

## **“THE VALUE OF CONTENTMENT”**

### **1 Timothy 6:3-10**

### **Servants’ Guide**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

*And so we come to the last word, the grand finale: You shall not covet.*

*That’s it? Somehow this command seems out of place. Does coveting even belong on the same list with idolatry, murder, theft and adultery? After all, it is simply a “thought crime.” It inflicts no damage on others. Or does it?*

*The tenth and final commandment, moving from action to thought, suggests new possibilities. It foreshadows a new law, one which will concern itself less with the hands than with the heart.*

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the difference between coveting and innocent desire?
  - *An accurate understanding of the word **covet** is essential for this study. The Hebrew word is **desire**, which is not sin in itself; the key distinction is that when something owned by someone else is the object, desiring becomes coveting.*
2. Exodus 20:17 says: “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.” We have previously considered the order of the commandments. Why do you think this one falls last?
  - *Coveting is a “gateway sin” which leads to many other commandment violations. Obedience to this final Word serves as “preventive maintenance” for others.*
3. In your opinion why does God include specific examples in this particular commandment?
  - *One possibility: A “thought crime” needs to be “fleshed out” for the hearers. Also, the examples demonstrate how broad are the implications for this commandment.*
4. Read 1 Timothy 6:3-10. What is the nature of the controversy Paul describes (vv.3-5)?
5. Given that the Proverbs teach that godly people often find material success, what is Paul upset about (v.5)?
  - *Paul deals frequently in his letter with teachers of heresy. Some of these teachers have taken the classic teaching that those who follow God’s law tend to prosper and distort it into religion with a profit motive. Wealth is a reasonable, possible by-product of godliness, not the incentive for it.*
6. How does Paul use irony to underscore his point (vv.5-6)?
  - *Paul uses financial metaphors to make his own point. In verse 5 the profiteers are “robbed” of the truth; in verse 6 it is godliness, not finance, which is “gain.” Paul thus underlines the distinctions between spiritual and monetary motives.*
7. How would you define “godliness with contentment” (v.6)?
  - *Contentment is a by-product of godliness. Becoming godly nurtures with us God’s perspective, which is that we have, in him, everything we need. This liberation from material longing is indeed great gain.*
8. Does being content with food and clothing rule out other desires (v.7)? Explain.
  - *Christians can be content, and happy, while still having ambitions for other reasonable goals. The real question is whether or not God is first in our hearts, and whether godliness defines and directs the ambitions.*
9. Give a description of Paul’s “trap” and its workings (v.9).
10. Verse 10 is often misquoted, as “Money is the root of all evil.” What difference does the true reading make in our understanding of money and ambition?
11. Which of the other commandments might “coveting” lead one to violate? Why?
  - *The answer: any or all of the other nine. See the note for question 2.*
12. How can you actively strive toward godliness with contentment in your present situation?