

# 10 HABITS of Highly Healthy Homes



## Habit 10: Discover Real Contentment

Sunday, July 30, 2000

**Exodus 20:17 (NLT)** Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else your neighbor owns.

- Some time ago, Milton Bradley released a game called "Mall Madness." It's a board game similar to Monopoly. Here's their description ... "Will you be the first to lose your money? You are let loose in a shopping mall with \$200. Go to it and spend it all. Empty your pockets first and you will win the game. When you've spent every cent, your marker moves triumphantly into the winner's space labeled 'broke' and you win!" The game even features an electronic voice that announces sales and clearances, and credit cards so you can plunge yourself into debt.
- A recent survey of female teenagers discovered that 93% of them said their number one favorite pastime was SHOPPING. Sorry guys, it beat out DATING by a long shot! One husband said, "If my wife doesn't go out shopping at least three times a week, I send her a get-well card."
- Today, we're going to talk about **CONTENTMENT** and its negative counterpart **COVETING**. Coveting is a word that isn't used much anymore, but we encounter its effects hundreds of times a day in our materialistic society.
- Did you know that Sunday shopping begins next weekend in Saint John, purportedly to make it easier for people to get their Christmas shopping done – in August?! Merchants say that Sunday shopping doesn't add to sales, it just spreads them out over one more day. Retail employees almost unanimously hate losing their only day off. But there is pressure from a select group of consumers who want to be able to buy whenever the urge hits them, be it on Sunday or in the middle of the night.
- Never before have people been as "pushed to possess" as we are. Marketing research is a billion-dollar-a-year business. Thousands of people spend forty hours a week designing ways to trigger our buying mechanisms, using music, images, slogans, fear, nostalgia, pride, jealousy, even sex to attract our attention. Their ultimate goal, though, is to impair our self-control just long enough for us to decide that we simply "must have" their product. **They're trying to make us covet!**

*You are cordially invited to join us for **The Re-Wedding** this evening at 6:30, as dozens of couples renew their marriage vows in the biggest wedding in the history of Saint John.*

## Ten Habits of Highly Healthy Homes

**Examine Your  
Priorities**

**Avoid The  
Counterfeits**

**Take God Seriously**

**Renew Your  
Relationships**

**Respect Your  
Heritage**

**Value The  
Individual**

**Protect Your  
Marriage**

**Maintain Your  
Integrity**

**Speak The Truth**

**Discover Real  
Contentment**

- According to the Educational Forum (Winter 1996), "The typical [North American] consumer is the recipient of **3,000 advertisements daily**. The general message in this merchandising is that all of our problems can be solved immediately by the consumption of the proper product."
- Our culture actually discourages the idea of **contentment**. People are continually bombarded with the message, "What you have isn't enough. You need more. A bigger house, a better car, a larger salary, whiter teeth, fresher breath, nicer clothes, etc. etc." The list is endless!
- BUT THERE ARE NO SURVEYS INDICATING THAT PEOPLE ARE ANY HAPPIER WITH MORE STUFF! One interviewer asked several instant millionaires, "How many of you are happier today?" Not one responded positively. One winner replied, "Every time you get something nicer, it isn't good enough, because you see and want something even nicer."

## WHAT IS COVETING?

- **COVETING IS THE UNCONTROLLED DESIRE TO ACQUIRE.**
- The impulse for WANTING is a very necessary part of being human. Without this particular form of energy, people would be inactive and unmotivated. However, it is also true that human nature desires more than it needs. Animals and plants function automatically to take from their environment only what they need to survive. There are clear limits to their acquisitions, dictated by instinct. But not so with human beings!
- When a journalist asked the late John D. Rockefeller how much wealth was enough, the millionaire, who was at the time one of the richest and most powerful men in the world, answered, "**Just a little more.**"
- Coveting is serious business with God, because it is one of the most complex and grievous of sins. The Bible lists it with vile passions, and warns that unrepented covetousness will exclude a person from heaven.
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** <sup>9</sup> *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, <sup>10</sup>Nor thieves, **nor covetous**, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, **shall inherit the kingdom of God.***
- Coveting is what you might call a "**seed sin**" because it can quickly lead to other sins. In fact, the Bible tells us that coveting was the original sin behind the fall of man ...
- **Genesis 3:6** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*
- Both the Old and New Testaments point out that coveting is the root of many forms of sin, including lying (2 Kings 5:22-25), theft (Joshua 7:21), domestic troubles (Proverbs 15:27), murder (Ezekiel 22:12), lust (1 Timothy 6:9), greed (Proverbs 1:19), envy (Titus 3:3), and jealousy (1 Corinthians 3:3). **THESE ARE ALL MANIFESTATIONS OF DESIRE THAT HAS RUN AMOK.** Does this really happen? Read the news!
- On September 9, 1996, Wanda Holloway pled no contest to solicitation of capital murder. All she wanted was for her teenage daughter to achieve her dream of becoming a cheerleader. But Mrs. Holloway actually paid a hit man to kill Verna Heath, the mother of her daughter's chief rival for the coveted position on the cheerleading squad, using diamond earrings as a down payment. By the time she pled no contest to the crime, Wanda had already spent 6 years of a 15-year sentence in prison. Legally, Wanda Holloway is guilty of solicitation of capital murder. Morally, she is guilty of coveting. Mrs. Holloway determined to get what she wanted for her daughter even if it meant selling her own soul. (HBO made this into a COMEDY called "The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom")
- One student at Harvard University coveted a particular roommate so badly that when she was rebuffed, she stabbed the young woman 45 times before hanging herself.
- According to the US Department of Labor, homicide is now the second leading cause of death in the workplace. A number of such murders are committed by employees exacting revenge after being passed over for a promotion they coveted.
- Vince Foster, President Bill Clinton's boyhood friend and deputy legal counsel, committed suicide early in Clinton's first term during the "Travelgate" scandal, in which innocent employees of the White House Travel Office were unjustly fired because powerful Clinton friends coveted the lucrative business for their own company. Foster's body was found in Ft. Marcy Park on the shores of the Potomac River on July 20, 1993. Several days later, a torn note was discovered in his briefcase with what appeared to be talking points on how to explain the Travelgate controversy to the media. The note ended with this lamentation: "I was never meant for the spotlight of public life. Here ruining people is considered sport."
- The Hebrew word for covet in this command is **CHAMAD**, which means "to desire with the intent to own something that can never be rightfully yours." That's why the commandment specifies your neighbor's house, wife, etc. **There are some things that you can never legitimately possess.** Every adulterous affair is rooted in covetousness, which is – in its simplest form – wanting something at someone else's expense.

- Coveting is a powerful and underestimated sin that can cripple you spiritually and ultimately destroy you, **and yet it is hard in our culture to be content with what you have!**
- **1 Timothy 6:10 (NLT)** *For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with **many sorrows**.*

## FIVE EFFECTS OF ALWAYS WANTING MORE

### 1. Fatigue

- In our push to get more, we overwork ourselves and take on second jobs. Everybody in the family works just to keep up in the material rat-race. As a result, everyone is tired and cranky.
- **Proverbs 23:4 (GN)** *Be wise enough not to wear yourself out trying to get rich.*

### 2. Debt

- **Coveting wreaks havoc with budgets.** We think the problem is that we don't make enough, but the real problem is just that we want too much. **The average North American puts \$1300 on credit for every \$1000 he makes** – that's called deficit spending and the only people who can get away with that are called government officials! (And they can't get away with it forever!)
- A LOT OF WHAT WE CALL **NEED** IS REALLY JUST **GREED!** The tenth commandment deals directly with the problem we have today of distinguishing between needs and wants ("keeping up with the Joneses"). **We spend money we don't have to buy things we don't need to impress people we don't even like!**
- If the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, you can bet the water bill is higher over there, too!
- **Ecclesiastes 5:11 (LB)** *The more you have, the more you spend, right up to the limits of your income, so what is the advantage of wealth – except perhaps to watch it as it runs through your fingers!*

### 3. Worry

- The more you have, the more you have to worry about: How am I going to protect it, save it, invest it, insure it, repair it, maintain it, avoid taxes on it, keep from losing it?
- The higher you rise on the corporate ladder, the more likely you are to bring work and job frustrations home with you and stress out about it. **One study said insomnia increases with income.**

- **Ecclesiastes 5:12 (GN)** *Workers may or may not have enough to eat, but at least they can get a good night's sleep. The rich, however, have so much that they stay awake worrying.*

### 4. Conflict

- **There is no place harder hit by covetousness than the home!** The number one cause of divorce is financial tension – arguments over money and possessions. Conflict comes when we're always wanting more. And the children always suffer the most!
- **James 4:1 (CEV)** *Why do you fight and argue with each other? Isn't it because you are full of selfish desires that fight to control your body?*

### 5. Dissatisfaction

- Things can bring happiness for a while, but the excitement soon wears off and we get bored. Why don't things keep you permanently happy? Because things don't change. But human beings are constantly changing (just look at fashion and style!).
- Pretty soon we have to redecorate, remodel, repair, replace, or at least rearrange! How many of you are still THRILLED about the Christmas gift you got last year? How many of you even REMEMBER the Christmas gift you got last year?!
- **Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NLT)** *Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness!*

## THE ANTIDOTE TO COVETING

- The antidote to coveting is CONTENTMENT, and contentment is something you have to **LEARN** – it does not come naturally or automatically. **None of us are by nature a contented person!**
- **Philippians 4:11-13 (CEV)** <sup>11</sup> *I am not complaining about having too little. I have **learned** to be satisfied with whatever I have.* <sup>12</sup> *I know what it is to be poor or to have plenty, and I have lived under all kinds of conditions. I know what it means to be full or to be hungry, to have too much or too little.* <sup>13</sup> *Christ gives me the strength to face anything.*
- Paul "**learned**" through his experiences that **CONTENTMENT IS NOT RELATED TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES!**
- Contentment is not passive or lazy – it's not the absence of ambition. Instead, contentment means that at every stage of your life your happiness is measured by an appreciation for **what you have**, and not postponed by dwelling on an inventory of **what you are missing**.

# FOUR WAYS TO CONQUER COVETING

## 1. Resist comparing myself to others

- **Comparing always leads to coveting!** If you're comparing yourself with others, God says that you just create dissatisfaction within. One of the greatest lessons you can ever learn is to **BE ABLE TO ADMIRE WITHOUT HAVING TO ACQUIRE**. If the only things in life you enjoy are the things you own, you're going to be miserable a lot of your life, because you can't own everything.
- Why do we constantly compare? Because the way we "keep score" in our society is by possessions. We're insecure, so we're always looking around and asking, "How am I doing compared to ...?" BUT NET WORTH HAS ABSOLUTELY NO RELATION TO SELF WORTH.
- **2 Corinthians 10:12 (GN)** *Of course we would not dare classify ourselves or compare ourselves with those who rate themselves so highly. How stupid they are! They make up their own standards to measure themselves by, and they judge themselves by their own standards!*
- You can be possessed by your possessions, sacrificing values, morals, integrity, even relationships, just to obtain more things.
- **1 Timothy 6:9 (CEV)** *People who want to be rich fall into all sorts of temptations and traps. They are caught by foolish and harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them.*
- When you can truly enjoy the success, happiness and blessings of others, you know you are on the right track. But when you feel **resentment**, you are ensnared by the sin of covetousness.
- Ahab coveted Naboth's property (1 Kings 21), David coveted Uriah's wife (2 Samuel 11), Saul coveted David's popularity (1 Samuel 18), Miriam coveted Moses' ministry (Numbers 12). What do you covet?
- **Proverbs 14:30 (CEV)** *It's healthy to be content, but envy can eat you up.*

## 2. Rejoice in what I do have

- None of us would have ANYTHING if it were not for the goodness of God. He wants us to enjoy what He has given to us! (Think of how you feel as a parent when your children enjoy what you give them.)
- **Ecclesiastes 5:19 (NLT)** *And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life — that is indeed a gift from God.*

- Some people fall into the trap of "WHEN AND THEN" thinking, which says, "When I get ... then I'll be happy." But that's faulty logic, because things never satisfy! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR TO MAKE YOU HAPPY? You're falling into the trap of covetousness!
- You are as happy as you want to be! Happiness is not getting whatever you want, it is enjoying whatever you have. One of the marks of maturity is being able to say, "Enough is enough."
- There are two ways to have enough in life: get more or want less.
- **Ecclesiastes 6:9 (CEV)** *It's better to enjoy what we have than to always want something else, because that makes no more sense than chasing the wind.*

## 3. Release what I have to help others

- God doesn't want to just bless you for your own benefit. He wants you to share your blessings to help others. He's watching you to see WHAT YOU GIVE AWAY.
- **1 Timothy 6:17-19 (LB)** <sup>17</sup> *Tell those who are rich not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone, but their pride and trust should be in the living God who always richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.* <sup>18</sup> *Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them.* <sup>19</sup> *By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven — it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well.*
- This verse is talking to those who are RICH — that's US! North Americans are in the top 2% of income in the world; even if you're on social assistance in Canada, you're RICH!
- Is it possible to be rich and not be materialistic? Yes, because materialism is an attitude, not an amount. To avoid it, we need to do what Paul said: 1) don't become proud of our wealth, 2) don't put our trust in money, 3) use our money to do good, 4) give happily. **GIVING IS THE CURE FOR MATERIALISM!**
- **Acts 20:35b (CEV)** *Remember that our Lord Jesus said, "More blessings come from giving than from receiving."*

## 4. Refocus on what's going to last

- Everything earthly is temporary. We MUST give our attention to permanent values and reorganize our lives around eternal priorities!

- **2 Corinthians 4:18 (GN)** *For we fix our attention, not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can be seen lasts only for a time; but what cannot be seen lasts forever.*
- The worst thing about materialism is that it clouds our vision of God, and we begin to think that all there really is to life is getting and enjoying things. Our perspective gets warped.
- At a funeral in Beverly Hills, CA people were gathered around the casket of a wealthy widow who was worth millions. One person said, "It's so sad – she had so much to live for." The person standing next to them said, "No, she had so much to live ON – she had nothing to live FOR." **WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?**
- **Luke 12:15 (NLT)** *Then he said, "Beware! Don't be greedy for what you don't have. Real life is not measured by how much we own."*
- I challenge you to challenge the MYTH that says having more will make you more happy! You have to make the choice: IS MY LIFESTYLE GOING TO BE DETERMINED BY CULTURE OR BY CHRIST? What's really important in light of eternity? What do I talk about the most? What do I spend the most time on? What am I really living for? **BREAK THE GRIP OF MATERIALISM!**

## THE LAST COMMANDMENT

- Why is the sin of covetousness mentioned LAST in God's Ten Commandments? Perhaps because this last sin is capable of producing the downward slippery slope that leads to any of the first nine sins. **Virtually all sins begin with this one!**
- When we covet, we are questioning God's fairness in our lives, and demonstrating a lack of faith in Him. The tenth commandment is the final exclamation point on the first commandment – let God be God!
- One day in heaven, somewhere in eternity past, Lucifer coveted God's position and sought to take it for himself. He failed then, but now attempts to do the same thing through encouraging mankind to sin and become gods unto themselves. That's the **WRONG KIND** of coveting!
- But the Bible teaches us that God wants us to covet some things with a passion – this is the kind of desire that makes life worthwhile! And this **RIGHT KIND** of coveting does not take from or diminish anyone else. In fact, **others benefit when we covet the things of God!**
- **Psalms 27:4 (NLT)** *The one thing I ask of the Lord — **the thing I seek most** — is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple.*