

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (PART 2): THE LAWS GOVERNING MAN'S DUTY TO OTHERS DEUTERONOMY 05:16–21

Introduction

Evil is sweeping the earth today. Note how these evils attack every area of society and human life:

- => Disrespect of parents destroys family life, the men, women and children of a nation.
- => Murder destroys human life as well as the dignity and value of life, destroys the greatest resource that a nation has — its citizens.
- => Adultery destroys the most precious qualities of life and relationships — the qualities of love, trust, loyalty, respect, fulfilment, perseverance, care and self-esteem.
- => Stealing destroys property rights and relationships, one of the most basic rights of a neighbour and of the nation and government.
- => Lying destroys the very foundation of relationships and society, causes the collapse of any relationship, organization, group or nation. No relationship can stand upon lies.
- => Covetousness destroys all rights upon which everything is based.

Every evil found upon earth can be found in these six basic evils. (See Introductions to each of the commandments, Exo 20:12-17.) But note a marvellous fact: God counteracts these terrible evils, and He does so in a very simple way, using very simple words. The evils that people do to one another are counteracted in the last six of the Ten Commandments. This is clearly seen in this passage: *The Ten Commandments (Part 2): The Laws Governing Man's Duty to Others*, Deuteronomy 5:16-21.

- I. Commandment 5 concerns man's parents (v. 16).
- II. Commandment 6 concerns man's life (v. 17).
- III. Commandment 7 concerns man's family: forbids adultery (v. 18).
- IV. Commandment 8 concerns man's property (v. 19).
- V. Commandment 9 concerns man's word: forbids lying or speaking falsely against anyone (v. 20).
- VI. Commandment 10 concerns man's desires and security: forbids coveting anything that belongs to your neighbour — his wife, house, land, servant, animals or anything else (v. 21).

I. *Deuteronomy 05:16 Commandment Five Concerns Man's Parents*

Commandment five is, "Honour your father and mother." The first four commandments covered our duty to God. Now, once we have done our duty to God, note what our very next duty is: to honour our parents. This is the divine order: God *first*, then our parents.

1. Note six points about the charge of this commandment.
 - a. The Hebrew word *honour* (kabed or kabedl) means to respect, esteem, and highly regard; to set apart and count as distinguished. We are to respect, esteem and highly regard our parents. We are to set apart our parents and count them as distinct, distinguished. There is even the idea of reverence in the word *honour*, we are to *reverence* our parents. The Greek word for *honour* (timao) pictures exactly what is meant: it means that we are to esteem and value our parents as precious; to show them respect, reverence, kindness and obedience. Mathew Henry says that in practical terms, the commandment means we are to...
 - respect our parents, reverence them
 - obey our parents
 - submit to the rebukes, instructions and corrections of our parents
 - listen to our parents' advice, direction and concern
 - comfort our parents (*Mathew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 361-362).

Thought 1. What does God mean by *honouring our parents*? Scripture tells us:

=> To honour means to obey and respect our parents.

Mark 7:10 *For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'*

Eph 6:1-3 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise — "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

Exo 20:12 *"Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."*

Deut 5:16 *"Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you."*

Mat 15:4 *For God said, 'Honour your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.'*

=> To honour means to listen to the instructions of our parents; to obey the instructions, never forsaking them.

Prov 1:8 *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

Prov 4:1, 10-13 *Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding....Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When*

you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.

Prov 6:20 *My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

=> To honour means to listen to our parents and never despise them when they are old.

Prov 23:22 *Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

=> To honour means to be wise, never foolish.

Prov 10:1 *A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

Prov 15:20 *A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother.*

=> To honour means to have a testimony of pure and right behaviour.

Prov 20:11 *Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.*

=> To honour means to respect and reverence our parents when they are elderly.

Lev 19:3 *"Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God."*

Lev 19:32 *Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.*

Job 32:6 *So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said: "I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know."*

Prov 23:22 *Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

=> To honour means to accept the true faith of our parents, their belief in God's Son, the LORD Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 1:5 *I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*

2 Tim 3:15 *And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

=> To honour means to respect our parents so much that it carries over to others, honouring and respecting all persons.

1 Tim 5:1 *Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers.*

- b. Note that mothers are to be honoured just as much as fathers, and fathers just as much as mothers: "[Children] honour your father and your mother" (v. 16; see Exo 20:12). Mothers and fathers are placed on equal footing. God Himself honours and respects mothers as much as fathers and charges all children to honour each equally.

- c. Note that every person within the family is mentioned: the child, mother, and father. If our mothers and fathers are living, we are to honour and respect them. But note this fact as well: every person in the world, whether young or old (adult), is the child of some father and mother.

The implication is clear: the families of the earth and the world as a whole are to be filled with honour and respect. Honour and respect are to flood the hearts and lives of our families, flowing out and flooding society and civilization, and spreading throughout the world. This is God's will; this is one of the main reasons God has given this commandment.

Note: the family is the basic unit of society, the very foundation of society. If honour and respect control the behaviour of the family, it will help to control the behaviour of our communities and society. God wants *honour and respect* to be the prevailing force flowing out from the hearts of people to one another. God knows:

- => if we honour and respect one another, then peace and love will prevail upon the earth.
=> if we honour and respect one another, then the behaviour of men will be controlled.
=> if we honour and respect one another, there will be no lawlessness and selfishness. There will be only honour and respect for all people — for all the parents and children of the earth.

Thought 1. William Barclay makes three points that should stir us to keep this commandment, to always honour our parents:

With the fifth commandment we come right home, for the fifth commandment is "Honour your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). Of all the commandments this should be the easiest to obey.

- i. *It should be easy to obey this commandment because it is natural to do so. This commandment is, as it were, built into the very structure of life. It is not a commandment which we find only in the Bible. There never was a society of any kind in which this commandment was not accepted as binding. In ancient Greece, for instance, Solon the great law-giver laid it down that, if a son did not support his parents in their old age, when they needed support, he should lose his rights as a citizen. The Greeks believed that to honour parents is part of the basic duty of every citizen of the state. Anyone who has good parents and who does not realise the duty of honouring them is an unnatural person. Nature itself demands that we keep this commandment.*
- ii. *It is a duty of gratitude to keep this commandment. It was our parents who brought us into this world, and we owe them our lives. Of all living creatures man takes longest to become able to support and look after himself.*

There is a long time when we cannot get ourselves a home or food or clothes, and when we are entirely dependent on our parents; and there is a considerable

part of that time when we are so helpless, that a blow would kill us, and, even if nothing was done to us, and we were just alone, we would certainly die. We ought to find it easy to keep this commandment, if only as a matter of gratitude to those to whom we literally owe the fact that we came into the world, and that we survived through the years when we were quite unable to help ourselves, or to get the things necessary to keep body and soul together.

Apart from that purely physical side of life, many of us owe a great deal to the care and the love and even to the sacrifice of our parents to give us a good start in life.... We ought to be grateful that in many, many homes the parents do without things and plan and save so that their children should have a chance to do well in life. Of all faults, ingratitude is the ugliest and the most hurting, and not to keep this commandment is to be guilty of ingratitude.

- iii. *To honour our parents is a matter of common sense. They have walked the journey of life before us, and therefore they know the dangers and the pitfalls on the way. If you are going on a journey through what is to you an unknown country, a map and a guide-book will be very useful, but most useful of all will be the advice and the experience of one who has already travelled that way.*

When parents advise their child to do or not to do something, he should understand that it is not because they wish to show their authority or because they are killjoys or because they are old-fashioned, it is because out of their experience they know that the thing is right or wrong, safe or dangerous.

The man who will not listen to the voice of experience will certainly end in trouble — and he will deserve all that is coming to him....

*It is sensible to listen to what our parents tell us, because they have an experience of life that we do not yet possess. (William Barclay. *The Old Law & The New Law*, pp. 24-26).*

- d. Note that this commandment emphasizes one of the great lessons of life, that we learn by example. Children are to learn to honour their parents. How? By the parents showing honour to their parents. The commandment charges all children to honour their parents. Even if they are adults and parents themselves, the adult child is to honour and respect his parents. Parents are to create an atmosphere of honour and respect in the home. By so doing, the parent teaches — sets an example — for his child to honour him. This commandment stresses the awesome importance of parents setting the right example before their children.

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

God makes it clear: parents have the obligation to teach this commandment and all the other commandments to their children.

Deut 6:7 *Impress them [the commandments] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

- e. What about parents who neglect their children or who abuse their children? Are children to honour and respect parents who are evil, who live in sin and abuse them? *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible®* (N.T. Vol. 9, Galatians — Colossians) has an excellent comment on this point that is quoted at length because of its importance:

Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Children are to obey their parents. The word "obey" (hupakouo) means to submit to; to comply with; to hearken; to heed; to follow the directions or guidance of some instruction. When a parent guides and directs a child, the child is to obey the parent. But what about the problems that are so repulsively evident in society: the problems of parental abuse — the problems of physical abuse, sexual abuse and mental abuse? Is a child to obey a parent when the parent is so devilishly wrong? No! A thousand times no!

To obey means to obey in the LORD. Note the command again: "Children, obey your parents in the LORD." The phrase "in the LORD" means at least two things.

- i. *There is a limit to the child's obedience. When a parent is not acting in the LORD, he is not to be obeyed. The LORD has nothing whatsoever to do with the filth of unrighteousness and abuse of precious children. If a child can break away and free himself from such parental corruption, he has every right to be freed from his parent. The LORD came to set men free from the abuse and the filth of sin, not to enslave men to it, and especially not to enslave children to it.*

One of the most severe warnings ever issued in all of history was issued by the LORD Jesus to adults who abuse children:

Mark 9:42-49 *"And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."*

The abusing parent had better heed, for one of the things that God will not tolerate — absolutely not tolerate — is the abuse of a child. We must proclaim the Word of God: children are to obey their parents, but they are to obey only if the parents' desire and instructions are in the LORD. If a parent is beating a child black and blue or sexually abusing a child, the child should go to some other adult he feels close to and ask for help. And ministers of the LORD — ministers who are called to proclaim Christ and to do what they can to bring His righteousness to earth — must teach the truth from the pulpits of the world.

- ii. *The phrase "in the LORD" also tells why the child is to obey his parents. "Children, obey your parents in the LORD" — obeying your parents is right; it is of the LORD; it pleases the LORD; therefore, obey them. When they guide and instruct you, follow them (cp. Col 3:20).*

*Lehman Strauss points out that obedience is the first law of the universe — that the law of obedience regulates everything in the world: the stars, the planets, the seasons. Even man himself tries to govern the world by the law of obedience. He wants obedience in the state, at work, at play and at home. (Lehman Strauss. *Devotional Studies in Galatians & Ephesians*. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957), p. 212). The point is simply this: the law of obedience is the very nature of things, at the very core of the universe and of man's life and behaviour upon earth. Therefore, it is to be expected that God would command children to obey their parents. Children are to obey — obey because it pleases the LORD and it is the right thing to do.*

Note the emphasis here; it is striking. Children are not told to obey parents because it pleases the parent, but because it pleases the LORD. Pleasing one's parents is, of course, a reason for obeying them. But the first reason for obeying parents is that it pleases the LORD. The child is to know the LORD to such a degree that he is continually thinking about the LORD and about pleasing Him. The child is to walk so closely with the LORD that his mind is constantly upon the LORD — upon what he can do to please the LORD. When the child so knows the LORD, then obeying his parents will become an automatic response. (Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Vol. 9. "The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible." pp. 219-220).

Mark 7:10 *For Moses said, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.'*

Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*

Col 3:20 *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

Prov 1:8 *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. (see Prov 6:20; 23:22).*

Prov 7:1 *My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you.*

Prov 10:1 *A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

Prov 20:11 *Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.*

Eccl 12:1 *Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."*

- f. What about abusive children, children who abuse their parents? Again, *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible*® (N.T. Vol. 9) has an excellent statement covering this point:

*To obey parents means to honour one's father and mother. The word "honour" (*timao*) means to "esteem [and value as precious" (*The Amplified New Testament*); to show respect, reverence, kindness, courtesy, and obedience. (Kenneth S. Wuesl. *Ephesians and Colossians*. "Word Studies in the Greek New Testament," Vol. 1. p. 136). Scripture is not speaking to any certain age child. It is speaking to all of us who are children with parents still living. We are to honour our fathers and mothers: to esteem and value them as precious — to respect and reverence them. Tragically, this is a rarity today. Too often a child's response to his parent is that of...*

- *talking back*
- *grumbling*
- *disregarding instructions*
- *cutting the parent*
- *speaking disrespectfully*
- *acting like a "know it all"*
- *ignoring the parent*
- *not listening*
- *calling the parent a cute but disrespectful name*

*In addition to these, there is the dishonour of delinquency, crime, drugs, alcohol, and the abuse of property; and the list could go on and on. And when it comes to adult children with aged parents, there is the dishonour of neglect, the ignoring of their needs and the shuffling of them to the side and failing to adequately care for them. Too many adult children forget how much their parents have done for them — bringing them into the world and taking care of them for years. Too many children forget the rich experience and knowledge that their parents have gained through the years and that could be put to great use in meeting community and world needs. And even if the parents failed to be and to do all they should have, we as Christian children are instructed to honour them as followers of the LORD Jesus Christ. (*Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, Vol. 9. "The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible," pp. 219-220).*

Eph 6:1 *Children, obey your parents in the LORD, for this is right.*

1 Tim 5:4, 8 *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God....If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*

Prov 20:20 *If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.*

Prov 30:17 *“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.”*

Exo 20:12 *“Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”*

Lev 19:3 *“Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.”*

Lev 19:32 *Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.*

Deut 27:16 *“Cursed is the man who dishonours his father or his mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”*

Thought 1. Maxie Dunnam warns us about making a “cult of the child” within society, showing how this attitude teaches children to be disrespectful and disobedient.

*I'm concerned about the extreme to which we have gone with the cult of the child during the past thirty or forty years in the United States. To be sure, we needed to give more attention to children. The adage “Children are to be seen and not heard” was a caricature of children treated as wards and, in the extreme in many cultures, as chattel. So we needed to get away from that. But as is so often the case, the pendulum swung too far. We reared our children to be self-centred. We ordered our worlds around not only their needs, but their whims. Our thinking about discipline was distorted. We spared the rod and spoiled the child. There was no centre of authority around which the child could order his life, no clear guidelines or directions, no well-defined values. And so respect was diminished, especially at the point of children listening and being obedient. This was not so much the child's fault as the parent's default. (Maxie Dunnam. *The Preacher's Commentary on Exodus*, pp. 261-262)*

2. Note the two great promises attached to this commandment. Every person should seek ever so diligently to lay hold of these promises.
 - a. First, the person who honours his parents will live an extended life upon earth (v. 16b). Common sense tells us this. A tension-filled home — a home full of arguments, bickering, abuse and divisiveness — causes all kinds of physical and emotional problems, shortening the life of family members. Whereas a home filled with love, joy and peace strengthens the health and emotional stability of a person, thereby adding years to a person's life.

God knows what He is talking about; He knows exactly what He is promising. If the Israelites would teach their children to honour their parents, then generations

of Israelite homes would be filled with love, joy and peace. Maxie Dunnam has an excellent thought on the importance of the family to Israel that sets a dynamic example for every civilization:

I believe one of the primary reasons Judaism has survived across the years is precisely its family structure. The Jews survived the Holocaust and thousands of years of anti-Semitism because the Jewish family had a sense of identity and a sense of order. It does not matter where the family is on the Sabbath, when the Sabbath comes, they stop and pray. It did not matter what Hitler and all the powers of Nazism said, when Passover came it was time to tell the story, even if the family was gathered in a concentration camp and there were no candles to light. There was a sense of order and identity that gave them roots and strength and perspective and discipline. At the heart of that family structure was a reverence for parents, a high regard, a respect, an esteem for the older members of the family. The elderly were honoured and cared for. (Maxie Dunnam. *The Preacher's Commentary on Exodus*, pp. 261-262).

b. Second, things will go well — far better — for the person who honours his parents. Common sense and logic tell us this: if children (youth or adult) honour their parents, disturbance is eliminated. There is far less...

- conflict • bitterness • regret • tension • exhaustion
- hurt • strife • guilt • pain

Honour builds love, respect and esteem. Honour grows people, strengthens them personally and the relationship that binds a family together. As the Israelites prepared to march into the promised land, they needed to know these facts. They needed to build strong families within the promised land. Strong families would help them live a victorious life in the promised land and help keep their nation strong. Therefore, Moses preached this great commandment, drove the truth into their hearts and minds:

Deut 5:16 Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Thought 1. In practical terms, Scripture tells us exactly what God means by this commandment.

(1) To honour our parents means to respect and to reverence our parents.

(2) To honour our parents means to obey our parents.

Eph 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" — which is the first commandment with a promise — "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

II. ***Deuteronomy 05:17 Commandment Six Concerns Man's Life: "You shall not murder."***

Commandment six is "You shall not murder." What is forbidden by this commandment? How is this commandment broken or violated? Note exactly what the commandment says:

1. The purpose for this commandment is to preserve life: to teach people the sanctity of human life, that they are to honour and hold human life in the highest esteem. Man is created in the image and likeness of God; therefore, man's life is of infinite value to God (Gen 1:26-27). Man is...

- God's *master creation*
- God's *royal masterpiece*
- God's *precious possession*
- God's *priceless property*

Why is man to be so highly esteemed? As stated, because man is created in the *image and likeness* of God. God demands that human life be valued above all the wealth in the world (Mat 16:26; Mark 8:36). The sanctity of human life is to be honoured above all else.

Gen 1:26-27 *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Gen 9:5-7 *And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."*

Mark 8:36 *"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"* (see Mat 16:26).

2. The Hebrew word for *kill* or *murder* (*rasah*) means premeditated, planned, deliberate, intentional, unauthorized murder. This commandment is broken either by a planned murderous attack upon a person(s) or by a rash, reckless attack. This commandment forbids the taking of a life because a person is...

- angry
- passionate
- lusting
- bitter
- vengeful
- coveting
- violent
- selfish
- rebelling
- uncontrolled
- stealing

Murder for such reasons as these is wrong and must always be counted wrong. This is the only way to make our community, society and civilization safe and secure.

The terrifying evils of this earth — lawlessness, violence and murder — must not be allowed. We must always agree with God's Holy Word: murder for such reasons as anger, robbery and violence must always be counted wrong and be punished.

But there are also other forms of murder that are just as wrong as lifting one's own hand to kill another person. All over the world, there are people who commit murder...

- by forcing people to work in conditions that will injure or eventually kill them, that lead to their premature death
- by forcing people to live in horrible conditions, so horrible that the environment or lack of basic necessities eventually kills them
- by selling and hooking people on drugs, drugs that eventually enslave and kill the addicts

Man must control and punish the lawless, the violent and the murderers who roam his streets and in many cases sit in the plush offices of authority and rule. Evil men must be stopped and taught to obey this commandment or else our civilization can never survive. Lawlessness, violence and murder must be stamped out. We can have safe streets and parks, unlocked doors and the freedom to move about at night only if we obey this commandment. We will have a satisfying and fruitful life only if we heed this commandment: "You shall not murder [live lawless and violent lives]" (v. 13).

But even the above are not the only kinds of murder forbidden by God. The spirit of lawlessness, violence and murder so sweeps through the societies and history of man that at least two other types of murder need to be discussed. (See *Abortion*, Deut 5:17; *Suicide*, Deut 5:17.)

3. Note this fact: this commandment is not a blanket commandment against all killing. God's Word clearly says that the taking of life is justified, understandable and allowed...
 - as capital punishment (Gen 9:6)
 - in a justified war (Deut 13:15; 1 Sam 15:3; 2 Sam 10:1f)
 - in cases of adultery (Lev 20:10). This may seem harsh to society today, but this commandment and penalty were given to protect and preserve the family. The very survival of Israel depended upon the family being preserved as the basic unit of society. Loyalty to the family taught the Israelites to be loyal to the nation as a whole.
 - in the defence of ourselves, for example, when a thief breaks into our home (Exo 22:2)
 - in accidental killing (Deut 19:5)
 - in killing animals for food (Gen 9:3)
4. What is the ultimate cause, the basic source, of murder? Scripture says that the underlying cause and source of murder is twofold:
 - a. Satan, the devil, is the arch-enemy of God and man: he seeks to tempt and arouse people to live greedy and selfish lives, lives of lawlessness, violence and murder.

John 8:44 *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

- b. Lust — the unregulated urges of man's heart — drives some people to rob, assault and kill. Some people allow the lust of their soul — greed and covetousness — to drive them to lawlessness, violence and murder.

James 1:14-15 *But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

James 4:1-3 *What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*

5. What will be the eternal judgment of God upon the murderer? Death, spiritual and eternal death.

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death.*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death.*

Gal 5:19-21 *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

James 1:14-15 *But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

Ezek 18:4 *The soul who sins is the one who will die.*

6. Can a murderer be saved and forgiven for his sin of murder? Scripture says “yes,” a resounding “yes.” But the murderer must confess his sin and repent, turning away from the life of sin. He must genuinely give his heart and life to Jesus Christ and live for Jesus Christ.

Luke 13:3 *“I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

Isa 55:7 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Ezek 18:21 *But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

Rom 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

7. Jesus Christ taught that this commandment means far more than just prohibiting the killing of people. He enlarged the meaning to include both the anger that is aroused within the heart and the lawless motives that drive a person to kill others.

Mat 5:21-22 *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."*

Note what Christ is saying: He is saying that man has a problem. Man misreads God's law. Man interprets God's law to say what he wishes it to say. Man applies it only to the outward act, in this case to the act of murder. Man fails to look inward — within himself — to the cause (see note, Mat 5:17-18: *Law*, Mat 5:17; note, Mark 7:14-23).

Murder is deeper than just an outward act. It is an inward act: an act of anger, bitterness, enmity. Murder is born from within, from an uncontrolled spirit, from an unregulated urge, from an inner anger. Anger itself is the root sin, the sin that first breaks the law of God. Anger is...

- bitterness and enmity
- indignation and wrath
- desiring a person's hurt
- rage and fury
- slandering and destroying a person's image (who is created in God's image)
- an uncontrolled spirit
- striking out against a person
- envying and killing a person's happiness
- a disappointment or hatred of oneself

The growth of anger is dangerous. Unresolved anger will fester. It can become uncontrolled and give birth to murder. There are three steps in the growth of anger given by Christ.

- a. The anger that broods, that is selfish. It harbours malice; it will not forget; it lingers; it broods; it wills revenge and sometimes seeks revenge.

- b. The anger that holds contempt (*raca*). It despises; it ridicules; it arrogantly exalts self and calls another person empty and useless. This is an anger that is full of malice. It despises and scorns (*raca*). It arises from pride — a proud wrath (Prov 21:24). Such feelings or anger walk over and trample a person. It says that whatever ill comes upon a person is deserved.
- c. The anger that curses. It seeks to destroy a man and his reputation morally, intellectually and spiritually.

There is a justified anger. In fact, the believer must be an angry person — angry with those who sin and do wrong, who are unjust and selfish in their behaviour. However, a justified anger is always disciplined and controlled; it is always limited to those who do wrong either against God or against others. The distinguishing mark between justified and unjustified anger is that a justified anger is never selfish; it is never shown because of what has happened to oneself. It is an anger that is purposeful. The believer knows that he is angry for a legitimate reason, and he seeks to correct the situation in the most peaceful way possible (see notes, Eph 4:26-27; Rom 12:18; John 2:14-17. Also see *Temple*, John 2:14.)

Eph 4:26 *“In your anger do not sin”*: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

Rom 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

John 2:13-16 *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”*

Thought 1. Anger is cast against many. Too often hurt feelings exist between those who are supposed to be the closest: husband and wife, parent and child, neighbour and friend, employer and employee. The LORD is clear about the matter: we must never allow anger to take hold of us without just cause.

Col 3:8 *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.*

James 1:19 *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

1 John 3:15 *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

Psa 37:8 *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret — it leads only to evil.*

Prov 16:32 *Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.*

Prov 14:17 *A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.*

Prov 19:11 *A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*

Eccl 7:9 *Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.*

Thought 2. There are reasons why people get angry and develop feelings against others:

- => To seek revenge and to hurt
- => To show ego or authority
- => To reveal passion or secure some end
- => To show hurt, resentment or bitterness
- => To express disagreement or displeasure
- => To correct a wrong (a justified anger)
- => To give warning

Thought 3. It is a serious matter to hold feelings against another person — a very, very serious matter. There is (1) the *danger of judgment*, (2) the *danger of having to come before earthly courts*, and (3) the *danger of hell fire*. Violence is to be judged — not only before the councils of the world but before the councils of God.

III. Deuteronomy 05:18 Commandment Seven Concerns Man's Family: "You shall not commit adultery."

The seventh commandment is, "You shall not commit adultery." How serious a problem is adultery? In just a moment we will see that this commandment refers to all forms of immorality. In light of that, how serious a problem is immorality in our society? Most authorities and polls tell us that...

- adultery is prevalent
- pregnancy among unwed mothers is on a sharp rise
- premarital sex is becoming commonplace, the accepted practice among the young
- sex among unmarried adults — young and old alike — is accepted and even expected by the vast majority of people

Is there a cesspool of immorality in society today? Most honest and thinking observers of history would say that immorality is a very serious problem today. Why? Because it threatens the family, the very foundation of society and civilization. The family is the primary place where trust, loyalty and love are to be taught and demonstrated. If a person will not be faithful and loyal to his family, how can he be trusted to be loyal to his nation, society and civilization? It is far easier to be loyal to that which can be physically seen, such as one's family, than for that which is only an ideal such as nation, society and civilization. Immorality strikes at the very foundation of society, the family. It tears apart the family and causes hurt, suffering, strain, shame, guilt, secrecy, destitution, distrust, disloyalty and unfaithfulness. Moreover, immorality and adultery teach that certain

behaviour is not acceptable: selfishness, unfaithfulness, distrust, disloyalty, secrecy, irresponsibility and on and on.

This is the reason God gave us this commandment: to preserve our lives, to preserve the great qualities that bring peace, love and trust to our lives, qualities that build a healthy mind and heart.

1. *Adultery* (naap) or *adulterate* means to debase, to corrupt oneself sexually, to make oneself impure sexually, to have sex outside of marriage. What God is saying is simple, unqualified, and irrevocable: "You shall not commit adultery: you shall not debase yourself, corrupt yourself, nor make yourself impure sexually. You shall not have sex outside of marriage."
 - a. Scripture teaches that a person becomes sexually impure in at least three ways:
 - => A person has sex with someone other than his or her spouse. This is what is commonly called adultery.
 - => A person has sex before marriage. This is called fornication. Fornication refers to any sexual immorality, either before marriage or after marriage.
 - => A person fantasizes and lusts after a person other than his or her spouse, allows his mind and heart to be set up on another person.
 - b. Note that the sin of adultery embraces all that leads up to the act of sex, not just the sexual act itself. Adultery is far more than just being sexually unfaithful in marriage. This commandment forbids any immoral thought or act...
 - that makes a person impure for marriage
 - that spots or dirties a person's marriage
 - that causes a person to lose his or her virginity
 - that keeps a person from being able to offer himself or herself as a pure virgin when married

Illicit sex is a violation against the marriage to be. Illicit sex dirties, corrupts, spots and makes a person impure either before or after marriage.
 - c. The thought life of a person is important when dealing with adultery. Adultery is committed in the heart long before the act is committed. Always keep in mind that God's law is spiritual; therefore His law deals with the thoughts of our mind and heart. This commandment forbids committing adultery in the heart. A person is...
 - not to prostitute his thoughts and imaginations
 - not to allow impure, lustful thoughts
 - not to indulge in illicit fantasies
2. The meaning of adultery was expanded by the LORD Jesus Christ, by God's Son Himself. Christ taught that this commandment means far more than just committing the act of

adultery. He enlarged the commandment to include thoughts and lusts, to include the second look when a person is dressed to sexually attract or expose his or her body.

Mat 5:27-30 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

3. Now, what causes adultery and immorality? There are no doubt many causes, but we can perhaps summarize them all under the following five categories.
 - a. Immorality is caused by corrupt moral standards or a lack of moral standards.
=> Some people have never been taught nor are they aware that sex outside of marriage is wrong in the sight of God. Their society has become so corrupted down through the ages that belief in the true and living God has been lost as well as the sanctity of sex and marriage.
 - b. Immorality is caused by lax or liberal moral standards, or by a selfish, worldly, immoral lifestyle. These people either ignore or deny God's commandment, choosing to live as they wish.
 - c. Immorality is caused by the need for companionship, attention or love or by the need for appreciation or fulfilment. Many people reach out to others because of these very basic needs. This is especially true during marriage when a husband or wife fails to meet these needs in his or her spouse.
 - d. Immorality is caused by anger, hostility or the seeking of revenge. A host of behaviours can anger a person and arouse him to commit adultery, such things as coldness, indifference, neglect, a biting tongue, harshness, selfishness.
 - e. Immorality is caused by poor ego strength or by an inflated ego, by a lack of self-esteem or self-worth, by a need to feel important or by the challenge and conquest of the affair. The most intimate thing a person can give to another is his or her body. Therefore, sex is a challenge or conquest for many people; it is an ego booster, an act that either builds a person's feelings of importance or adds to his or her trophy case of conquests.

Sex is a very normal, natural act, a most precious and cherished act given by God. God has built the desire for sex into the very nature of man. In fact, sex is the most intimate experience God has chosen for man to nourish the great virtues of life and to propagate the human race. But the depraved, sinful heart of man has corrupted sex, so much so that man has developed a sex-crazed society. In very practical terms, immorality is caused...

- by ignoring or denying God and His Word
- by ignoring right vs. wrong

- by lack of teaching and training
 - by unsatisfying, inadequate sex with a spouse
 - by coldness, the alienation of husband or wife
 - by living in a dream or fantasy world due to such things as pornography, films or suggestive music
 - by not guarding relationships, by getting too close and becoming attracted to a person
 - by not guarding against loneliness, emptiness or the disappointment in one's spouse or loved one
4. Now, why does God forbid adultery? Prohibit immorality? What is God's purpose, His reason for giving this commandment? Keep in mind what is stated above: the experience of sex is a gift to man, a gift given by God. God created sex for man, and even went so far as to make sex...
- a part of man's very nature
 - the very way man is to propagate the human race

Note what this means: if man failed to have sex, the human race would cease to be. Human life would become extinct within a few generations. God so intertwined sex within man's nature that man must have sex. All this is to say one thing: sex is of critical importance to God. God not only approves of sex: He is the Giver and Creator of the experience of sex. But He put boundaries and limits around sex. Sex was created for marriage, for the home, and only for marriage and the home. This leads us to the purposes for sex, the reasons why God gave this seventh commandment.

- a. God gave the seventh commandment to preserve man, to protect and safeguard the value of the individual, the sanctity of man's body and spirit. When a man and woman lie together, they are never more vulnerable, never more exposed. Lying together, their bodies and spirits are more exposed than at any other time. God intended sex to be one of the most intimate, warm, precious and growing experiences of human life. Sex was created so that two people could grow together, could nourish and nurture each other in...
- love
 - loyalty
 - care
 - joy
 - perseverance
 - security
 - peace
 - attractiveness
 - self-esteem
 - trust
 - attention
 - a sense of fulfillment

On and on the list could go; but note all the wonderful, positive and strong qualities that sex is supposed to bring between two people. This is the reason God gave the seventh commandment: "You shall not commit adultery" (v. 18; see Exo 20:13). These things are so important for a healthy personality that God did something: He ordained that one man and one woman were to give their lives to one another, that they were to focus upon sharing and developing the wonderful qualities in the other.

God ordained marriage. Sex outside of marriage never develops these qualities. Illicit sex always causes problems...

- guilt
- unhappiness
- loss of respect by others
- jealousy
- disease
- dissolution of the family
- a sense of being used
- a cheapening of sex
- emotional problems
- unwanted pregnancies
- broken trust
- disloyalty
- broken marriages
- selfishness
- insecurity
- loss of self-esteem
- loss of affection and relationships
- a lack of fulfilment
- a false sense of security
- loss of respect for others

The point: God gave the seventh commandment to preserve the value of human life, the sanctity of man's body and spirit.

- b. God gave the seventh commandment to preserve the family and the human race, society itself. The family is the basic unit of any society; therefore, the family has to be protected and preserved for society to survive. This was true for Israel and it is true for us, no matter what our generation. When husbands and wives are living in love and are faithful to each other, the great qualities of life are learned and taught: loyalty, trust, commitment, love, joy and peace. These are the very qualities that grow and develop fruitful lives, families and nations. No family, society or nation can survive without these great qualities.

God demands the *sanctity of marriage*. God demands that husbands and wives be pure and faithful to one another, that they love one another and never commit adultery: "You shall never commit adultery, never commit any act of immorality."

Exo 20:14 *You shall not commit adultery.*

1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

1 Th 4:3 *You should avoid sexual immorality.*

1 Pet 2:11 *Abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

Thought 1. What is the decision required by this commandment?

Obedience! Very simply, we must never commit adultery, never commit an immoral act. We must live pure, holy lives. But how? How can we guard ourselves and keep from committing sexual sin in a sex-crazed society — a society that uses sex to sell products, provide entertainment, pleasure, recreation and clothing for day-to-day dress? Scripture says the following:

- (1) Never take a second look. And if you can prevent the first look, never look the first time. As the old saying goes, we cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from roosting there.

Mat 5:28 *“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

(2) Flee temptation; flee the very appearance of evil. We must always flee at the very first offer, the very first sight, the very first thought, the very first urge (desire).

1 Th 5:22 *Reject every kind of evil.*

(3) Flee immorality — abstain totally.

1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality.*

1 Th 4:3-5 *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.*

(4) Never touch the unclean thing.

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.*

(5) Never talk about immorality, not even once.

Eph 5:3-4 *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

(6) Never give any part of your body over to sin.

Rom 6:13 *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

(7) Never let sin control your body.

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. (see vv. 11-13).*

(8) Do not love the world nor the things of the world.

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

(9) Live a crucified life, a life sacrificed totally to Christ.

Ga1 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

(10) Sacrifice and commit your body totally to Jesus Christ.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

(11) Put the sinful acts of the body to death.

Rom 6:11 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Rom 8:13 *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

(12) Discipline yourself — strenuously so — in order to control your body.

1 Cor 9:27 *No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

(13) Be filled with the Spirit of God, bearing His character and His character alone.

Eph 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.*

(14) Guard your spirit.

Mala 2:15 *So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.*

(15) Glorify God in your body.

1 Cor 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

(16) Captivate and subject every thought to obey Christ.

2 Cor 10:5 *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

(17) Listen to God's Word: hide His Word in your heart and live by it.

Psa 119:9, 11 *How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word....I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

IV. Deuteronomy 05:19 Commandment Eight Concerns Man's Property: "You shall not steal."

The eighth commandment is, "You shall not steal." Think for a moment: What is *the crime* most often committed within your community? The nation? Around the world? Probably stealing. So many people steal that stealing has become a very commonplace crime of society. If the thief does not assault or kill the victim, he is simply called a

common thief. Thievery, robbery and swindling have become epidemic, contributing to the lawlessness within society. And stealing is such a terrible epidemic that it threatens the very foundation of society itself. Just think of...

- government leaders who steal and misuse funds
- employees who steal from their employer
- employers who steal through unfair prices and wages
- dishonest athletes and famous people who steal
- acquaintances and neighbours who steal and are dishonest
- people who steal by living extravagant and indulgent lifestyles, hoarding and banking when so many are in such desperate need throughout the world
- people who steal by taking so much of the earth's wealth and resources

Stealing shows a disrespect for property and for human life. Stealing leads to more and more lawlessness, sometimes even assault and murder. Stealing always creates some havoc, and it can cause devastation. Stealing can bankrupt families, companies, communities and even nations. Stealing always causes loss, loss for both the victim and the thief. The victim, of course, loses whatever object (physical or otherwise) is stolen; but in addition, the loss can be very painful and sometimes irreplaceable. The thief, though frequently undetected by men, always loses his reputation, integrity and character before God; and eventually, unless he repents and turns from his sin, he loses his soul. This is the subject of this important commandment:

1. *Stealing* (ganab) means to take and keep something that belongs to another person. William Barclay says:

[Stealing] is a "natural" sin. It is human nature to want what we have not got; and the desire may turn to action; and, when it does, a man may steal. We do not need to argue about the rightness of this commandment. Everyone agrees that stealing is wrong. (William Barclay. *The Old & The New Law*. p. 37).

God has made man a working being, a being who must work, produce, achieve, accomplish and possess. The desire to move ahead and progress is planted within man by God. This is the reason we desire things that we do not have. The desire is normal and natural; it is God-given. But the legitimate way to fulfil that desire is to work for what we want and can achieve in life. The illegitimate way to fulfil the desire is to steal. When we act out our desire and take something that does not belong to us — take it either secretly or by force — it is stealing.

2. Note that stealing is a *heart problem*: the cause, the source of stealing, is found in the human heart. Stealing begins with a desire in man. When that desire turns into a passion, a lust, an urge or covetousness — regardless if the act is carried out — the person is guilty of sin. This is exactly what God says:

James 1:14-15 *But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

Thought 1. Note an excellent example of coveting — of desiring and lusting — in Scripture.

Jos 7:21 *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.*

Thought 2. Arthur W. Pink points out the following:

- (1) Stealing was the first sin committed by the human race: Eve took of the forbidden fruit.

Gen 3:6 *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

- (2) Stealing was the first recorded sin committed by Israel after entering Canaan: Achan stole the spoils of war.

Jos 7:21 *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.*

- (3) Stealing was the first sin to defile the early church: Ananias and Sapphira kept back some of the money from the sale of their property, money that was to be given to the church. (Arthur W. Pink. *The Ten Commandments*, p. 54).

Acts 5:1-3 *Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"*

3. God's purpose for commanding people not to steal can be simply stated: it is to protect a person's property and his right to own property, to preserve peace among neighbours and within society. Stealing causes loss — sometimes terrible loss — to the victim. And stealing always leads to hard feelings, broken relationships and sometimes revenge. This commandment protects a person's right...
 - to feed, house, clothe and provide for himself and his family
 - to own property
 - to reap and keep the property and rewards of his labour
 - to secure enough goods and money to help meet the desperate needs of the poor, the suffering and the lost of this world

Eph 4:28 *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

2 Thes 3:10-12 *For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.*

4. Now, how is this commandment broken, violated? Stealing is so common and so costly to society that the way people go about stealing needs to be studied. Moreover, stealing is not only a sin against society and the people stolen from, stealing is a sin against God. Stealing condemns a person to death, eternal death — unless the person repents and turns to God. For this reason, the various forms of stealing need to be looked at in some detail. A person breaks God's commandment, a person steals...

- by robbing a person, store, company, organization or bank
- by shoplifting
- by not paying bills
- by failing to pay debts
- by stealing the reputation and character of another through lies, gossip or rumour
- by taking away a person's right to justice (Isa 10:1-3)
- by falsely or deceptively advertising
- by keeping an overpayment or excessive refund check or over-shipment of goods
- by overcharging or price-gouging: charging unfair prices
- by not paying fair and just wages
- by not giving a full day's work on the job
- by taking things from one's employer
- by making unauthorized phone calls by padding expense reports
- by unjustly extending business trips at company expense
- by manipulating information or stocks for personal gain
- by abusing sick days
- by arriving at work late or leaving work early without permission
- by stealing and enslaving people for work and profit
- by breaking the rules or cheating to win something, a game or a prize

All acts of stealing are wrong, but there is one form of stealing that is most serious and damning, that of robbing God:

=> A person robs God by failing to pay his tithes and offerings to God.

Mal 3:7-8 *"Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the*

LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and offerings."

⇒ A person robs God by living a hypocritical, inconsistent life. When a person professes to believe and follow God, then fails to follow through, he robs God and other men of a *godly testimony*.

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

⇒ A person robs God by living for self and the world, by choosing not to live for God. God is the great Creator of man; therefore, man owes his life — all he is and has — to God. When a person chooses to live like he wants, he steals his life from God.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

Thought 1. This commandment against stealing is broken when property is taken, no matter how little and insignificant the item may be. F. B. Huey again has an excellent comment on the breaking of this commandment.

The spirit of this commandment can be broken in ways other than taking the property of another violently or covertly. The employee who takes paper clips, postage stamps, stationery, etc., from his employer for personal use, the taxpayer who falsifies his tax return, the friend who borrows money or even a cup of sugar without intent of returning it, the shopkeeper who uses dishonest scales or engages in any kind of fraudulent business practice, the student who takes credit for work that was done by someone else, the employee who loafs on the job but accepts full wages, or the nation that takes the land of another by war — all violate this commandment. (F.B. Huey, Jr. A Study Guide Commentary, Exodus. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), p. 91).

Maxie Dunnam also has an excellent application on this commandment:

One of the tragedies of our day is how the justice system treats crimes of stealing. Poor people, with no money to hire legal defence, waste away in prisons for stealing a car or a television, while officers of huge corporate organizations preside in posh board rooms, though it is proven they have manipulated the stock market. Television

gives us almost daily reports of defence contract “cost overrides” that steal millions of tax dollars....Ours is a society “on the take,” and stealing is one of our most blatant sins....

Apart from the obvious ways of seeing this commandment broken, we should think of the more subtle ways we break it.

- *by not giving our employers a full day for the pay we receive*
- *by stealing the good name of another with malicious gossip*
- *by remaining silent, thus stealing from another the word that might preserve reputation and / or undergird character*
- *by failing to give to others the support, praise and credit they're due. (Maxie Dunnam. *The Preacher's Commentary on Exodus*, pp. 265-266).*

Thought 2. Scripture is very forceful in dealing with stealing, holding back and cheating.

(1) We must never steal, not even once.

Exo 20:15 *You shall not steal.*

(2) We must never withhold tithes and offerings from God.

Mal 3:8-10 *“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse — your whole nation — because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”*

(3) We must never cheat our brother in anything.

1 Th 4:6 *And that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.*

(4) We must never steal people (i.e., kidnap, enslave or put them in bondage): the enslavement of people takes away a person's right to his own life.

Exo 21:16 *Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession.*

V. Deuteronomy 05:20 Commandment Nine Concerns Man's Word: Forbids Lying or Speaking Falsely Against Anyone

The ninth commandment is, “You shall not lie — never bear false witness against your neighbour.” Lying — bearing false testimony against people — is common to all of us. Sometime in the past we have all...

- told a little white lie
- twisted the truth
- told a half-truth
- gossiped, not really knowing the truth

- discredited someone
- slandered someone
- sought to escape blame by skirting around the truth
- tried to place blame elsewhere by failing to come forth with the truth
- cast a suggestive hint or insinuated an untruth about someone
- boasted or exaggerated the truth in order to boost ourselves
- raised an eyebrow, shrugged a shoulder or made some motion to indicate something was untrue or to keep from disclosing the truth

Scripture emphatically declares: “All men are liars” (Psa 116:11). Lying is so common that it is condoned, accepted and even expected by many people. But lying is never justified. Silence sometimes is, but not lying, not answering dishonestly. Leaders, both business and political, can say or promise anything, and people either accept or overlook their twisting of the truth. A person's character, his word and integrity, seem to matter little. Making false claims and promises has become a way of life. There is a feeling that a person simply cannot survive or get ahead unless he twists the truth to boost himself. Telling the truth and being honest have fallen by the wayside.

Lying — bearing false witness — threatens the very foundation of society. Nothing can survive when it is filled with lies, not for long: not families, friendships, businesses, clubs, schools, churches, communities, governments. Any organization or group will collapse in the wake of mistrust and broken, severed relationships.

This is the great concern of the ninth commandment, the concern for truth, that we build our lives upon truth: build our families, friendships, businesses, clubs, schools, churches, communities and governments upon truth.

1. This commandment is broken by lying, by telling an untruth of any kind. Man's concept of lying is this: “If I lie, it is justifiable, but if you lie to me, it is unforgivable.” But to God, lying is lying. The word *lying* (sheqer) means that which is false, untrue. It is untruthfulness, deception, misrepresentation, exaggeration.

Note how Scripture itself defines a false witness:

=> A false witness is a person who breathes out lies.

Prov 14:5 An honest witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies.

Prov 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.

=> A false witness is a person who shares a false report.

Exo 23:1 Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.

=> A false witness is a person who deceives

Prov 12:17 An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies.

As pointed out in note one, when some people look at the ninth commandment, they think of a courtroom scene and think that lying against someone in court is what is being forbidden. But as the Scriptures above show, *bearing false witness* means far more than just lying against someone in court. *Bearing false witness* means any kind of lying. Hosea 4:2 clearly shows this. When Hosea charged the people with breaking several of the commandments, he did not charge them with bearing false witness in court. He charged them with lying in their day-to-day affairs:

Hosea 4:1-2 *Hear the word of the LORD, you Israelites, because the LORD has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.*

2. There are several forms or kinds of lies, and they must be diligently guarded against.

a. There is slander: thinking something bad about a person and sharing it; misrepresenting something about someone; tearing down the reputation and life of a person by spreading bad news about him.

Psa. 101:5 *Whoever slanders their neighbour in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate.*

Prov 10:18 *Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool.*

b. There is rumour or gossip or tale-bearing: spreading little or big tales, idle or active tales, whether imagined or real; spreading the evil news that one has imagined in his mind or has heard.

1 Tim 5:13 *Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.*

1 Pet 4:15 *If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.*

Lev 19:16 *"Do not go about spreading slander among your people.*

Prov 11:13 *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.*

Prov 16:28 *A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.*

Prov 26:20 *Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.*

c. There are suggestive hints or insinuations: arousing a bad impression about someone; stirring the idea that something might possibly be true; planting in the mind the possibility of something improper or indecent.

Exo 23:1 *Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.*

Jer 9:4 *Beware of your friends; do not trust anyone in your clan. For every one of them is a deceiver, and every friend a slanderer.*

- d. There is deception: thinking or wanting something to be true, accepting it as true and sharing it; tricking oneself and others into thinking something is true; deceiving oneself and others by accepting bad news as true when the truth is really not known; causing oneself and others to believe bad news.

Prov 12:17 An honest witness tells the truth, but a false witness tells lies.

Prov 24:28 Do not testify against your neighbour without cause — would you use your lips to mislead?

- e. There are false charges and criticism: accusations made against a person to a third party; sharing the faults and failures of a person with someone other than the person himself; talking about the weaknesses and failures of a person with someone else; condemning, blaming and censoring a person with others.

Mat 5:11-12 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

1 Pet 3:16 Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Psa 31:13 For I hear many whispering, “Terror on every side!” They conspire against me and plot to take my life.

- f. There is exaggeration and blown-up flattery: stretching the truth about a person; excessively praising someone; falsely representing someone; painting a false picture of a person.

Job 32:21 I will show partiality to no one, nor will I flatter any man.

Prov 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.

Prov 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

Prov 28:23 Whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favour rather than one who has a flattering tongue.

Prov 29:5 Whoever flatters his neighbour is spreading a net for his feet.

Psa 12:3 May the LORD silence all flattering lips and every boastful tongue.

1 Th 2:4-5 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.

Prov 24:24 Whoever says to the guilty, “You are innocent” — peoples will curse him and nations denounce him.

- g. There are innumerable ways in which we lie, such as...

- perjury
- propaganda
- boasting
- telling half-truths
- breaking vows
- shifting blame
- seeking to discredit someone
- sharing a convenient lie
- making up an excuse
- seeking to escape responsibility or punishment
- twisting the truth to protect oneself
- raising an eyebrow, shrugging the shoulder or snickering — doing anything that indicates something is untrue or that disavows knowledge of the truth

3. A lie has at least three terrible effects upon people.

a. Lying misrepresents the truth. It camouflages and hides the truth. The person lied to does not know the truth; therefore, he has to act or live upon a lie. If the lie is serious, it can be very damaging:

=> A lie about a business deal can cost money and cause terrible loss.

=> A lie about loving someone can stir emotions that lead to destruction.

=> A lie about the salvation of the gospel can cost a person the hope of eternal life.

b. Lying deceives a person. It leads a person astray. A person deceives...

- to get what he wants
- to cause harm or hurt
- to seduce someone
- to cover up or hide something

The point to see is that lying is a deception, and deception eventually causes misunderstanding, disappointment, bewilderment, helplessness, emotional upheaval, loss and sometimes immorality and destruction.

c. Lying builds a wrong relationship, a relationship built upon sinking sand. Two people cannot possibly be friends or live together if the relationship is based upon lies. Lying destroys...

- confidence
- trust
- love
- security
- assurance
- hope

4. Four facts need to be noted about lying or bearing false witness.

a. False witness is usually shared with loved ones and good friends, with people we feel can be trusted. Therefore, we always feel that our loved ones and friends can be trusted with the bad news. However, what is overlooked is that our loved ones and friends have good friends whom they feel can be trusted. And so the bad news is spread further and further afield; more damage and hurt is done to people and to the cause of Christ. God knows this is the way people are. This is the reason God forbids His people from sharing failure, whether true or untrue, except in dealing with the person involved with the issue.

- b. Bearing tales about a person, whether true or untrue, always hurts the person. The person being talked about has a heart just like we do: a heart that is subject to being cut and hurt and suffering pain. Therefore, when tales are shared, we are eventually going to cause pain and hurt, sometimes a great deal of pain, to the person and his loved ones. (Imagine how God feels about this.)

Psa 41:7 All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me.

Prov 18:8 The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts.

Prov 25:18 Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is one who gives false testimony against a neighbour.

- c. The person who bears tales, giving false witness, shall be judged by God, no matter who he is.

Rom 1:29-30, 32 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity....Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Psa. 101:5 Whoever slanders their neighbour in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate.

Prov 19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish.

- d. If a person truly loves, he will not bear false witness about anyone. If there is a problem or some questionable report, he will deal with the person himself, seeking to restore him to the faith. Note: love does not deal with a person in harshness, downgrading him, but in love and tenderness and in *strength*, being guided by the Holy Spirit of God.

Gal 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Isa 57:18 "I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners"

Psa 141:3 Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips.

5. The source of lies and lying is Satan. He was the first ever to lie; therefore, he is called the father of lies. The person who lies follows in the footsteps of Satan and is called by Scripture a "child of the devil."

John 8:44 "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar."

6. The source of truth is God. Note Scripture declares time and again that God is the God of truth.

Num 23:19 God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil?

Deut 32:4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

2 Sam 7:28 Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your covenant is trustworthy, and you have promised these good things to your servant.

Psa 146:5-6 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God. He is the maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them — he remains faithful forever.

Isa 65:16 Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the one true God; whoever takes an oath in the land will swear by the one true God. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.

Romans 3:4 Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: “So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.”

Titus 1:2 A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time.

Heb 6:17-18 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

7. The very foundation or basis of society is truth. Families, businesses, organizations, clubs, neighbours or communities in any society will disintegrate and collapse unless the members are truthful with one another. If we lie and deceive one another, the consequences are hurtful, damaging and often devastating. Wrong decisions are made and wrong actions are taken. Lies and deception — bearing false witness — are often what cause...

- divorce
- bankruptcy
- suffering
- imprisonment
- failure
- accident
- vengeance
- pain and hurt
- abuse
- unemployment
- severed relationships
- retaliation
- job loss
- collapse
- death

8. A critical question needs to be asked when dealing with lying or telling the truth. Should we ever tell the truth bluntly or harshly? In a court of law, the truth must always be spoken straight to the point: directly and straightforward. But when dealing in personal, face-to-face relationships, we should not intentionally cause pain, hurt, embarrassment or shame. We should never deliberately wound a person with a

blunt, harsh statement of the truth. Truth is to be spoken in love and kindness not in harshness and ugliness.

Eph 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Eph 4:31-32 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Thought 1. William Barclay has an excellent statement on this point:

When we speak about telling the truth, one special point arises. Must we always tell the truth boldly and bluntly? For instance, if a person has played a game or sung a song or given some kind of performance, and not done very well, must we say that he was no good, or is there any harm in the polite compliment which will encourage him, even if it is not strictly true? Must we tell the truth, even when it is unpleasant and when it might hurt?

*Someone has given us a valuable rule about this. There are three questions we should always ask about anything we say about anyone else or to anyone else. The first question is: Is it true? And, of course, if it is not true, then it must not be said at all. The second question is: Is it necessary? If it is necessary, it will have to be said, but there are not many times when politeness and courtesy need to be disregarded. The third question is: Is it kind? It is hardly ever a duty to be unkind. There are ways and ways of telling the truth. You can tell it in a way that is deliberately designed to wound and hurt; there are people who take a delight in seeing other people wince when something is said. On the other hand, it was said of Florence Allshorn, a great teacher, that, when she had some criticism to make, she always made it, as it were, with her arm round your shoulder. She spoke the truth; she said what was necessary; but she took care to say it kindly and in a way that would help and not hurt. And that is the best rule of all . (William Barclay. *The Old Law & The New Law*, pp. 43-44).*

V. Deuteronomy 05:21 Commandment Ten Concerns Man's Desires and Security: "You Shall Not Covet."

The tenth commandment is, "You shall not covet." What is forbidden by this commandment? How is this commandment broken, violated? Commandment ten concerns man's security. This commandment forbids coveting anything that belongs to our neighbour: his house, wife, servant, workers, animals or anything else. A man should be able to live in peace and feel secure. He should not have to worry about someone coveting and stealing what he has. God wants man to feel secure and protected. God wants man to know that his wife and family, his property and possessions, his joy and anything else he has is secure and protected against the covetousness and theft of people.

1. The Hebrew word for *covet* (**hamad**) means to desire, crave, want, long for, thirst for, yearn for, lust after. *Coveting* is a neutral word; that is, coveting can be good as well as bad, legitimate as well as illegitimate.

a. The Bible clearly says that there is a legitimate covetousness, that God has planted within man certain inalienable desires, desires that we are entitled to, desires that are good. We all have legitimate desires for love, joy and peace; legitimate desires to be secure, successful, fulfilled and satisfied.

=> The Bible says that every good and perfect gift comes from God Himself. This being so, we should actually *seek after* and *covet* good and perfect gifts.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

=> The Bible says that the excellent qualities of life and the best gifts of God are to be coveted.

Mat 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

1 Cor 12:31 But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

Psa 19:9-10 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.

=> The Bible even says that God gives us the ability to get wealth and that we should work so diligently that we can actually earn enough to meet the needs of others.

Eph 4:28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

b. The Bible clearly says there is an illegitimate covetousness, that man commits evil when he desires another person's wife or property, or any other possession belonging to the person.

Exo 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

2. Covetousness is an inward sin, a sin of the heart and mind: it is a *desire*, a *thought* within the heart and mind. This commandment differs from the other commandments

in this very fact, differs rather significantly: covetousness is not the outward sin; it is the inward *desire* and *thought* that leads to the outward sin.

Remember, the first nine commandments dealt primarily with outward acts, with such acts as lying, stealing and killing. But this tenth commandment deals with the human heart, with inward feelings, desires, thoughts and attitudes. But note: the first nine commandments *also involved* the desires and thoughts of a person. Before a person ever lies, steals or kills, the desire or thought to take such action arises in his heart and mind. The desire to do something always precedes the actual act. A man commits immorality because he desires a person. A woman steals because she either desires the thing stolen or the excitement of stealing. In dealing with the first nine commandments, we discussed this fact, the fact that the evil forbidden was aroused first of all in the heart and mind of a person, that the evil was basically a heart problem.

This is the very reason God has covered coveting last, listed it as the tenth commandment. Coveting (desire, lust, the covetous thought) is the first thing that happens before a person commits the outward sin. The sin is *aroused* within the heart before it is committed; the evil act is *thought about* before it is done. This commandment underlies all the commandments: coveting — the desire or thought — takes place within the human heart and mind before any of the nine commandments are publicly or secretly committed. Before a person ever commits the sinful act, he desires and thinks about what someone else has, his...

- house
- wife
- servant
- livestock
- horse
- vehicle
- property
- money
- clothing
- appearance
- personality
- looks
- position
- power
- recognition
- job
- promotion
- opportunity
- influence

The list could go on and on. We commit the sin of covetousness when our *hearts and minds* are set on some possession, so set that we...

- crave, long and lust after it
- are consumed with getting it
- give ourselves over to pursuing it
- give top priority and first attention to it
- focus our hearts, minds, energy and time to securing it

Covetousness is being so consumed with getting something that we become gripped and enslaved by it. Our hearts become focused upon *a possession, a thing, something other than God*. This is the reason Scripture declares that covetousness is idolatry:

Eph 5:5 *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a man is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

Thought 1. Maxie Dunnam has an excellent application on this commandment:

Most of us are guilty of looking at others, comparing ourselves to them and seeing ourselves come out on the short end. We torture ourselves in this fashion, drive ourselves to depression by self-pity, thinking we deserve more. When we find ourselves jealous of what life is for someone else, dreaming of how happy we would be if we were in someone else's situation, it's a dead give-away that we are falling into the subtle, seductive hands of covetousness.

How often do we convince ourselves that other people always get the breaks and not us? How recently have we thought that we were deprived of opportunity? We look at our peers, friends our own age, and see where they are in life, and we're plagued with the notion that they had far more opportunity than we did.

You probably have not associated that with coveting, but whatever name you give it, it is exactly that, and it is destructive....

We convince ourselves that we have a sort of cosmic right to an equal share of the good things of life. That's a fallacious idea, and it plays folly in our lives. There's no equality to being in the right place at the right time.

*There is no cosmic right that is ours to have an equal share of what everybody else has. If you're prone to leaning in that direction, consider how you would feel if you were averaged out with the world's two billion starving people. You see, we always want to be averaged up and not down. (Maxie Dunnam. *The Preacher's Commentary on Exodus*, pp. 267-268).*

Thought 2. Mathew Henry has a very graphic application:

*"O that such a man's house were mine! Such a man's wife mine! Such a man's estate mine! " This is certainly the language of discontent at our own lot, and envy at our neighbour's; and these are the sins principally forbidden here. (Mathew Henry's *Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 362-363).*

Thought 3. The covetous life has been described as follows by an unnamed author:

The passion to possess is an ugly sin no matter how we look at it. But when the object of our passion belongs to some one else, as the Tenth Commandment says thy neighbour, this sin takes on an even uglier hue. When we covet something out there, something that is available and waiting to be claimed, we limit most of the destruction to ourselves. But, when we covet that which belongs to others, we bring those people into the situation, and jeopardize our attitudes toward them and our relationships with them.

Someone may covet a starting position on a sports team or another individual's job. This person, consumed with envy, may scheme and wish for his nemesis to be hurt, or miss a deadline, or lose an account, in order to claim his position. Or, what about coveting someone else's spouse? This person berates their own mate, feeds discontent with insensitive comparisons, and undermines another's marriage with subtle

(or, not-so-subtle) advances. Some selfish siblings count the days to their parents' death as they covet the inheritance money.

Coveting what belongs to another person is a serious offense on two counts. First, it indicates our lack of love for our neighbour, our relative, our friend or whoever owns what we desire. The first and great commandment has to do with love; but, covetousness stands in direct opposition to love. When we place our affections on an inheritance, we remove our love from the person who's bequeathing it to us. When we see our neighbour's wife as the object of our desire, we begin to view our neighbour as the object of our disdain. When we scheme to get someone else's job, we reveal our calloused, insensitive heart. When we wish another person illness, injury or bad fortune, we make it clear that the ONLY person we care about is "NUMBER ONE", ourselves. When we covet what belongs to someone else, we displace the owner. In our minds, we kick him out of the game, or out of the job, or out of the marriage. ■