

**TEN COMMANDMENTS**  
**(Part Ten)**  
**Respect For Contentment**

**Text:** Exodus 20.17 (in pew Bible p. 74 / in large print Bible p. 115)

**Intro:** -“He that is never satisfied with anything, satisfies no one.”

-Part Nine in our series on Ten Commandments.

- Part One = No Other Gods / *respect for God’s authority.*
- Part Two = No Idols / *respect for God’s uniqueness.*
- Part Three = Respect For God’s Name / *God’s essence & person.*
- Part Four = Respect For Rest / *sanctuary of time for enhancing relationship.*
- Part Five = Respect For Family / *cornerstone of society.*
- Part Six = Respect for Life / *“love and help others live.”*
- Part Seven = Respect for Sexuality / *“authentic wholeness”*
- Part Eight = Respect for Property / *“caretakers of people & things”*
- Part Nine = Respect for Truth / *“always wear the sturdy belt of truth”*
- Part Ten = Respect for Contentment
  - **illust. Wired To Want**

-pattern for the Ten Commandments:

- 4 God-ward = only one God, no idols, name not in vain, keep Sabbath holy.
- 6 man-ward = honour parents, respect life, moral fidelity, honesty, truthfulness, no coveting.

**Take Home Point:**

-True religion with contentment is great gain ... (1 Timothy 6.6).

- Lewis Smedes: instead of “live and let live” – “love and help others live.”

- transform prohibitions into positive **directions**.

-so let us turn to the tenth commandment / **direction:** You shall not covet your neighbour’s house, wife, servants, or any property that belongs to your neighbour ... (Exodus 20.17):

- **covetousness** destroys the tissue of honesty and harmony that holds every human community together.
- **contentment** transforms us into soaring eagles high in the skies above dissatisfaction and greed.

## 1. MEANING OF RESPECT FOR CONTENTMENT

- deals with the inner heart – 1<sup>st</sup> 9 commandments *deals with outward actions.*
  - this command helps us to not break the first nine.
- contentment protects us against desiring earnestly what does not belong to us.
  - fiercely wanting something / someone at someone else's expense.
    - BETSA = dishonest gain.
- breach of this commandment led to Achan's terrible sin and punishment (Joshua ch. 7).
  - stole items which were devoted to the Lord (v. v. 1, 21).
    - e.g. expensive garment, 200 shekels of silver, & bar of gold.
- to be content means that ruthless greed is replaced with gratitude and peace.
  - leads us to be concerned about others who are in need.
  - ultimately the content person cannot rest until the needs of others are met too.
    - illust. How Did You Sleep Last Night?
- contentment is important to cultivate:
  - stops us from excessively thinking about things that do not belong to us.
  - stops us from loving earthly things in lieu of pursuing godliness.
    - obsession with gaining other people's things disrupts a balanced life and often leads to evil desires & actions.

## 2. WHY WE MUST RESPECT CONTENTMENT

- the Bible condemns covetousness.
  - Romans 7.7, 8 (p. 1117) & James 1.12 – 16 (p. 1196).
  - craving for money to buy materials things.
    - love of money = root of all evil (1 Timothy 6.10).
    - often leads to dishonesty, exploitation and gambling fever.
  - craving for status and rank.
    - politicking of the disciples (Mark 10.34 – 45).
    - discord in the work place.
  - craving for improper relationships.
    - your neighbour's wife or husband.
    - Potiphar's wife & Joseph (Genesis ch. 39) / David & Bathsheba (2 Samuel ch. 11).
- the Bible promotes contentment.
  - True religion with contentment is great gain ... (1 Timothy 6.6)).
    - protects us from idolatry of possessions, positions, and relationships.
    - produces true happiness & harmony in community.

### 3. HOW WE SHOULD RESPECT CONTENTMENT

-two kinds of relationships in this world:

-I / IT

- flawed basis for true contentment.
  - manipulation for advancement of self.
  - loss of self-respect & forbidden relationships.

-I / THOU

- personal, authentic relationships.
  - self, humankind, and *God*.
- Shakespeare's Henry the Sixth the king is asked the question:  
But, if thou be a king, where is thy crown?" and he answers:

My crown is in my heart, not on my head;  
Not deck'd with diamonds and Indian stones,  
Nor to be seen. My crown is call'd content;  
A crown it is that seldom kings enjoy.

-in regard to yourself:

- self-respect that will not stoop to that which is low.

-in regard to our fellowman:

- love which is forever pure and *forever faithful*.

-in regard to God:

- the love which issues in true obedience, *not given in fear but in reverence*.

-if you have these three qualities, *you will covet nothing*.

- you will experience great gain.
- **illust.** Satisfied Mind.

**Conclusion:**

1. Know what God wants.

-overcome the calamity of discontent.

- True religion with contentment is great gain ... (1 Timothy 6.6 / **p. 1177**).

- pursue gifts of godliness (v. v. 11, 12).
  - faith, love, endurance, gentleness, good fight of faith.
  - **take hold** of eternal life *to which you were called*.
- lay up treasure for yourself as a firm foundation for the coming age (v. 19).
  - allows us to **take hold** of the life that is truly life.

**-illust.** Lottery Winners.

**-covetousness** destroys the tissue of honesty and harmony that holds every human community together.

- **contentment** transforms us into soaring eagles high in the skies above dissatisfaction and greed.

-God wants you to be able to enjoy the success and happiness of others.

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-when struck with the calamity of discontent:

-do something benevolent.

- when envious about a friend's new gain – offer a sincere gesture of congratulations.

-do something spiritual.

- prayer = wonderful means to defeat covetousness and cultivate contentment.
- reading Scripture, confession and personal prayer reconnects us with God.
  - hearts and mind shift to a meaningful plane.

-lay up treasure for yourself as a firm foundation for the coming age (1 Timothy 6.19).

- allows us to **take hold** of the life that is truly life.

-contentment transforms us into soaring eagles high in the skies above dissatisfaction and greed.

- God brought Israel up out of Egypt on the wings of an eagle (Exodus 19.4).

3. Know that you will do it. - **Closing Hymn:** Wings Of An Eagle.

## **Wired To Want**

A syndicated cartoon by Jules Feiffer shows a child thinking about “wanting.”

In the first frame he says, “I want.”

In the second frame he says, “I want.”

Then in the third frame he says, “I want?” “I want nothing!” “I need nothing!” I have everything! My mother gets it for me.”

In the final frame the child screams, “I want ... TO WANT!”

*(The Ten Commandments* Laura Schlessinger, p. 297).

## **Satisfied Mind**

(By Rhodes & Hayes)

How many times have you heard someone say  
"If I had his money, I could do things my way?"  
Little they know that it's so hard to find  
One rich man in ten with a satisfied mind.

Once I was winning in fortune and fame  
Everything that I dreamed for to get a start in life's game  
Suddenly it happened, I lost every dime  
But I'm richer by far with a satisfied mind

Money can't buy back your youth when you're old  
Or a friend when you're lonely, or a love that's grown cold  
The wealthiest person is a pauper at times  
Compared to the man with a satisfied mind

When my life is ended, my time has run out  
My trials and my loved ones, I'll leave them no doubt  
But one thing's for certain, when it comes my time  
I'll leave this old world with a satisfied mind  
I'll leave this old world with a satisfied mind

## Lottery Winners

Rabbi Vogel tells of a TV program he watched which interviewed people who had become instant lottery millionaires. The interviewer's question, "How many of you are happier today?" was met with no one raising their hand. One of the winners commented, "How many new suits can you buy? How many cars can you drive? Every time you get something nicer, it isn't good enough, because you see and want something even nicer." Rabbi Vogel was reminded of the rabbinic teaching, "Who is wealthy? The one who is content with his life" (*The Ten Commandments* Laura Schlessinger, p. 307).