

# 29 WANTING WHAT GOD WANTS

One day King David took a walk on the palace roof. From there he could see a beautiful woman bathing. And he wanted her.

He found out that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. He sent for her, and when she came to the palace he took her to bed with him. Then she went home.

A few months later she sent a message to David telling him that she was pregnant.

Now her husband Uriah was a soldier, away on duty. So David brought Uriah home on leave. David thought that if Uriah and Bathsheba slept together, Uriah would think the baby was his.

But Uriah wouldn't sleep with Bathsheba. (During war, soldiers were expected to refrain from intercourse). The next night David got him drunk and tried to send him home to Bathsheba. Again he refused.

David was desperate to cover up his affair with Bathsheba. So he sent a message to his general to make sure Uriah was killed in battle.

After Uriah's death, David took Bathsheba into the palace. She became his wife and soon gave birth to a son. David had managed to get out of a really delicate situation. And he finally had the woman he wanted so badly!

"But," the Bible tells us, "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27).

## 3 STATEMENTS

- If you want what you cannot have, you will never be happy.
- The only thing that can make you truly happy is a loving relationship with God.
- Joy is wanting what God wants.

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*Source*

## WANTING

Before David was through, he had sinned more than once. He misused his kingly power. He committed adultery.

He tempted Uriah to break military orders. And finally he murdered Uriah. All this he did because he had *coveted*.

Both the Ninth and Tenth Commandments talk about coveting: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house" and "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his cattle, or anything that is your neighbor's."

To covet means to wish for something enviously—to want or desire something very much.

Now there's nothing necessarily wrong with wanting something. You might want to get good grades in school. You might want to be more loving at home. You might want something to eat.

So when is it wrong to want? Remember Jesus said the two great commandments were love God and love your neighbor. If wanting is the loving thing to do, it's okay. If it is not loving, it is a sin.

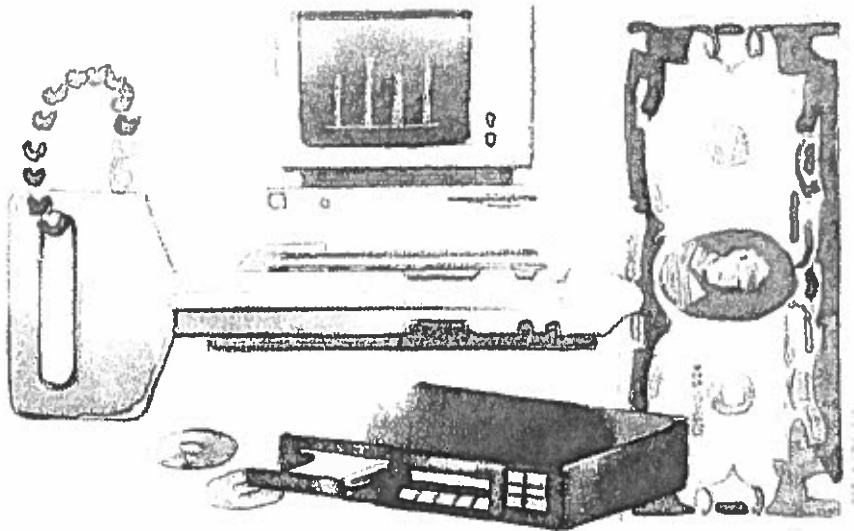
Take another look at David. He *wanted* Bathsheba. His desire was not loving, because she was married and his coveting would only lead to hurt. That's just how it went with David. He started out coveting, and before he knew it, he was in way over his head with sin. Rather than owning up to his sin, he tried to cover it up. And that meant death to Uriah.

You see if God didn't "keep us in line" with this Commandment, nobody would be safe. People would be wanting all kinds of things and scheming to get them. You couldn't trust anyone.

As always, God wants to protect relationships. First of all, God wants to protect your relationships with your neighbor.

The minute you start loving your neighbor's video collection more than your neighbor, look out. Sooner or later your neighbor will realize that you are using him or her to get at something you want. And your neighbor will be hurt.

Or you might want something of your neighbor's so badly that you will stop at nothing to get it. Now your



neighbor will really get hurt. When your wanting becomes actual getting, you will be breaking all kinds of Commandments. And eventually, you will be hurt too.

Second, God wants to protect you. Of course the Ninth and Tenth Commandments apply to your neighbor, and when they live by them you will be safe. In that way God protects you.

But there is more. God does not want you to be hurt by your own wants. *If you want what you cannot have, you will never be happy.* Even if you don't actually try to get what is not yours, the very wanting will leave you empty. It becomes a hunger that cannot be satisfied. Wanting what you can't have is dreaming a lie. You will be hurt.

Third, God wants to protect your relationship with God.

When you start to want something you can't have, it becomes the passion of your life. It takes the place of God. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

"Okay, so I'm not supposed to want the things I can't have. What about the things I can have?" When you feel that you can never get enough, that too is dangerous. If things are what you treasure, then things will be your love. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

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***The only thing that can make you truly happy is a loving relationship with God.***

Unless God is the main love in your life, you will never be happy. We all have a God-sized hole in our hearts that only God can fill. People throw all kinds of things into that hole to try to fill it up. They pursue happiness in drugs, sex, money, success, popularity, but nothing quite does the trick. *The only thing that can make you truly happy is a loving relationship with God.* God loves you and wants to have a relationship with you.

## WHAT GOD WANTS

Just as there is an Introduction to the Commandments ("I am the Lord your God"), there is a Conclusion. Read it on pages 175-176. Two kinds of people are mentioned in the conclusion: those who hate God and those who love God. There is nothing new here. It tells us again what right and wrong are all about: *love* and *hate*. Those are relationship words. God wants us to have a loving relationship with God. Hate violently breaks that relationship.

"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." *Jealous* is another relationship term. Jealousy is a negative emotion, an emotion that comes out of insecurity and fear. *Love*, the Bible tells us, "is never jealous" (1 Corinthians 13:4). So what does *jealous* mean here? God certainly isn't like an insecure fearful character in a romance novel!

When God says "I am a jealous God," that means God's feelings are intense. God does not love you with a half-hearted love. God's love for you is all-consuming.

And it means that God is not interested in a feeble, halfhearted response. God wants you to love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, soul, strength, and mind. God wants to be the driving love of your life.

That may sound selfish on God's part, but it isn't. When we love God with our whole heart, it does not exclude other loves. It *includes* them. That's why the Bible says you cannot say you love God and hate your brother or sister. If you are really in a loving relationship with God, the love overflows to all those around you, creating relationships with them as well. In this way, God establishes human community. That's what God wants for you.

You might be thinking, "But I'll never make it; I mean those Commandments ask too much!" The Commandments themselves are gifts of love! They are God's way of reminding you when you are dangerously separating yourself from the God who loves you. They are God's way of saying, "Repent." They are God's way of saying, "Turn around. Come back home. I love you!"

## BY STREAMS OF WATER

Some people are frightened by God's laws. They are so afraid of doing the wrong thing that the laws drive them to despair.

Well the law is intended to drive us, all right, but not to despair. When we sin, God's law drives us to the cross and the forgiveness that Jesus offers. The law of God keeps us coming back for forgiveness. The law of God keeps

us returning to relationship! And there is more.

The law of God is also there as a guide to a joyful life with God. It is the ticket to freedom and joy. God's Commandments show us what God wants. *Joy is wanting what God wants.*

## I THINK

There was once a woman who spent a lot of money on her clothes, her makeup, and her hair. She spent hours and hours making sure she looked stunning. As she got older, she found she was spending more time and more money than ever before trying to look young and pretty.

Appearances are important, but if they become the center of our life they become more important than God. Do you have any "wants" that are so important to you that God sometimes gets put in second or third place?

Have you ever wanted something that belonged to someone else? How did it affect your relationship?

Have you ever been aware of someone who wanted something that *you* had? Did it put a strain on your relationship? What did you do?

## Shaping life

### CONTENTMENT

A farmer was always looking for new ways to expand his operation. He always wanted a better crop, a bigger yield, a newer tractor, and another few acres. His neighbors praised him for working so hard.

But soon he didn't have time to even look at his neighbors. But he did have time to look at their land. "If I could get that neighbor's farm," he'd think, "I could really put in a crop next year."

He was never content.

He had to have more and more. By the time he was in his 40s he was rich. But he kept on wanting more.



SAMUEL SAYLOR

One year he had so much success he didn't have enough storage space for his crops. So he decided to tear down his barns and build bigger ones.

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God" (Luke 12:20-21).

It is so easy to get caught up in the vicious cycle of always wanting more and more. Contentment is God's way of breaking that vicious cycle. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10 and answer the following questions. Circle "T" for true or "F" for false.

1. T F It is a good thing to be content with what you have. Why did you answer that way?

2. T F If you have food and clothing, you really don't need any more. Why did you answer that way?

3. T F Wanting to be rich is a safe thing to do. Why did you answer that way?

4. T F Money is the root of all evil. Why did you answer that way?

5. T F The craving for money has made many people wander away from faith in God. Why did you answer that way?

*Joy is wanting what God wants.*

## FURTHER

# opportunities

### *Bible Reading*

Read Matthew 6:19-33. How dependable are possessions? Who alone will not disappoint us? What should we seek before anything else? What will happen if we do that?

### *Memory*

Memorize the Ninth and Tenth Commandments and their meanings. Also, memorize the section "What Does God Say of All These Commandments?" and its meaning. As an additional challenge, memorize one or more of the following: Psalm 1; Matthew 6:19-21; Matthew 6:31-33; Matthew 22:37-40.

### *Activity 1*

Make a list of the things you "want." Go back over the list and de-

termine which "wants" are good and which are bad. Remember, as you make your decisions of "good" or "bad," use the yardstick of love.

### *Activity 2*

During the next few days, keep paper and a pencil by the TV. As you watch, write down how advertisers try to get you to want more and more. Make special note of the times when they try to convince you that you need their product. Record any particularly effective techniques or slogans. Report back to the class about what you found.

### *Activity 3*

In the Lord's Prayer we pray, "Your will be done." We are praying that what will be done in our lives is what *God* wants. Write about how that part of the Lord's Prayer is an answer to the Ninth and Tenth Commandments.

## FOCUS



### ON SHARING RESOURCES

When people covet, those affected most are the people to whom we are the closest. But others can be hurt, too, especially people who are struggling to survive. Money we spend for excess food and more and better things could be spent helping people who have a real

need. And by consuming just our share of the world's resources, others can have their share too. For example:

- Although many people in the world do not have enough to eat, abundance, not scarcity, describes the world's food supply. Redistribution of a country's food supply could in some cases wipe out hunger in that country.

- Sometimes we give others gifts they do not need. Instead of giving a gift directly, perhaps give a *double* gift.

Make a gift to a church or charitable organization instead of an unnecessary gift. It's a double gift because it is one to the church or charity, and it is a gift to the other person who shares a concern for a better world.