

Bible Studies for Life: October 11

Honor All Relationships • Exodus 20:15-17, Psalm 37

by Becky Brown



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For our final lesson on the Ten Commandments, we focus on the last three: Do not steal, Do not bear false witness against your neighbor, and Do not covet. Commandments Eight and Nine surely stand alone. Exactly as written, they speak concisely for themselves. Truly, each word of “The Ten” speaks volumes as recorded in God’s Word. Exodus 31:18 and 32:15-16 tell us that these words flowed from the very heart of God through Moses to the people. They were written on stone tablets by the finger of God. I will attempt to show that the final one of The Ten, “Do not covet,” literally encapsulates them all.

To steal means to be a thief. You “steal” when you lift up and carry away something that does not belong to you. The stolen item can be things or persons. Theft is stealing things. Kidnapping is stealing people. Both are forbidden. To “bear false witness” means to lift up your voice and carry away the truth, leaving a lie in its place. “Theft” is also involved in this situation. The value stolen is the reputation of the person being testified against. Whether things, persons. or reputations, God forbids theft – period.

The final six commandments pertain to our earthly relationships with each other. The first four pertain to our

relationship with God. Their value continues to stand today as our direct word from God. Even though they are contained in the Old Testament, they are not obsolete as some might suggest. My favorite comment about The Ten is that they are commandments, not suggestions. They are not obsolete negotiables. They are absolute truths that never waver or fade even if blatantly disobeyed.

My study time for this lesson brought me to a fork in my thought road. Actually, during these weeks of study it was the commandment, "Do not covet," that stopped me in my tracks. Once in a while, I will read a small section or a chapter of Scripture from the final verse to the first verse, from bottom to top. This keeps my love of a familiar or favorite passage of scripture in check, opening another opportunity for the Holy Spirit to teach me a fresh truth. Covetousness is the basis of ALL of our problems. Covetousness is the seed bed of sinfulness.

In Matthew chapter 22, Jesus revealed the two Greatest Commandments: Love God. Love your neighbor. In obedience to these two commands, we will bless our neighbor and be a blessing to God. This fulfills all of the law and the prophets. Jesus said so!

Reading the Ten Commandments from the last one to the first one hit me like a brick. When we covet anyone or anything, we say to God: "Lord, we are not content with you. You are not enough. We want more!" We read in 1 Peter 4:8 that we should keep fervent in our love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Conversely, self-love COVETS a multitude of sins!

The inventor of sin was named Lucifer. Isaiah chapter 14 and Ezekiel chapter 28 show us that Lucifer wanted to *be* God. He coveted His place and His throne. Because of his own pride, he forever forfeited his treasured and appointed place near the Occupant of the throne. Lucifer fell because of covetousness.

He fell long before Adam and Eve. His first expedition on Earth was to confront Eve in the Garden of Eden. His temptation of her under that forbidden tree provided the opportunity to covet its fruit (Genesis 3:4-5). Adam and Eve were our progenitors. Their sinful nature is our heritage.

Count down and read backward with me in Exodus 20: When we covet, we do not care about the reputations of others. We steal at will. Our marriages mean nothing. Life lies unvalued at our feet. Our parents are dishonored. The Sabbath is just another day. God's holy name is a byword or a curse word. Idols have usurped God's rightful place in our lives. The one and only true God has competition. Ten, Nine, Eight, Seven, Six, Five, Four, Three, Two, One ... implosion!

King David's response to those who would keep/break covenant with God is found in Psalm chapter 37. Could I suggest that you listen to the Lord as you read Psalm chapter 37? Start with verse 40, then read verse 39, then verse 38..