

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

X

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.
Exodus 20:17, NIV

Introduction

A Catholic priest noted that the sin least confessed was the tenth commandment. Most of us do not recognize this sin in ourselves.

After a young pastor had preached a sermon on the Ten Commandments, a little old lady approached him with, "Pastor, you hadn't oughta preach on them sins. Our young people already know enough mischief to get into without you givin' them more ideas!" There is a tendency in human beings to want the forbidden. What kid hasn't thought that a stolen watermelon was sweeter? Paul writes,

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Romans 7:7-12, NIV

In this commandment we move from the outward to the inward; from actions to motives. It is the

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

seed sin that produces other sins. Paul teaches us that when we covet we also break the Second Commandment—we are guilty of idolatry:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, *which is idolatry* [italics mine].
Colossians 3:5, NIV

The outline for this chapter comes from the Apostle John's teaching:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.
1 John 2:16, NASB

These Greek words mean *to covet* or *covetousness* in the New Testament:

Pleonexia—the "insatiable desire to have more, avarice."

Philarguros—the "love of money."

Oregomai—"to stretch out." for something.

Epithumeō—"to desire or lust."

Zēloō—to "fervently desire (good or bad)."

Covetousness is greed, the selfish desire for someone or something that we have no right to

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

possess.

The Lust of The Flesh *The Passions*

The lust of the flesh corresponds to the *Id* in psychological terms. The *Id* produces the primitive, pushing, unregulated urges. These are the *passions* and include sex drive, hunger, and aggression. Obviously, sex, hunger and aggression are not evil in themselves. However, they must be guided and controlled.

Sex drive

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was an Austrian physician who founded psychoanalysis. He viewed sex drive as the primary motivation of human beings. In order to explain *intra-personal relationships* (internal relationships within one's own mind), Freud made some logical constructs. The primitive, pushing, unregulated urges from the unconscious he called the *Id* (From Latin, "it"). These urges include sex drive, aggression and hunger. The *ego* (From Greek, "I") is the decision-making self. The *superego* (From Latin "above" + Greek "I") is the conscience. (For more on how the moral nature of man works, see <http://www.jrcministries.org/wholeness/15-how-to-have-a-clear-conscience.html>)

If sex drive is not controlled, it can result in breaking the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." All kinds of damage results from sex outside marriage. Sexually transmitted diseases are spread, including the deadly AIDS virus. Families are ripped apart and children are injured psychologically.

Sex drive is *amoral*—neither immoral or moral. Sex drive is basically good, but must be expressed only between two married people —a man and a woman.

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

Hunger□

Gluttony reduces the quality and quantity of life. If hunger is uncontrolled, it is harmful to one's health. Life is shortened by eating too much or not eating the right foods in balance. Also, one should have a basic amount of exercise and rest. If a love of food is uncontrolled it can result in hoarding of food and even stealing food—breaking the eighth commandment.

Aggression□

Aggression is usually associated with destructive behavior. However, aggression can be used positively. If we channel aggression or *life energy* to accomplish some positive goal, it is good. Psychiatrist Smiley Blanton, in his book, *Love or Perish*, deals with this subject. A carpenter can use his ability to channel aggression positively into building a house, or he can channel aggression negatively into tearing a house down. Conclusion: aggression is basically good, but must be directed positively.

Aggression in our society takes on a foolish negative turn in the *Victim Syndrome*. When people become *hurt* by some injustice or perceived injustice, anger is generated. This anger can be cultivated, *enjoyed* and turned into *hatred*, then expressed in destructive behavior.

Selfishness can result in destructive behavior. A horrible example is the murder of 311 million babies since 1973 (61 million surgical abortions and 250 chemical abortions).

See

<http://www.numberofabortions.com/>

. The population of the USA in 2019 is 329 million. See

<https://www.census.gov/popclock/>.

This is the American holocaust!

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

On the other hand, aggression can be directed positively. Three great examples are Dr. Ben Carson, Mrs. Kay Coles James, Mrs. Star Parker. Pro-life organizations are aggressively trying to stop people from murdering babies.

If any person deserved to be classified as a victim, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. He refused to be a victim, and became a victor instead! By his physical abuse we have been made physically whole. By his spiritual, psychological and physical suffering on the cross we have been given spiritual life everlasting and the hope of an immortal body at the resurrection:

But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

1 Peter 2:20-25, NIV

If we follow the example of Jesus, then our lives will also be a beacon of hope to others.

*The Lust of The Eyes
Possessions*

Materialism □

The desire for possessions has been the downfall of many. Materialism is a curse of the United

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

States

Someone has described it well: "We come into this world, trying to grasp everything material that we can. We leave this world with open hands, taking nothing with us." Jesus said,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21, NIV

Carolyn, my wife, remembered the site where our home once stood in Mississippi City, Mississippi. The time was August 1969 right after Hurricane Camille. She said that the LORD impressed her with the words, "All you have left is what you have sent ahead." This meant that we will not lose what we invest in the

Kingdom

of

God

. This world and all it contains will be destroyed by fire. Peter says,

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

2 Peter 3:10-13, NASB

The Lord took care of us during hurricane Camille. Carolyn and I were on R and R in Hawaii and our children were safe with Carolyn's folks here in Garden City,

Missouri

! I was serving as a Chaplain in the Army in

Vietnam

at the time and we had planned to be together in

Hawaii

on our anniversary,

27 July 1969

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

. However, the Army transferred me and we did not make the original date—we had to wait until August! Also, the LORD took care of us financially with a SBA loan! If we had been in Hawaii

on the original date, Carolyn and our children would possibly have been killed. We give thanks to the LORD for his providential care!

Love of Money □

Some misquote Paul as saying, "Money is the root of all evil." Paul actually writes,

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 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.

1 Timothy 6-10, NIV

It is the *love of money* that enslaves people and causes them to suffer. People wear themselves out to make money. Paul tells us that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil." Greed drives people to break other commandments such as committing murder, lying, stealing, prostitution (committing adultery), and idolatry.

Gold! There is no better symbol of material wealth than gold. This intriguing yellow metal is described chemically as atomic number 79, having an atomic weight of 197.2 and represented by the symbol Au. It is almost indestructible. One ounce can be drawn into a wire five miles long or hammered into a sheet covering 100 square feet. It can be made so thin that it is transparent! All the gold ever mined would fit into a 67-foot cube. There is an estimated 70 million tons in the ocean, but it is not economically feasible to extract it. Gold can be made from lead and mercury in an atom smasher, but it is too expensive to do so.

Gold is extremely rare and very valuable. There are many applications for gold. Gold does not corrode and it conducts heat and electricity well, making it especially suited for electronics. Most people are not allergic to gold so it serves well as jewelry, in human implant procedures, and in

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

teeth fillings. Thin coatings of gold on astronauts' masks reflect heat and light to protect their faces. It also protects space vehicles and a thin coating on glass windows reflects heat and light. Gold has served as currency for thousands of years. Threads of gold woven into fabric add beauty and value. Gold flakes placed in auto paint clothe vehicles with elegance. Gold leaf protects and beautifies art and architecture.

The greedy are attracted to gold like a magnet attracts iron. Throughout human history, people have killed and been killed for it. Some have let covetousness or greed consume them until they have become sociopathic monsters.

Yet, gold is amoral, meaning that it does not have a moral nature. Human beings have a moral nature. When people make a decision having to do with right or wrong, they either make a moral (right) decision or an immoral (wrong) decision.

Therefore, gold is basically good—God created all things good:

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.)
Genesis 2:10-12, NIV

However, gold must be used for *good* and not for *evil*.

Stewardship of Wealth □

So, is it wrong to possess gold? It is wrong if it were acquired unethically, or if misused. It is right if it were acquired ethically and used to glorify God and to help people.

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

Is it wrong not to possess gold? It is wrong if one has the ability to gain wealth and is too lazy to work for it. It is wrong to lose gold or wealth by careless mishandling.

If we have the means to learn about gold and wealth, we should apply ourselves to learn. I suggest that you carefully study some authorities in the economic field.

The whole material universe belongs to the LORD and we are entrusted with a small portion of it for a short time. Paul writes,

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.
1 Timothy 6:7, NIV

The Pride of Life Position

The desire for position is a driving force that is never satisfied. It can be enslaving.

Power over Others□

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher, psychologist, poet and classical scholar. His father and two grandfathers were Lutheran ministers. However, he was a vocal critic of Christianity and declared that "God is dead" in 1883, meaning that Judeo-Christian beliefs should be replaced with something else. How arrogant that human beings can think that they are more wise than their creator! Walter Kaufmann says concerning Nietzsche,

In the course of his psychological observations, Nietzsche gradually came to the conclusion that all human behaviour could be reduced to a single basic drive, *The Will to Power* [italics mine]. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1963, S.v. "Nietzsche, Friedrich," by Walter Kaufmann, Professor of Philosophy, Princeton University).

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

By the term, *the will to power*, Nietzsche meant that man wanted first of all, power to overcome his own passions and to "recreate himself." If one failed in this endeavor, he then sought power over other people.

Desire to Become God □

Nietzsche recognized the need for power to overcome one's own passions. "He aspired to *become a creator rather than a mere creature* [italics mine]." However, Nietzsche rejected the One who wanted to give him power to overcome the *lust of the flesh*

,
the lust of the eyes
and
the pride of life

. Nietzsche had a nervous and physical breakdown in 1889 and remained insane until he died in 1900. His illness was probably due to tertiary syphilis.

In summary, Nietzsche (1) Rejected Christ; (2) Saw the need to keep the Tenth Commandment (rule his own desires); (3) Tried with human power to keep the Tenth Commandment but was only successful to a limited degree by living an ascetic life; (4) Failed to save himself; (5) Lived in a "hell on earth" in a state of mental and physical breakdown for about eleven years before he died. His was a terrible tragedy that could have been avoided by accepting Christ and following Christ's teaching.

Conclusion

In contrast to Nietzsche and other failed human attempts to overcome wrong desires, Jesus overcame. Nietzsche was only one son of Adam, who was the first to fail when tempted.

The First Adam □

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

Moses records the temptation of Adam and Eve:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman [Eve], "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the Garden?' The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman, "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food [lust of the flesh] and pleasing to the eye [lust of the eyes], and also desirable for gaining wisdom [pride of life], she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband [Adam], who was with her, and he ate it.
Genesis 3:1-6, NIV

Note Satan's strategy in tempting Adam and Eve. He appealed to their desires: *The Lust of the Flesh, The Lust of the Eyes and The Pride of Life*.
Then, he persuaded them to

1 Doubt God's Word. "Did God really say?"

2 Deny God's Word. "You will not surely die...."

3 Disobey God's Word. "She. . . and he ate it."
(David Alsobrook, S.v., "Know Your Enemy")

The Last Adam, Jesus

The narrative that describes Jesus' temptation is found in Matthew:

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread [the lust of the flesh]. Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down [the pride of life]. For it is written:

He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you [lust of the eyes]," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.
Matthew 4:1-11, NIV

Jesus did not yield to temptation when Satan appealed to his hunger [*the lust of the flesh*]. Jesus really needed to eat soon, since he was at his limit of going without food. If he did not eat soon, he would be facing death.

Jesus also did not yield to temptation when Satan tempted him in the areas of *the lust of the eyes* and *the pride of life*.
. Jesus refused to doubt his Father and answered Satan with the Word of God.

All of us will be tempted. We can overcome as Jesus did if we receive Christ as our Savior. The Holy Spirit will make his home in our hearts and empower us to overcome wrong desires. He will help us redirect our desires not to sin,

But [to] earnestly desire and zealously cultivate the greatest and best—the higher [gifts] and the choicest [graces]. And yet I will show you a still more excellent way—one that is better by far

The Tenth Commandment

Written by Dr. John E. Russell Sr - Last Updated Tuesday, 18 June 2019 13:54

and the highest of them all, [love].
1 Corinthians 12:31, AMP

Taken from *The Ten Commandments*

Book and Program Copyright © 1995, 2019 by Dr. John E. Russell, JRCM

Power articles may be printed, copied, published not-for-profit and forwarded, but only if not edited.