

# Back to the Basics

The Ten Commandments Pt. 9

## The Ninth Commandment

**You shall not covet your neighbor's house.**

## The Tenth Commandment

**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 are covering these two commandments together because they are both concerned with the sin of coveting. "Covet" means to yearn to possess or have; to be consumed with desire for. In ***Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone***, Harry sees himself with his deceased parents in a mirror. Dumbledore tells him this is the Mirror of Erised and the *happiest man on earth would see only himself in it*. He goes on to say, *It shows us the deepest and most desperate desires of our hearts. This mirror gives us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away in front of it. Even gone mad. It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.*

If we follow the First Commandment and *fear, love, and trust in God above all things*, we would see nothing else in the Mirror of Erised, there would be nothing that would hold that much power over us. The problem with coveting is that it consumes us. It can consume time, resources, even our souls. No sin is more damaging to the one committing it. Yet it is the one Commandment of the Second Table that is the most difficult to avoid. It is a sin of the heart and mind. The Small Catechism says that we covet when we *scheme to get* what rightfully belongs to our neighbor in a *way that only seems right*.

**1 Kings 21:1-16** tells us the story of Naboth's vineyard. King Ahab wanted a vineyard owned by an old man named Naboth. Naboth wouldn't part with the *inheritance of my ancestors*. Ahab went home and sulked. Queen Jezebel saw him sulking and asked what was wrong. When he told her what happened, she told him to grow up and start acting like a king. Then she sent letters, sealed with the king's ring, to the elders of the town Naboth lived in, instructing them to have a feast. And sit Naboth in a prominent spot. Have two *scoundrels* accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then stone him. They carried out her wishes and Ahab got the vineyard. However, the prophet, Elijah told him that the *dogs would lick up his blood (1 Kings 21:19)*. We read in **1 Kings 22** how Ahab died in battle and when he was buried, the *dogs licked up his blood, as the Word of the Lord declared (1 Kings 22:38)*.

*What does God require of us in this Commandment?* The opposite of coveting is contentment. Paul tell us the secret of contentment: *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 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. I can do all this through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:11-12)*. The secret of contentment is to rely on Christ for everything.

## The Close of the Commandments

*“I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:5-6).*

God is holy. Because He is holy, He hates sin and insists on obedience; He will not share with idols or anything else the love and honor we owe Him; He will punish those who hate Him. *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy (James 4:12).* God will punish the children “to the third and fourth generation” of those who sin against Him. This seems to contradict what God says in **Ezekiel 18:20**, which says, *The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.* However, not only do we inherit original sin from our parents, they also pass down “family values” which shape the way we think and act. Wicked parents teach their children to hate God and not follow His commandments. By the same token, God showers blessings on those who love Him and keep His commandments. These blessings are temporal, as well as eternal. As we’ve seen, we live a fulfilled life if we keep His Law. That’s how we were designed to live.

I hope you’ve gotten something out of these lessons on the Ten Commandments. Next week, we will continue with this examination of Bible Basics with the Apostles’ Creed. Until then:

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*May the peace of God,  
Which passes all understanding,  
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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