

Chapter 6

Keep the 10th Commandment

“Thou shalt not covet” is the hardest of the Ten Commandments to keep, but if you keep it, a world of happiness awaits you.

This book is for people of every conceivable religion, including Atheists. Whether you believe that the Bible was written by God, or written by Man to accurately and literally describe what happened, or a nice story inspiring people to do the right thing, or propaganda, or pure fiction, by the end of this chapter you will have to admit that the tenth of the Ten Commandments is a vital piece of advice in achieving a satisfied and productive attitude in bad times.

Here is a quick review of the Ten Commandments:

1. Only one God
2. No idols
3. Don't take the Lord's name in vain
4. Keep the Sabbath
5. Honor your father and mother

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6. Don't murder
 7. Don't commit adultery
 8. Don't steal
 9. Don't near false witness
 10. Don't covet (envy and want to have) your neighbor's possessions

Notice that commandments 1-3 dictate your relationship with God. Commandments 4-9 dictate your actions. Commandment 10 dictates how you think!

What is this, the thought police? Isn't it unfair for you to be judged by your thoughts. You can control your actions, but how can you be asked to control your thoughts?

Your actions can hurt people, but not your thoughts. If you murder your neighbor, you hurt him. If you commit adultery with his wife, you hurt him and your wife, and probably yourself and the neighbor's wife. If you steal from him, you hurt him. If you spread false rumors about him, you hurt him. But if you are secretly jealous of his ox, his donkey, or his Lincoln Navigator, who does it hurt?

You. That's who it hurts. It hurts you very badly. In many different ways. And if you can get rid of these secret jealousies, it *helps* you in many ways.

I'm neither a Priest nor Minister nor Rabbi nor Parson nor Mullah, nor Teacher nor Guru, but I think I understand the tenth commandment and its genius. The first 9 commandments are law. The tenth is advice, very much like the advice my mom gave me. If it were written as advice from a parent, it would probably sound something like this:

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"My child, if you want to be happy, indeed if you want to avoid misery throughout your life, take my advice: Do not covet the things that are your neighbors — not his house, nor his wife, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor his Lincoln Navigator. Because if you covet these things, you will be embittered. If you covet these things, you will lose the benefit of friendship with your

neighbor. If you covet these things, you will lose the opportunity to learn from your neighbor — maybe even the opportunity to learn how he went out and obtained these blessings. If you covet these things, you will lose perspective on the blessings that are already yours. If you covet these things, your children will know of your coveting, they will imitate you, and they will judge you and everyone else on possessions. If you covet these things, you will try to keep up with the Joneses, and you just might go bankrupt."

"And my child, if you can resist coveting these things, you will stand as an equal to your neighbor, and confront him in friendship, not in competition. You will learn from him, as he will learn from you. Your whole community will see you standing tall, and will respect you, and good things will come your way. If you don't covet these things, you will start to notice and appreciate those things which you have, and you will be happier."

"My child, I know coveting is hard to resist. But you must try to resist it, because coveting leads to unhappiness. So notice the good things in your life, no matter how insignificant others judge them to be. Celebrate yourself for yourself. Rejoice in the people and things around you. If, after that, you still want things like what your neighbors have, look at what your neighbor did to get those things, and model him. Or find other ways to get those things."

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■ Coveting and Destruction

Coveting precedes many thefts and murders. Coveting between rich and poor leads to class war and then military war. It's no good for you and it's no good for society.