

Word #10: (Never) Enough

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 September 2026

Preacher: Brian King

[0:00] Let's pray and let's get ready to hear from the Lord. Heavenly Father, as we come once again, we come expectant, of our hearts open and ready to receive and to listen and to obey you.

In the name of Christ, amen. Now, have you ever had that moment when you're out with friends at a restaurant downtown and you're doing some surprisingly deep soul-searching over the dinner options?

Yes. So there you are, scanning the menu, agonizing over whether the steak or the pasta is better. And after 10 minutes of deliberation, you finally make your choice.

Grilled chicken, please, you say to the waiter. And you hand back the menu, satisfied with your decision. But then the food begins to arrive.

The steak lands with a sizzle on someone else's plate. The smell of it already causing your mouth to water. The pasta somehow looks 10 times more heavenly in real life than the picture on the menu.

[1:34] And by the time your chicken arrives, you are suffering buyer's remorse. Now you're stabbing at your chicken a little more viciously than you otherwise would have, feeling sorry for yourself.

Now, what changed? Nothing really. The chicken hasn't changed. It's the same chicken you ordered 15 minutes ago.

You were happy with it when you chose it. You were looking forward to it when the waiter walked away. The only thing that has changed is that now you can see what someone else has.

And somehow, what was perfectly satisfying a few moments ago doesn't seem quite so satisfying anymore. And isn't that what so often happens not just with food, but with phones, bonuses, weekends, holidays, and yes, even churches?

We were fine with what we have until we look at someone else. And then suddenly, what we have isn't enough anymore.

[2:46] But today, God tells us, you shall not covet. Now, I don't know how you feel when you realize that is the last one on the list.

Do you feel slightly disappointed? Because you were wondering if God was going to say something a little more profound than that. I mean, it all feels so anticlimactic.

After all, if I ask you, which command do you think is the most important? You probably would say, well, we definitely shouldn't go around building idols.

We certainly shouldn't murder. Even our non-Christian friends know that. Don't commit adultery.

Yeah, that's a big one too. But don't covet.

I mean, maybe it's not the most virtuous thing to do. But will it make my top ten sins? I doubt it.

[3:51] It doesn't really hurt anyone, does it? Maybe that's why God put it last on the list. He kind of ran out of all the big ones.

But ten is a nice round number. So, onto the list it goes. But really, it's not a big deal. Besides, doesn't our global economy kind of depend on the coveting stuff?

Imagine if everyone was happy with their current iPhone and didn't want the latest one their neighbor got. Apple probably wouldn't be too happy about that.

Governments might not be too happy about that. Where is the GDP growth going to come from now? So, why is coveting such a big deal?

Why would don't covet make God's top ten list? That's what I hope to show us today. And to help us see that, I'm going to do three things this morning.

[4:55] Firstly, I'm going to clarify the command. Then secondly, I'll get us to discern the dangers. And finally, I'm going to ask us to soak in the secret that we might truly obey.

So firstly, clarify the command. What does it mean to covet? Well, have you ever had a Christian friend going on a mission trip tell you, I covet your prayers?
Now, to be honest, it's not an expression I have heard much at KEC. But certainly in many churches I've been part of, it's common enough. Now, what is your friend asking for when he says that? It's quite simple, really. He's saying, I desire your prayers. I long for you to pray for me while I am away.

So at its root, coveting is just desiring. But this then raises the question, is that what God is saying no to?

[6:08] Is desire itself the problem? Classical Buddhism more or less says yes. You see, Buddhism says we suffer because we are constantly craving and seeking attachment to all sorts of things.

For example, we crave good health. Hence, when sickness comes, we feel the pain. So the solution Buddhism gives is to loosen our grip on desire.

You can see the logic there, can't you? If you have no attachment to good health in the first place, you won't feel the agony when illness strikes.

But the Bible doesn't go down that path. It never considers desire in itself to be the problem.

So it never says it is wrong to want food when you are hungry, or rest when you are exhausted, or love when you've been forsaken. That's not sin.

[7:18] That's being human. Neither is it wrong to want to be married. Marriage is a gift from God. It isn't even wrong to want to work hard and see your circumstances improve.

After all, Ecclesiastes 5 verse 19 affirms that whenever someone enjoys wealth as a result of the fruit from their labor, that too is a gift from God.

In fact, there are some things you ought to want. Listen to Psalm 42 verse 1, for instance. As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.

Is that not the language of desire? You and I should desire to know the Lord. We should desire holiness in our life.

We should desire for people around us to come to know Jesus. Clearly, whatever the Christian life is, it is not the absence or extinguishing of desire.

[8:36] So what exactly is the tenth word forbidding here, if not the desire itself? Let's read the verse again.

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

Now, did you notice the command is not you shall not covet full stop? That's what we tend to think it says.

But notice, it actually names something specific we shouldn't be coveting or desiring. Indeed, notice how many times one word in particular is referred to.

Did you catch it? It's your neighbor. Don't covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, your neighbor's servant, ox or donkey, anything that belongs to your neighbor.

[9:48] So God isn't telling you to stop wanting good things. He's not even telling you to want less. Rather, he's telling you to want rightly.

He's telling you not to desire what God has given to someone else in such a way that you must have what they have.

The Old Testament has multiple examples of this. Let me just give you one. Think, for instance, of what happens in 1 Samuel 8.

Those of you who have attended my Bible overview class should be familiar with this chapter. In this chapter, what are God's people telling him? They say to him, Hey God, we've been looking around and sure you have given us some nice things, but we've got no human king.

Well, everyone else seems to have a king. That's what we want. A king like everyone else. We must have what they have.

[11:06] That's what coveting is. It's to desire what is not yours to have. Or to repeat what I said a minute earlier, it's to desire what God has given to someone else in such a way that you must have what they have.

And when you don't have what they have, you resent it when others do. That's the other side of the covetousness coin.

Think back to that restaurant at the beginning. When the steak landed on your friend's plate, you wanted to have what they have. And when you couldn't, you couldn't enjoy your chicken anymore. You felt resentful. In fact, that scenario helps us distinguish appreciation from coveting.

Appreciation says, how good it is that this delicious steak exists.

Coveting says, how unfair that it's yours and not mine. So don't covet whatever belongs to your neighbor.

[12:31] But easier said than done, isn't it? Just think about that list in Exodus 20 verse 17 and all the kinds of things we shouldn't covet.

So God says, we shouldn't covet our neighbor's house. Or perhaps more precisely translated, household. household. But isn't it so easy just to look at someone else's family and kind of wish what they have is yours?

Their children are the kind who greet the guests politely and just seem so well-mannered in general. Yours are hiding upstairs and look awkward when they have to make an appearance.

Or your teenager just got into a cause that she wanted overseas. Yours didn't. And weren't.

Because you can't afford it. And it is so easy to have a covetous heart at that moment, isn't it? And yet the 10th word tells us not to.

[13:35] Then God says, we shouldn't covet our neighbor's wife. Don't covet other people. In today's world, that is deeply counter-cultural.

After all, we are constantly told to follow our feelings and pursue the people we are attracted to, even if they are already attached to someone else.

You hear it in our pop songs, whose whole message is, she doesn't really get him the way I would, so he belongs with me.

It glorifies fixing our hearts on someone who isn't ours, seeking to convince us that if we think we will be better for them, that makes it okay.

But again, God says, it's not okay. And that applies even if we aren't technically committing adultery.

[14:38] You see, isn't it easy for a married man to look at how his friend's wife speaks about her husband to other people and wonder, why doesn't mine ever speak about me like that?

Isn't it easy for a married woman to watch another guy carry himself confidently in public and think, why doesn't my husband act like that?

That's a lot more subtle, but that is still coveting. And to those of you who are single, I don't want to downplay any legitimate longings you might have today to be married.

I know sometimes any announcement of upcoming weddings or people getting together can be painful because it hasn't happened to you. But there is a difference between bringing your real pain to God and looking sideways at someone else's joy and demanding God owes you the same.

The latter is when you've crossed the line. And then God says, don't covet their servants, their ox, or their donkey.

[16:01] Now, in the ancient world, this basically refers to his workforce. The ox plows the field, the donkey carries the load, and the servants do everything else.

Which means this part of the list is about what a man commands. It is his standing. It's what we would call position. And this one is especially difficult, isn't it?

Most of us aren't sitting around thinking, oh, I want that person's ox and his donkey. But do we look at what someone else has and think, why do they end up progressing more than I do?

So for instance, somebody at work gets promoted and you try to be happy for them, but secretly, back at your desk, you're thinking, honestly, I've been here longer.

I've worked harder. How did that get it? And not me. Or somebody gets the opportunity you were hoping for.

[17:12] they get invited into that meeting, they get put in charge of that project, their name gets mentioned by the boss, and suddenly every little thing they do starts irritating you.

Why? Because somewhere underneath all of that is this thought that should have been mine.

And even in church, we are not immune to it. It's so easy, isn't it, to look at another church's ministry and think, wow, look at their volunteers.

Look at their youth leaders. They turn up. They are prepared. They actually stay. And then your next thought is, why can't I have people like that?

And the reason beneath that thought, if we are being honest, isn't, why can't I have people like that so that God's kingdom will grow and his gospel flourish?

[18:22] Instead, it is, God, why don't I look as successful as they do? That's what coveting does.

And in the end, the tenth word applies to anything that belongs to your neighbor. Don't covet their property, their energy, their health, their exam results, their influence, their skills.

Anything that God has given to your neighbor that in his wisdom he has not given to you, don't covet it.

That's the command. Don't desire what God has given to someone else in such a way that you must have what they have.

But now that we've clarified the commandment, perhaps we're still wondering, at the end of the day, is it really that bad? That brings us to the second thing I want us to do today.

[19:41] Discern the dangers. Discern the dangers. You see, I wonder if the reason we think coveting is not such a big deal is because it's invisible.

I mean, make an unauthorized image of God, everyone can see it. Break the Sabbath, your colleagues will know. Murder someone, obvious.

Commit adultery, you can get caught in the act. Bear false witness, the court records your every word. But coveting?

Now, this one, you can hide. You can covet in the heart and no one will ever know. And if it stays in the heart, that's not so bad, that's not so bad, right?

But the Bible never lets us off that easily. Because the heart is not morally neutral territory.

[20:46] When Samuel went to anoint a new king, God told him, people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. So even if no one else ever sees it, God does.

And what goes on in there matters to him. That's why the Bible speaks so strongly against covetousness.

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

For of this, you can be sure, no immoral, impure, or greedy person, such a person is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Now, that word greed in the NIV is translated covetousness in the ESV. That's because the word use is the word for the appetite that always wants more than it has been given.

[22:05] So either translation is fair and relevant to our subject matter today. And notice what Paul is saying when you put these two verses together.

Let's pay close attention. He's saying, first of all, if sexual immorality is a fair and accurate description of you as a person, you need to seriously consider if you really belong to God as one of his people.

so far, so uncontroversial, I think. After all, if it were discovered beyond any reasonable doubt, someone in our church was seeing prostitutes, we would be shocked.

We would be having conversations about discipline and repentance. Christians. But did you notice what else Paul says? He's saying, if the word covetous is a fair and accurate description of you as a person, you also have to ask yourself some hard questions about whether you are a follower of Christ.

He puts covetousness sex and sexual immorality in the same category. Now, I am pretty sure we don't do that, do we?

[23:38] If you discovered someone in our church who is constantly preoccupied with what others have, do you think you would ask the elders straight away to meet them?

I don't think so. Yet, the Bible treats both with the same seriousness. Now, to be clear, Paul is not talking about the Christian who struggles with this, who fights it, who is repenting of it.

He's talking about the person who has made peace with it, for whom it has become who they are. But the question remains, why?

Why is it so bad? There are two reasons why. Firstly, when you covet, you are exposing your lack of trust in God.

You see, in many ways, the first and the tenth word are fitting bookends to the ten words. They pull them all together. Think about what the first word says, you shall have no other gods before me.

[24:54] In other words, God is to be first. He is to be the one we look to for our deepest satisfaction, our joy, and our security.

He alone can meet the deepest needs of our hearts. He is enough. Now, think about what the tenth word says, you shall not covet.

In other words, don't ever think, God isn't enough. What he's given me isn't enough. I'll only be happy if I have what that person has.

Do you see how the two are related? One says, let God be enough. enough. The other says, don't let other things make you think God isn't enough.

Because here is what's actually happening when you covet. God, in his wisdom, has given your neighbor a particular house, a marriage, a job, a body, a set of results.

[26:06] And in that same wisdom, he has given you yours. And coveting looks at that arrangement and says, Lord, you've got it wrong.

So it's no longer just about the stick your friend got at the restaurant. It is a complaint lodged against the goodness of God. You have not given me enough.

You have not been fair with me. If you really loved me, my life would look more like the earth. And when I let that complaint settle into my heart, I am letting dissatisfaction take hold.

And when that happens, my focus begins to shift. Instead of looking to God for my satisfaction, I start looking at other things.

I begin to desire them, chase them, and build my happiness around them. And eventually, those things can take God's place in my heart.

[27:18] the thing I'm looking at has become the thing I am trusting to make my life good. Not God. That thing.

And what does the Bible call that? You heard it earlier in Ephesians 5 verse 5. Idolatry. When you covet, you are really exposing your lack of trust in God.

Then secondly, when you covet, you are exposing your lack of love for neighbor. You see, what starts in the heart never stays in the heart.

What's in your heart will eventually come out. It'll come out through your hands, it'll come out through your mouth, it'll come out through your life. Given enough time, it eventually will come out. And when sin comes out, it always ends in a bad way. That's what James 1 verse 14 to 15 is all about.

[28:35] James says, each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and entice. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death. And there is no more vivid example of that than King David.

You might remember the story. It is springtime in Israel, the time when the kings go off to war, but David stays home in Jerusalem.

One evening, he gets up from his bed and he walks around the palace roof. And from there, he sees a woman bathing. She is very beautiful.

And David doesn't look away. He discovers she's the wife of Uriah, one of his elite soldiers. and he covets his neighbor's wife.

[29:46] And notice what happens next. What follows is like watching dominoes fall. From coveting her, he sleeps with her.

He commits adultery. And because she falls pregnant, David tries to cover it up. He lies and schemes and bears false witness, ensuring that Uriah will die on the front line.

He commits murder. And when the prophet Nathan confronts him, he tells David a story about a rich man with huge flocks who take a poor man's one little lamb.

In other words, he describes it as theft. Because that's exactly what it was. So count them up.

Adultery, deceit, theft, murder.

When David broke the tenth word, the dam broke. He ended up breaking way more than that. He ended up breaking command after command about loving his neighbor.

[31:03] David shows us what coveting looks like when it runs unchecked. It poisons the way we treat our neighbor. Think about it.

If you covered your friend's house or holiday photos, listen to how you talk about him afterwards. I wonder where the money came from.

Yeah. Always living the high life. we don't protect the reputation of the people we resent. Or if you covered your boss's job, see how hard it becomes to honor his authority. Notice how you read his emails in the worst possible light. For coveting, in the end, sees people as competition, as obstacles, even as enemies, rather than as neighbors, as people I am glad for, people to love.

Coveting destroys relationships. So, back to the question we asked at the beginning.

[32 : 23] Coveting doesn't hurt anyone, does it? ask Uriah. Now, this past week, at our Wednesday prayer meeting, one of our brothers was reflecting on this sermon series.

And he said this series had made him better recognize how deep our sin goes. And that also describes Paul's experience when the tenth word finally got true to him.

Do you remember what Paul was like? This is the man who could say, before meeting Jesus, that he was blameless in keeping the law. Go through the list, and he would have ticked every box.

Oh, kept that, kept that, kept that. But looking back, Paul saw something he hadn't seen at that time. There was one commandment he never really kept at all.

Listen to Romans 7 verse 7. What shall we say then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not. Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.

[33 : 41] For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said you shall not covet. And in the very next verse he talks about all the kinds of coveting in his heart.

You see, in the end, what does the tenth word show us? It shows us that the law of God is like an x-ray revealing what's under the surface.

And what it reveals is that our desires are ultimately bent in the wrong direction. It showed Paul and us our covetous heart.

But the horrible thing is it couldn't cure it. An x-ray can show you the tumor. It can't take it out. So what are we to do?

This brings us to the third thing we can do today. Soak in the secret. Soak in the secret. You see, in the end, what is the opposite of coveting?

[34 : 54] It's contentment, isn't it? It is a contented heart that makes us glad in God and glad for people.

That's why in 1 Timothy 6 verse 6, Paul writes, godliness with contentment is great gain. one pastor used a great analogy to bring this idea out, so I'm going to borrow it from him.

He says, you know that feeling when you've just eaten exactly the right amount? So, you're not so full that you are feeling bloated, but you're not hungry either.

You're completely satisfied. So, if someone offered you dessert, you might say, sure, I'll have a little. But if no dessert was offered, your spirits wouldn't be dampened one single bit.

You are in that happy place. Now, imagine if that's how you feel in your soul about everything.

That's how you feel about the house you currently live in, the job you currently have, your present relationship status, if God blessed you just a little more in those areas, you would be thankful.

[36 : 21] But even if not, you would be thankful just the same. Is that not truly great, great gain?

Is that not something you would really, really desire? but just how do we get to that happy place?

Most of us think we already know. It's no secret at all. Surely it's when we get into that school, or we succeed at that task, or we have that experience, once I have that, I'll be in the happy place.

That's what we believe. otherwise, why would we chase that thing, whatever that is? But now, listen to that same man, the one the ten word exposed earlier, talk about contentment years later, as he writes from prison.

Philippians 4, verse 11, and 12. I'm not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances, I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.

[37 : 46] I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Now, did you notice what Paul calls it? A secret. Now, that's surprising because that means contentment isn't found where most people expect to find it.

Indeed, he says it holds whether he's in plenty or in want. That should make us stop and think because our kind of contentment fails on both counts.

It fails when we are in want. After all, if our contentment depends on having something, whatever that might be, then it automatically disappears the moment we don't have it or we lose it.

But it also fails when we have plenty because how often does anyone who got what they wanted stay happy? But Paul is content whether he has everything or nothing.

[39:01] that means his contentment can't be coming from what he has. It has to come from something that never changes whether his hands are full or empty.

So what is his secret? Let's find out. Verse 13. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. So here is our answer. Ultimately this secret isn't a method or a strategy. It's a person.

Paul can be content because he knows Christ. For in Christ God has offered his whole heart to you. In Christ you can have God himself. You can have the father who loved you so much he did not even spare his own son for your sake.

[40:08] You can have the son who opened his hands and gave up what was his all the way down to the cross so that people like us could be brought home.

You can have the spirit who endures that you are sealed! and secure! and guarantees you a delightful inheritance you can enjoy for eternity. My brothers and sisters, do you realize what that means?

If you have Christ, even if you have nothing, you have everything! You see, whenever we covered what is on our neighbor's plate, or our neighbor's household, or our neighbor's life, we are like a person who fights over the crumbs!

under the table, while the host is offering a full feast at the head of the table. But when we find our contentment in Christ, we are like someone who knows their place is set at the table, their portion is reserved, and everything else is just leftovers.

so my friends, soak in the secret of contentment, Christ himself.

[41:33] Soak in the welcome of the one who does not grow tired of receiving you, even when you've messed up again. Soak in the patience of the one who continues to stick with you, even though you are so slow to change.

Soak in his grace, his mercy, his kindness to you, even when your life isn't all together. Let him satisfy you.

You see, you don't have to manufacture contentment by telling yourself you need less. You learn contentment by discovering you have Christ.

But let's be honest about where we stand. The Puritan pastor Thomas Watson once gave his congregation a set of questions to test whether covetousness had taken hold of them.

Let me adapt a few for us. Where do your thoughts drift when your mind is free? On the drive home lying awake at night, what do you find yourself turning over?

[42:54] What do you talk about most? What comes up again and again when you are with friends? Indeed, what do you frequently grumble about?

What have you been willing to give up to get what you want? Sunday worship? Time in prayer? your family's evenings?

Your honesty? How do you feel when someone else gets good news? Can you rejoice with those who rejoice?

Or does something in you go quiet? it? If you find one or two of those questions provocative this morning, take heed.

Don't be complacent. Remember, covetousness is to have no place amongst God's people. But don't lose heart either.

[44:00] Every time you've coveted, Christ has already paid for it. He's the only one who ever kept the tenth word perfectly, and his record is now yours.

And did you notice, twice in Philippians 4 verse 11 and 12, Paul says he learned this? It's something we can grow into over time as we lean into God's grace.

So if we are struggling with covetousness this morning, which I assume is all of us, there is hope. Contentment can be learned.

So how do we learn it? Let me briefly give you three ways to cultivate contentment. firstly, give thanks and be specific about it.

Think much of what Christ has won for you. Jeremy's sermon next week might help you in that regard. Count what God has given you rather than what other people have.

[45:18] Second, pray for the person you envy. Remember how Jesus treated you when you were his enemy. And then ask God to bless his house, their marriage, their promotion.

Third, ask God every morning that he may help you keep soaking in Christ. Pray Psalm 90 verse 14 regularly.

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Maybe that's what I should pray for the next few months myself.

So my brothers and sisters, I hope and pray that God has been speaking to you in the last few months or so. If you were paying attention, I am 100% certain there have been some uncomfortable moments.

Moments when God asks some searching questions of you. 10 words. But I also hope and pray that this series has deepened your appreciation of Jesus and caused you to thank him so much more.

[46:43] It is only because of Christ and Christ alone that the law does not condemn us. And I hope and pray we will continue to live by these 10 words, not merely as a duty, but as our delight.

Because now we want to obey from the heart and love God and love neighbor. And when we do that, we bless the world and we point them to the Christ who satisfies.

So let me sign off for the year. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let's pray. Father, I trust that you have spoken by your spirit through your word.

And I pray that as we ponder both today's word and the 10 words as a whole, you will continue to do your work in us. Please shine your light in the areas of our hearts which we know still need cleaning up in that sense, that still need to be molded to be more and more like your character.

[48:09] But help us also to be thankful Lord that indeed because of Christ our old self has been taken off and our new self has been given to us.

so help us to live what we are now in Christ and help us to live by your wisdom, by your direction, that we might truly love you and love our neighbor.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.