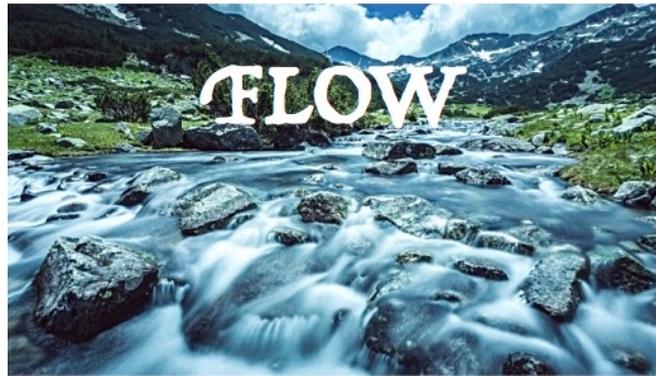


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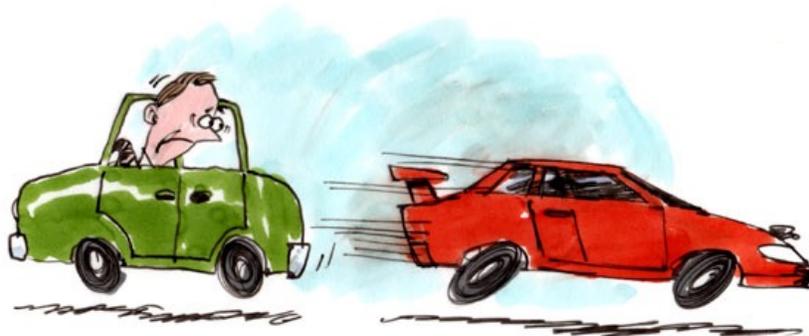


You Shall Not Covet

by Diane Anderson

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Numbers 20:17 (NIV)



My husband enjoys cars and houses. He was raised by a Vocational Ed teacher who also taught him and his siblings all about car and house care, structure, repair, and maintenance. His family bonds over classic cars as well as repairing or upgrading their own vehicles. They also make time to

help each other build a new home or upgrade/maintain a current house. Therefore, my husband enjoys seeing the newest (and oldest) models of both cars and homes, scanning the classifieds, and attending the annual Sherwood Cruise In and local open houses. I, on the other hand, just can't do most of it. I want to be with him and enjoy spending time with him in an activity that is a way he's learned to bond with others. I can't. I start the comparing game—my car or house versus the ones we're viewing. I covet the upgrade. I simply stop being content with what God has given. I find I can do that, too, with my health. I see people enjoying a delicious salad or glass of milk at a restaurant and covet that ability. This attitude should not be. It interferes with serving God and is mentioned in the Ten Commandments.

When I originally wrote and researched this devotional, I had planned to focus on Paul's words about being content in every situation. However, after Pastor Mike's sermon a week ago, I found myself reading a passage containing words that jumped out at me, with a message that was new to my understanding. It has required a complete rewrite of this piece over the past couple of days.

Pastor shared, "*The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*" (Romans 13:9-10, NIV). Please understand that I know that coveting is wrong but always felt it was because it disturbed my peace of mind and trust in God's provision. When I read verse 10, however, I realized that contentment and love are completely linked! Love fulfills the law against covetousness! I have a much deeper understanding now. When we covet, we are not loving our neighbors—we are resenting them and it affects how we treat them.

How can I share Christ's love and sacrifice when I am disliking the other person because I don't have what they have? James 4:1-3 says, "*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*" Our concept of what we need leads us to argue, resent, think ill

of (and remember that Jesus says that this is just like murder), and otherwise hurt others.

Covetousness leads us to not love others. However, it also puts a barrier between us and God. We doubt His love. We don't trust His provision. We make what we DON'T have into an idol. We don't love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. The writer of Hebrews puts it well when he quotes the Old Testament, "*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,*

'Never will I leave you;

never will I forsake you.'

So we say with confidence,

'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5-6, NIV)

God is my helper! He sent Jesus to save me from these sins knowing I could never keep His commandments perfectly! He sent His Holy Spirit to guide and comfort me so that I would never be alone or forsaken!

Do you understand how revolutionary this is?

In my education courses, I was taught to write behavioral objectives—the things I expect students to be able to DO when I finish with a lesson. We were instructed to only write positives. Children's brains struggle to interpret negative words like "not" and "don't" so they find it difficult to obey. Rephrasing commands using only positive language makes it easier for the minds to understand. It's probably not that much different for adults.

So, knowing this, Jesus taught us the truth of the law—it's summed up in one positive word!

L O V E

Love God and Love others—all the law and the prophets are summed up in these.

God, in HIS infinite and perfect love asks us simply to LOVE. How many other systems of faith or belief ask us to do one simple, positive thing?

So, in summary, now when my husband wants to go and look at houses or cars, or when I see someone enjoying a tall glass of milk or a salad; I will

ask the Lord to remind me to love those who are blessed so I'm not tempted to covet. I will use my heart, soul, mind and strength to choose love.

Questions:

What areas tempt you to covet?

What do you do to prevent that from happening?

In what areas do you need help loving God? Others?

What steps can you take to practice love?

What does contentment mean to you? What does it look like? Sound like? Act like?

Prayer:

Our Lord God Almighty,

You are the God who loves us. You desire only the best for our spirits. Thank you. Thank you for your Word, the Bible, that teaches us about you and your plans and how we are to think and act and be. Please open our minds to its truth through the leading of your Holy Spirit. We confess our lack of love as we covet what we do not have. I pray that we will not covet—that we will avoid even the temptation to covet. Instead, fill our hearts and minds with such a love for others that we are glad for their blessings instead of jealous. Remind us how our trust of you is linked directly to our contentment of what you have given. Help us trust more completely in your goodness and love. Prevent any seeds of resentment or doubt from sprouting, growing and thriving in our hearts. We do love you. We do want to serve you with all of our selves. Be glorified through our weak selves. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Extras:

About a Mile - "Satisfied"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KzB6Xklulo>

The Larger Catechism

Q. 146. Which is the Tenth Commandment?

A. The Tenth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

Q. 147. What are the duties required in the Tenth Commandment?

A. The duties required in the Tenth Commandment are: such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul towards our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto and further all that good which is his.

Q. 148. What are the sins forbidden in the Tenth Commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the Tenth Commandment are: discontentment with our own estate; envying, and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

Philippians 4: 11-13 (NIV)

11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

I Timothy 6:2b-10 (NIV)

These are the things you are to teach and insist on. 3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. *7 For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8 But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a*

root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

An article on a recent trend. Maybe our culture is yearning for contentment but not realizing it's only found in Christ?

<http://time.com/4579894/hygge-denmark-nordic-trend-survive-2016/>