. God's word, the bible says, "*A working man can get a good night's sleep. But the rich man has so much that he stays awake worrying about it all.*" Eccl 5:12 When we focus on things we always inevitably worry. You add these first three together -- fatigue, debt, worry and you get the fourth one.

4. Conflict. God's word, the bible says, "*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from the desires that battle within you?*" James 4:1 Conflict comes when we always want more. The number one cause of divorce is financial tension. They are arguments over money, over possessions. When you have what I want there's going to be conflict over it. God says, "*Don't covet what is somebody else's.*" Don't covet somebody else's job, car, house, wife, husband. God says don't do it.

5. Dissatisfaction. "*You will never be satisfied if you long*

to be rich. You will never get all you want." Eccl 5:10 The Living Bible says "*It's foolish to think wealth brings happiness!*" Things can bring happiness for a while. But the thrill doesn't last. The excitement wears off. When you get something and open the package you think, Wow, this is great. But after a while it's not so great any more. You're bored with that piece of art or that furniture or that car. Why? Let me ask you, why don't things keep you permanently happy? Because things don't change. Human beings like change. If things don't change we get bored with them. That's why we have a thing called fashion or style. Because things don't change we get bored with them and we have to have something new. Pretty soon you have to redecorate, or remodel or repair or replace or at least rearrange it. Things don't give permanent happiness. I wonder how many of you are still thrilled about the

Christmas gift you got last Christmas. Most of us probably don't even remember what you got last Christmas! Things do not bring lasting happiness. It's a temporary thrill. And coveting is the number one reason for dissatisfaction in our world. What is the antidote to coveting? The antidote to coveting is contentment. Paul says, "*I've learned the secret of being content whether living in plenty or in want.*" Circle "learned". Contentment is something you have to learn. It does not come natural. I am not by nature a contented person and neither are you. It is not automatic. You have to learn to be content. It is an education process. One of the ways you learn it is by realizing the effect of always wanting more -- those five things we just talked about. So then we must ask, How do I learn to be content, to have contentment:

II. HOW TO LEARN CONTENTMENT

1. RESIST COMPARING MYSELF TO OTHERS.

Comparing always leads to coveting. "*We do not dare classify or compare ourselves. It is not wise.*" II Cor. 10;12 That means it's dumb! If you're comparing yourself -- houses, cars, jobs, looks, clothes – God's word, says, "*It's not wise.*" God says your just creating dissatisfaction. How do you react when you see somebody with a nicer car? Do you say, "I wish I had that" or can you just be glad that they've got it. How do you react when you see somebody with a nicer house? or more beautiful furniture? One of the greatest lessons you can learn, is to learn to admire without having to acquire. I don't have to own everything to enjoy it. If the only things you enjoy are the things you own, you're going to be miserable a lot of your life. You can't own everything. Learn to admire without having to acquire. Why do we compare? The Bible says don't do it. We

compare because in our society the way we keep score is by possessions. We're insecure. We're always looking around and asking "How am I doing?" as if net worth and self worth were the same thing. They're not. Your net worth has absolutely no relationship to your self worth. You can be a millionaire and a jerk or be poor and be wonderful. Don't compare net worth to self worth. *"When we long to be rich, we are a prey to temptation. We get trapped. [Circle "we get trapped"] into all sorts of foolish and dangerous ambitions which will eventually plunge us into ruin."* 1Tim 6:9 Things can control us. You can be possessed by your possessions if you don't watch out. People will sacrifice values, morals, integrity, all kinds of things in order to get more. They'll even sacrifice relationships. How do I learn to be content, to have contentment:

2. REJOICE IN WHAT I DO HAVE.

Appreciate what you've got and be grateful to God. Open your eyes. *"If God gives a man wealth and property he should be grateful and enjoy what he has. It is a gift from God."* Ecc. 5:19 Circle "grateful", "enjoy" and "gift". God says I want you to enjoy and be grateful for what you've got. It's a gift. You wouldn't have anything if it weren't for God. It's all a gift from God. We get into a trap I call When and Then Thinking. When and Then Thinking says, "When I get _____, then I'll be happy." You fill in the blank. But that's a lie you won't be happy. You maybe happy for a little while, but it won't last.. You've got to learn how to cut through that. Let me ask you a question... What are you waiting on to make you happy? Maybe it's when I get married then I'll be happy. When I get out of this marriage then I'll be happy. When I have kids then I'll

be happy. You are as happy as you want to be right now.

It's a choice, your choice. Forget the When and Then

Thinking. Happiness is not getting whatever you want.

Happiness is enjoying whatever you have. One of the

marks of maturity is when you can say "enough's enough,

I'm happy." How do I learn to be content, to have

contentment:

3. RELEASE WHAT I HAVE TO HELP OTHERS.

God doesn't want to just bless you for your own benefit. He

wants to bless you so you can be a blessing to someone

else, he wants you to share it, he wants you to help other

people with it. He's watching you to see how much you

give away. I Tim 6:17-19 *"Tell those who are rich, not to*

be proud and not to trust in their money which will soon be

gone. Tell them to use their money to do good to give

happily to those in need, always with others whatever God

*has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real
treasure for themselves in heaven -- it is the only safe*

investment for eternity." This is a very, very important

verse. First, who's it talking to? "Tell those who are rich".

Who does that involve? If you're an American it means

you, you're rich. I don't care if you're on welfare, if you're

an American you're rich. In the world, the people in this

room are in the top 2% of income of the world. You're rich,

no matter how little you make, because you're an

American. This verse is talking to us. The question is, Is it

possible to be wealthy and not be materialistic? Yes.

It's possible to be wealthy and not materialistic.

Materialistic is an attitude. You can be poor and greedy or

rich and greedy. You can be poor and contented or wealthy

and contented. It's an attitude not the amount that God's

talking about here. How can I be wealthy and not

materialistic? As long as you follow the four precautions in this verse. If you follow these four things you can be as wealthy as you want and you won't be materialistic.

1. Don't become proud of your wealth. Don't think you're better than somebody because you've got more money than they've got.

2. Don't put your trust in money. Don't look to it for your security. Security is not in your bank account. Your security is in God.

3. Use your money to do good. Don't waste it. If you've got a lot of money, don't squander it. Don't blow it. Use it to do good.

4. Give cheerfully. The Bible says that the more we receive the more we are to give. Giving is the cure for the disease of materialism because it is the opposite. The root of materialism is the word "get" -- get, get, get, get... The

opposite of getting is giving. So every time I give to somebody else, a friend, my tithe to the work of the Lord here at Calvary,... I'm breaking the grip of materialism in my life. It's saying "I can get along without this." It's a spiritual victory every time you're generous. Acts 20:35 "*There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.*" How do I learn to be content, to have contentment:

4. REFOCUS ON WHAT'S GOING TO LAST.

Give your attention to permanent values. Reorganize your life around eternal priorities. II Cor. 4:18 "*We fix our attention, not on the things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever.*" Everything you see is temporary. Nothing you see is going to last. Everything you see in the world is eventually going to decay or rust or wear out or fall apart –

it will eventually not exist, because all possessions are temporary. The only things that really last for eternity are things you can't see – your relationship to God, relationship to others Christians, values, freedom -- things you can't see. The worse things about materialism is it clouds our vision of God. We begin to think that all there is really to life is just things and that's so wrong. There is so much more to life than just getting things, just obtaining things. Our perspective gets warped. Jesus told a story about it one time. He said there was a guy who was a real successful business man and had these barns full of wheat and stuff and had a bumper crop year. He said as a result the guy said "I know what I'll do. I'll just build bigger barns." It never occurred to him to share any of it. It never occurred to him to tithe on it. It never occurred to him that

there might be other things he could do with it beside store it up. God said to this guy, "You fool." Your thinking all there is to life is just getting more, moving up the ladder. You're not going to take any of it with you any way. You only get to use it 70, 80 maybe 90 years. There is more to life than things. Luke 12:15 "*A man's true life is not made up of the things he owns no matter how rich he may be.*" Our culture says if I have a little I'm worth a little. That's not true. The cross says, you're worth a lot. I think we need to do a periodic checkup and ask the tough question that says, "What am I really living for? Is the primary goal of my life just to get more? Is that the only way I'm keeping score in my life, by my balance sheet? What do I think about the most? What do I talk about the most? What do I spend time the most on? Happiness does not come from possessions; it comes from knowing your purpose in life.

Why in the world did God make me and why am I here.

What does he want to do with my life? Where am I going when I die? I want to challenge you to challenge the myth of having more will make me happier. Each of us has to make a choice, is my life style going to be determined by culture or by Christ, by the Master or by Madison Avenue.

What's really important? If you want to break the materialism grip in your life, buying things we don't need with money that we don't have, take these four steps and you will never regret doing it...