



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading
Week of
May 15th - 21st



Monday

- ❖ 1 Samuel 29, 30
- ❖ Psalm 96
- ❖ Acts 7

Tuesday

- ❖ 1 Samuel 31
- ❖ Psalm 97
- ❖ Acts 8

Wednesday

- ❖ 2 Samuel 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 98
- ❖ Acts 9

Thursday

- ❖ 2 Samuel 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 99
- ❖ Acts 10

Friday

- ❖ 2 Samuel 5, 6
- ❖ Psalm 100
- ❖ Acts 11

Saturday

- ❖ 2 Samuel 7, 8

Sunday

- ❖ 2 Samuel 9, 10

The Battle over a New Couch

When Wanting is Coveting

By Pastor Powers

We need to learn how to judge our own hearts as well as how to speak to our hearts if we are going to be free from the soul-damning sin of covetousness.

The writer of Hebrews has given the exhortation, "Keep your life free from love of money" (Hebrews 13:5). These words match Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke 12:15, "Be on guard against all forms of covetousness." We might well define covetousness as an inordinate affection for this world's goods. Our concern here is with the *inordinate affection*. When is *wanting* a thing *coveting* a thing? The answer is when the wanting of the thing has formed an inordinate affection in my heart. So what makes wanting a thing an inordinate affection?

My wife and I battled with this question for months about a year and a half ago when we went to purchase new living room furniture. The simple fact was that we wanted new

furniture. But were we coveting? Before you go any further, let me rescue you from two wrong paths: (1) it does not do our souls much good to blow these questions off as minor or incidental. Instead, blowing them off numbs our hearts to some very necessary and painful questioning; (2) nor do we do our souls any justice by simply making purchases a matter of financial accountability or budgeting. The answer as to whether or not we should buy a new couch had nothing to do with whether or not we had the money. We did have the money. We could afford it. We could pay cash. We didn't need to go into debt. But were we coveting? The answer to this question rests squarely and plainly in one place - the heart!

Cleaning Up the Dictionary

First, let us clarify some word meanings. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to speak in terms of *need* when we are addressing a

want? Desire is so often at the heart of all things. To desire is human. If you ever stop desiring, it means you are dead! Nowhere does the Bible condemn us for desiring. Instead, the Bible speaks of *what* we desire, *when* we are to desire and *how* we desire. My concern here is not with the "what" of desire. I assume an audience that is keenly aware of wanting the wrong things. It is not wrong to want a couch because a couch is not inherently evil. So, I am going to focus on the *when* and *how* of desire. You and I can desire a good thing, an innocent thing, and a noble thing in the wrong way and at the wrong time.

Normal and healthy desires can take control of the heart. At that moment an inordinate affection has formed. Why? The key word is *control*. We serve what we worship and what we worship masters us. It is possible to let normal and healthy desires morph

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into little gods that turn our hearts into idol factories. The problem comes when a *want* morphs into a *need*!

There is nothing wrong with the expression of "I want." All things were made by God for our enjoyment when they are received with thanksgiving (1 Tim. 4:4-5). In fact, everything in the universe can be used as a means to enjoying God. That's why God created. He wanted his glory to fill the earth. We have desire in us by design so that we might desire God and enjoy him in the fullness and the goodness of his creation. But the worship wagon comes to a screeching halt the moment we worship the created thing and not the Creator himself.

The moment something we desire is seen to the eyes of our heart as *something essential to our existence*; we have morphed into idolatry. The moment I become convinced that I cannot live without the desire fulfilled, I have crossed the line into an inordinate affection with this world's goods. We find ourselves no longer speaking in terms of "I want" but in terms of "I need."

Oh, how easily we believe the lie of things - "You need me for your existence! You need me for your security! You need me for your contentment! You need me for your happiness!" These are absolute lies!

STOP! PINCH YOURSELF! WAKE-UP! Make sure you are prepared for the next few words. *The only thing humans need for their existence is GOD!* Even if you go without food and water for 50 days and die, you do not cease to exist. There is still God! You don't even *need* food and water to exist - to be happy - to be secure -

to be content! So what makes you think you need a new couch? (Put whatever it is you want / "need" in the place of *couch*).

Identity, Meaning and Purpose

When we start to believe the lie of things our identity gets hi-jacked; our sense of meaning gets redefined; our purpose as creatures gets re-aligned. We start to see ourselves as defined by our unmet desire. "If only I had x,y,z then I could be happy." Why do we want the things we want? How badly do we want the things we want? As soon as we begin to tighten our fists around the things we want, we morph into all kinds of evil actions.

Do the things you desire form the basis for your identity? Will you be thought of as lesser if you did not have x,y,z? Will you be accepted by a desirable crowd if you have x,y,z? Will people look to you as having arrived if you have x,y,z? These are all forms of identity. Listen, is it true, "You are what you wear? You are what you drive? You are where you live? You are what you sit on?" Jesus said, "A man's life does not consist in the things he possesses (Luke 12:15). The Apostle Paul would suggest a man's life consists instead, on who possesses him. "I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20a). Our identity is to be found in Christ alone!

Do the things you want re-define your sense of meaning? What does it mean for me to be a man? If I believe that unless I own a navy blue Ford F-350 (I don't even like Fords; but it is appropriate in following up last week's illustration) my manhood is at risk, then my sense of meaning has been re-defined. Being a man does not

mean owning a truck. Meaning can morph for young adults who find themselves still single: "Unless I get a husband, I cannot fulfill my desires as a woman." Do you see the subtle redefinition? Meaning as a female is re-defined as being a wife. That is simply not true! What does it mean for you to be you - whether you are male or female, young or old, single or married, with children or without, employed or employing, rich or poor?

Do the things you want re-align your sense of purpose? Why do you exist on the planet? For what purpose has God brought you forth? This is entirely simple but not simplistic. You exist to glorify God by enjoying him forever. If you have any other purpose than the glory of God, your desires are wrongly aligned. In what way do the things you want enhance your worship of God? Does the boat enhance your worship or has it become an entitlement? Must you spend our days off of work on the golf course? If you say, "I must!" then you, sir, are an idolater! Does having the new living room furniture enhance your image in the community with those who will enter your home? Will they think more of God because of this couch? Will this couch become a tool God can use for furthering his glory? How about this new house? Is it promoting the glory of God or simply boosting my status?

You see, if you can clearly articulate how wanting a thing enhances your identity, meaning and purpose under God; if you can receive the thing you want with thanksgiving as you take it into possession as a means to enjoying more and more of God, then by all means, enjoy God in enjoying his good gifts.

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Listen to Paul the Apostle: "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:4-5). Do you see those words, "for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer"? Whatever else these words may mean; I think they at least mean this much: when we receive God's good gifts into our possession, we do so with thanksgiving and with a desire to set them apart as means to a greater goal, namely, the glorification of God. When we sit down to food we commonly say in our prayer, "Use this meal to strengthen our bodies for your service." That is a fitting and proper use of the words. That's what food is - a means to an end. I will say that anything in the world - in so far as it is not inherently evil - can be used in this way as well.

Oh, but be on guard against covetousness because your heart and mine is deceitful and wicked, hard to discern. We need to learn how to listen to our hearts, how to judge our hearts and how to speak to our hearts if we are going to fight the fight of faith that puts to death covetousness.

(Now, in all honesty, this article covers only one of the two prongs for fighting covetousness. There is another one - giving it away. When should I forgo the purchase of the new couch, the boat, the car, the meal, etc. because there is such a higher use for that money? When should my purchase become a sacrifice of what might be otherwise acceptable but necessary for kingdom advancement? We will take this up next).

Corporate Arsenal Passages

God is Faithful to All His Promises

Promise 8: Promise to hear prayers

Psalm 34:15



The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry.

Isaiah 65:24

Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.