

THE MEASURE OF A MAN

NOT COVETOUS

We are measuring a godly man by looking at the spiritual characteristics required of leaders in the church. Even if you do not aspire to a position, your practice should be the same if you want to be a maturing, godly man.

Our thirteenth characteristic is “not covetous.”

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

1 Timothy 3:3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, **not covetous**...

Have you are wondered: What is the difference between envy, jealousy and covetousness?

- Envy is what you feel towards someone when he has something that you want.
- Jealousy is what you feel when you have something you really like and don't want to share.
- Covetousness is what you feel about the thing you want that that other person has.

This sinful feeling is the result of having the wrong attitude toward material things.

It involves a strong desire after the possession of worldly things. It is a serious enough sin to be listed as the 10th commandment:

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

God's Word teaches that "the covetous cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Charles Spurgeon eloquently wrote:

[Covetousness] is a degrading, groveling, hardening, deadening sin, which withers everything around it that is lovely and Christlike. He who is covetous is of the race of Judas, and will in all probability turn out to be himself a son of perdition. The crime of covetousness is common, but very few will confess it; for when a man heaps up gold in his heart, the dust of it blows into his eyes, and he cannot see his own fault.

I thought it might be helpful to list a few biblical characters who succumbed to covetousness.

Achan:

Joshua 7:21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

Samuel's sons:

1 Samuel 8:1 Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.

1 Samuel 8:2 The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.

1 Samuel 8:3 But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

Saul:

1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

Ahab:

1 Kings 21:2 So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money."

1 Kings 21:3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"

1 Kings 21:4 So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food.

In the New Testament we could list the rich young ruler and Ananias and Sapphira.

What is it we covet? According to the 10th commandment it is **anything** that is your neighbors. Then there follows a representative list of material things.

But it obviously includes things like power and position.

What about pleasures? Sure, we can covet those, too. So possessions, power, position, and pleasures make our list of things we can covet.

Let's talk about possessions as these are the easiest to identify and admit we are coveting. How do we avoid coveting our neighbor's possessions?

It's critical that we as Christians have the proper biblical mindset toward possessions:

- We're to be content with what we have.

1 Timothy 6:6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

1 Timothy 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

1 Timothy 6:8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

- We should not seek financial prosperity as our primary goal.

Matthew 6:19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.

- If we are rich, we should give to the poor.

1 Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

1 Timothy 6:18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

1 Timothy 6:19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

- We're called to set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Colossians 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Colossians 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

A couple of additional thoughts on covetousness. In one place we read that "covetousness is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). It's our nature to covet and, as a result, we elevate people and possessions, pleasure, power, and position to the status of an idol in our lives.

We're exhorted in Hebrews to,

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU."

The ground of our contentment is to be found in our personal relationship with Jesus - specifically the sense He is always present in our lives as our intimate companion.

Jesus will never "leave" you. It means He will never loosen His grasp! He'll never let go of you.

Jesus will never "forsake" you. It means to leave alone in a test or contest or place of suffering.

Bottom line: Do we prefer Jesus to everything and everyone else? Is He enough for us to be content no matter our material situation?

He's sufficient! It's up to us to look to Him.