



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V24 N36 September 4, 2022

## TEN WORDS

“10/Enough is Enough”

Exodus 20:17

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Joy

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

*“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*

John 15:11



What does the tenth commandment prohibit?

Reflecting on joy elicits nuanced reflections on covetousness, contentment, and complacency, and to their relationship that begins by questioning the relationship between *contentment* and *ambition*. Are the two mutually exclusive? Put differently, is it possible to be content and ambitious? Or does the first preclude the second? Clearly, if joy is defined in terms of inner contentment, and inner contentment and ambition are mutually exclusive, we have a problem. Ambitious people will never experience joy.

The New Testament comments on both being *content* and being *ambitious*. Regarding being content, Paul writes in Philippians 4: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (v. 11) and “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” (v. 12). And yet, he no doubt he preferred “living in plenty” to “living in want.” And the writer of the book of Hebrews instructs his readers: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’” (13:5). Being content is clearly a good thing.

When it comes to being ambitious, the New Testament condemns “*selfish ambition*,” or ambition rooted in improper desires, for example, the desire for something that belongs to someone else or something unseemly. Paul condemns “*selfish ambition*” in a number of passages (Gal 5:20; Php 1:17; 2:3), but distinguishes it from “ambition” that he approves of in two passages (Ro 15:20; 1Th 4:11). James shares Paul’s negative view of “*selfish ambition*.” He writes: “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and self-

ish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (3:13-16). The takeaway from these passages is simple. There is a difference between *contentment* and *apathy* or *complacency*. Clearly, “*selfish ambition*” is a bad thing.

Dave Ramsey offers some helpful comments, observing that ambition is not the opposite of contentment. In his answer to the question “How do you balance contentment with ambition?” he writes:

“To be honest, I don’t believe they require balance. You thought ambition was the opposite of contentment, didn’t you? I don’t look at it that way. It’s not like a teeter-totter. They don’t have to balance out because they’re not on the same spectrum.

“I’m content *and* ambitious. I’m content with what we have and what God has entrusted to us. On the other hand, I’m not content to sit around and do nothing just because we’ve been blessed. To me, that kind of attitude is not contentment, it’s apathy. I do what I do because I’m passionate about helping people. You can have peace and contentment and at the same time be a real go-getter – the kind of person who still moves stuff around and makes things happen. They’re not inconsistent concepts. I think problems are created when ambitious people are driven by a lack of contentment . . .

“More than anything, I think it has to do with what’s driving your ambition. If discontentment or a quest for ‘stuff’ is the motivating factor, then maybe they are on the same spectrum. But I think that’s a really bad way to live your life. You can get tons and tons of stuff, but no matter what you get or how much you get, you’re still not going to really be happy until you find contentment!” (cbn.com/dave-says-balancing-ambition-and-contentment).

**Read Exodus 20:17**

17 *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

**Cf. Deuteronomy 5:21**

21 *"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."*

**Read complementary passages****Joshua 7:20-21**

20 *"Achan replied, 'It is true! I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I **coveted** them and **took** them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."*

**James 1:13-15**

13 *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own **evil desire** and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "covet."
- Circle "neighbor's."
- Circle "house."
- Bracket "anything that belongs to your neighbor."

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Define “neighbor” as used in this verse (cf. v. 16).
  2. Coveting another man’s wife is forbidden. What about coveting another woman’s husband? Explain.
  3. If coveting another person’s spouse is forbidden. What about coveting a person who’s no one’s spouse?
  4. A Facebook friend posted pictures of his new luxury car. You very much want one. Have you broken the tenth commandment? Explain.
  5. Violations of the tenth commandment aren’t violations of the seventh and eighth commandments also, are they? Explain.
  6. Explain the relationship of the tenth commandment to the seventh and eighth commandments (cf. 2Sa 11:2-5; Jos 7:20-21).
  7. The list of what is *not* to be coveted moves from *general* to *specific* and *living* to *nonliving*. How so?
  8. What do *servants* and *donkeys* represent in ancient culture?
  9. Is it possible to covet something other than a tangible object that belongs to another person? If so, give an example.
  10. **Discussion:** The verb “covet” refers to desire, an emotion. As such, talk about whether it can be prevented, and if so, how so?
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### Commentary On The Text

Exodus 20:17 contains the ninth commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor,” which prohibits entertaining a strong desire for what belongs to another person—not the desire for a wife, but the desire for *another man’s* wife, not the desire for diamond earrings *like* another woman’s diamond earrings but a desire for the very diamond earrings that belong to her. That which is coveted does not have to be a material object; it can be something intangible like *respect*. It’s possible for one employee to covet the respect a coworker has in the eyes of his or her colleagues, potentially leading to a scheme intended to increase that employee’s respect at that coworker’s expense. The movement of the text is from *general* to *specific*, encompassing everything that is your neighbor’s. From “house” or “household,” it moves to specifics in descending order of value—“wife,” “servants,” “animals,” and any “things” that belong to your neighbor.

Coveting is desiring—wanting or craving something. Note that the commandment does not read, “You shall not covet” (cf. “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not steal”), which would be misleading since coveting is permissible, even commendable, as long as the thing coveted is something a person *should* desire—not something that belongs to someone else. As one commentator writes: “The commandment is necessarily worded with objects for the verb ‘covet,’ these objects being things that one should *not* desire *because they already belong to someone else*” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 466, italics added). Strictly speaking, the commandment doesn’t prohibit desiring something *like* your neighbor’s; it prohibits desiring something that *is* your neighbor’s. Put differently, it prohibits coveting anyone else’s spouse, servants, animals, or things. To do so and then try to obtain what belongs to another person is “to be dissatisfied with what God has given, and thus to show lack of faith in His love. Further, the envy which this encourages will lead sooner or later to the hurt of one’s neighbour, and this is inconsistent with the primary duty of love” (R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*, TOTC, 161).

One commentator sees the tenth commandment as *summary* commandment, since violating it can lead to the violation of any or all of the other commandments. To justify his statement, he writes:

“Obsessive covetousness could be the gateway to the violation of every other principle in the Decalogue. Thus coveting for oneself the gold and silver with which idols are decorated leads to idolatry, the violation of the first commandment. Desiring the ‘free love’ of the fertility cults leads both to the worship of other gods and to sexual irresponsibility, the violation of the first and the seventh commandments (Isa 1:29). Yearning after the possessions of others may lead to stealing, a violation of the eighth commandment (Mic 2:2; Josh 7:21-26, which includes also a violation of the third commandment, since Achan had apparently sworn the oath of Yahweh-war loyalty).

“Before Ahab’s obsessive desire for Naboth’s vineyard was satisfied, the ninth and sixth commandments had been broken (1 Kgs 21). Before David’s lust for Bathsheba was sated, the seventh, eighth, and sixth commandments were broken (2 Sam 11-12). The coveting merchants of Amos’s day broke the fourth and the eighth commandments in their fever to possess (Amos 8:4-6). The citizens of Judah in Jeremiah’s time, deifying their desires and longing after a material and local security, violated the first, third, sixth, seventh, and ninth commandments, and above all, by making Yahweh’s temple into a fetish, the second commandment as well (Jer 7:1-15). And the son whose determined desire for his own way led him to strike (Exod 21:15) or abuse (Exod 21:17) his father or his mother was guilty of breaking the fifth commandment” (John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Exodus*, 298). Covetousness is truly the root of all kinds of evil (cf. 1Ti 6:10). Craving wrong things, as well as craving someone else’s things, are both prohibited by the tenth commandment.

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## Word Studies/Notes

### v. 17 *covet*

“The verb (khamad) focuses not on an external act but on an internal mental activity behind the act, the motivation for it. The word can be used in a very good sense (Ps 19:10; 68:16), but it has a bad connotation in contexts where the object desired is off limits. This command is aimed at curtailing the greedy desire for something belonging to a neighbor, a desire that leads to the taking of it or the attempt to take it. It was used in the story of the Garden of Eden for the tree that was desired” (*The NET Bible*, 41sn on Ex 20:17). Some commentators argue that the Hebrew term connotes taking action to acquire what belongs to one’s neighbor: “It is sometimes claimed that this is the only one of the ten commandments which prohibits an attitude of mind rather than an outward act: but to make this distinction is probably to misunderstand Hebrew thought. As in the case of ‘loving’ and ‘hating’, ‘desiring’ is an activity, almost equivalent to ‘seeking to acquire’ (R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*, TOTC, 161). But if that were the case, the tenth commandment would be practically the same as the seventh and eighth commandments, so it more likely simply connotes to “‘desire obsessively, covet or lust after for oneself’ describing a mental and emotional process interior to a person’s being” (John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Exodus*, 298; see discussion in U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 248-49).

### v. 17 *neighbor’s*

As in verse 16, neighbor probably refers broadly to “anyone else” rather than narrowly to a “fellow Israelite.” On its use in verse 16, one commentator writes: “This is the first commandment to employ the word *rēa’*, ‘neighbor,’ in its general juridical sense of ‘anyone else you happen to come in contact with’ rather than the more narrow sense of ‘someone living near you’ (cf. Exod 3:22; 11:2; 12:4). In laws and formal rules, neighbor has nothing to do with proximity or familiarity; your ‘neighbor’ connotes any other human being you may have dealings with, actually or potentially” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 466).

### v. 17 *house*

“‘House’ can easily be translated ‘family and property’” (Stuart, 466-67). “‘House,’ in accord with this broad application, is used in its collective sense, in reference to the ‘neighbor’s’ entire family and his entire property, as for example in Gen 7:1 or Deut 11:6” (Durham, 299).

### v. 17 *anything . . .*

“The categories of the most valuable possessions the neighbor could have (‘wife,’ ‘male slave,’ ‘female slave,’ ‘ox,’ and ‘donkey’) represent all that he has (‘anything that belongs to your neighbor’) (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Exodus,” 2022 ed., 199, [planobiblechap-el.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf](http://planobiblechap-el.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus.pdf)). “The entire verse is a prohibition against any sort of coveting of what someone else already rightfully has, with enough examples given as to leave no doubt that nothing properly owned by someone else can be coveted. Again the principle of paradigmatic law applies: from the list any reasonable person can extrapolate to all other instances of things that cannot be coveted” (Stuart, 467) – e.g., laptops, lawnmowers, LG TVs.



## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Craving wrong things as well as desiring anyone else's things are both prohibited by the tenth commandment.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

This past January, my family moved into a very unique house, and we had countless ideas to make it our own. I found myself with list after list of things I wanted, projects that needed to be done, things we needed to get, etc. My sole focus quickly became the house and all the things we didn't have. After some unforeseen circumstances, we were forced to let go of, or set aside, all our wants and plans, almost as if God was telling us to sit in and be thankful for what He had already provided, instead of longing for what we thought we needed/wanted. This makes me think of the numerous conversations with my daughter about things that she wants or thinks she needs. Just like I did with the house, she finds things that she likes and puts them on her "wish list" and I can see the disappointment in her face when I tell her that she can't have something. It becomes so easy for us to focus on the things that we want, instead of all the things that God has already provided us with, which leads to feelings of discontentment and dissatisfaction. We can replace coveting in our hearts with thanksgiving and trusting God. What areas do you need to be thankful for? In what areas do you need to trust God with what He's given you or where He has you? This week, ask God to remind you and your kids of the things to be thankful for, and for the things to trust Him with. We are praying for you!

**\*\*Scrolls guest written by Kayla Moore, Fix Coordinator.**

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 20:17

1. What is the tenth commandment?
2. What does it mean to covet?
3. What does it look like to be content, according to 1 Timothy 6:6-10?

### What Do You Think?

What are some things that you find yourself coveting?

### What Do You Do?

Get a jar and a few pieces of paper. Cut the paper into strips. On each strip write something that you are thankful for. Fold and place each paper in the jar. At the same time each day draw out 1-2 pieces of paper. Read them and spend time thanking God for those things

## CORE COMPETENCY: Joy

I am happy on the inside no matter what is happening on the outside.

## MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 2:9

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I completed my Bible Study
- \_\_\_\_\_ I memorized this week's verse
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought my Bible to church
- \_\_\_\_\_ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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