

Sunday 7/11/04

“Lord, Change My Attitude (Before It’s Too Late)” – Week 4

Saved as mdutton\adult bible fellowship\Lord, Change My Attitude\04 Lesson Chp 3 Covetous

Introduction:

1. We’re continuing our series: **Lord, Change My Attitude** – by James MacDonald – the book is available in the MRC (great read and it’s very direct and challenging!)
2. We’re taking these subjects in a ‘put off’ and ‘put on’ format – e.g. complaining needs to be replace with _____ (thankfulness – which is what we studied last week)
 - it’s not enough to stop a bad habit – we need to REPLACE that habit with godly living (Eph. 4:22-24)
3. We made several observations about thankfulness from Luke 17:12-16 (review)
 - A. Not many people are good at being thankful!
 - B. Christ notices those who are grateful and those who are not.
 - C. A thankful heart can give glory to God. (mentioned twice in the text)
 - D. Thankfulness is far more than saying the right words. (it’s an attitude of the heart!)
 - E. Thankfulness is very powerful!

Q: Were you thankful this past week? Do you express it verbally to the Lord . . . to others?
4. This week, we’re moving on to a subject that all of us struggle with at time, but like complaining, are sometimes slow to recognize this problem – the ATTITUDE of COVETOUSNESS!
 - * Open your bibles to Numbers 11 – read the verses later
 - This problem, as other sins, goes all the way back to Gen. 3 and Adam wanting something more than he wanted to please God by keeping the one commandment!
 - So man went from 1 commandment to Ten Commandments – one of which is . . .
 - **Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

Input: What makes covetousness different from complaining, and why is covetousness harder to detect than that attitude of complaining?

 - *Complaining* – griping (usually verbal, but not always) about your circumstances/situations
 - *Covetousness* – desiring a specific object/situation and making that more important than pleasing God
5. If you could say it in a sentence:
 - **Covetousness is wanting God to replace Himself with something we consider more important.**
 - in many ways, covetousness (as is the case with all sin) is really a form of idolatry!

Quote: *“Our nation is drowning in a sea of covetousness. We are far more infected with materialism than we realize, and some of the worst victims are the ones who think they’re living in victory.”* – p. 66

Input: In what ways is James right about this observation?

[the amount of indebtedness (which is not wrong in and of itself – I’m talking about indebtedness beyond one’s reasonable ability to pay it back) – matched with the # of bankruptcies filed annually!]

Let’s consider . . .

I. What Covetousness is

A. Covetousness is wanting wrong things.

Note: Ex. 20:17 – your neighbors house spouse . . . servant . . . animal or anything that is your neighbors

Point: There’s nothing wrong with wanting to have a spouse – but not your neighbors (even if that spouse is better than yours)

Input: What are some examples of wrong things (or situations) we tend to covet?

[various answers]

B. Covetousness is wanting right things for wrong reasons.

Point: These are not wrong in and of themselves, but you want them for the wrong reasons

Example:

Right Things	Wrong Reasons
Higher Job Position	
Spouse	
Higher Pay	
Things – cars, recreational vehicles	

C. Covetousness is wanting right things at the wrong time.

Q: *What would be another word to describe this attitude? (impatience)*

- many times our impatience for what we want is nothing less than covetousness!
- What if God wants you to wait to get what you’ve asked for – and remember where impatience & ingratitude can get you . . .
- > . . . with meat coming out your nose!!

D. Covetousness is wanting right things but wanting them in the wrong amount.

- in other words, wanting MORE than what God thinks you really need
- you may be asking: How do you know when enough is enough?
- the issue is not really what you have, it's what you DO with what you have

Input: Complete this sentence: Enough is enough when _____.

[various answers: when God is glorified, when God withholds and gives you what He thinks is enough, when you begin to violate biblical principles in order to get more]

- Let's think about what covetousness looks like:

II. The Practice of Covetousness

- Numbers 11:4-35 is somewhat like a drama in 3 short acts
- In between the scenes, there are brief changes in the subject, like intermissions, then the action returns to the main story line.

Act I: Yielding to Covetousness and Why God Hates It

1. Covetousness becomes sin when we yield.

- **Numbers 11:4** The rabble [mixed multitude] who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"

'rabble' – yielded to intense craving (lit. craved a craving)

Point: They started looking for something else to make them happy.

- It is practically impossible not to desire things, experiences, and situations
 - > God has made us worship beings . . . with a will to choose who/what we worship
 - > obviously the curse of sin has a significant impact on our worship ability and desires
- People are always asking the questions, "*When is it sin? When does a covetous thought or desire become a sin?*"

* 2 Questions to ask yourself:

1) How do you respond when you don't get it?

2) Are you willing to sin in order to get it?

- * Lesson: Wanting something is not inherently sinful – unless what you want is forbidden – it's when you want it *more than* God wants you to have it.
- There are a couple of verses in the NT that address this issue of desire (esp. wrong ones)
 - **Galatians 5:16-17** But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.
 - **Romans 8:5** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

2. When we dwell on desire, yielding is only a matter of time!

- **Numbers 11:4-5 ...“Who will give us meat to eat? “We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic.”**

Q: *Do you remember the slavery? Inability to worship your God freely?*

Q: *Do you remember the 10 plagues? Red Sea? Bodies of Pharaoh’s army washing up on the shore?*

* **Covetousness inflates the desire while it ignores the danger.**

- cf. Great passage that explains this process: James 1:13-18

3. **At the root of covetousness is a rejection of God’s sufficiency.**

“In effect, they were slapping God’s face by saying; ‘It’s not enough, God. Nice try, but it’s not enough. I have needs, and You’re not taking care of them. You promised to be all I need, but You’re just not meeting my expectations.’” – p. 73

- Our problem is not that we don’t want God, it’s that we covet God and _____(?)

Examples:

- God *and* the perfect spouse.
- God *and* an impressive career.
- God *and* the house by the lake.
- God *and* the exotic vacation / big bonus / whatever catches our fancy next.

Point: The hard truth is that at the root of my covetous attitude I am rejecting the sufficiency of God in my life.

Act II: A Gift From God You Don’t Want (Numbers 11:16-20)

- Read Numbers 11:16-20
- This event was so significant that several hundred years later the Holy Spirit inspired the Psalmist to write: Psalm 106:15 “He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.”

Q: *I wonder what thing in your life might parallel the meat the children of Israel had to have.*

“Nothing is essential but God. Things were never designed to take God’s place. When we covet something and make it essential—and then beg God to give it to us—we are asking God to replace Himself with something we consider more important. When we do this, God will often allow us to experience firsthand the consequences of substituting anything for Him. Maybe as you read this book you are hurting over the poor health of your own soul. Maybe God is bringing to mind even now something that you have substituted for Him—a relationship or a financial goal, or a specific material dream about your future for which you have been suspending your happiness. Covetousness is such a cruel enemy. It promises prosperity and brings only painful poverty of spirit.”
– p. 74-75

* **Lesson: Covetousness can lead to hating the very thing you so strongly desired!**

Examples?

- Careers of men and women climbing the corporate ladder – to neglect of spiritual responsibilities and neglect of the family
- The single adult who *had* to get married – but then reality of character set in!
- The unhappy husband or wife consumed with their spouse's shortcomings – and eventually gets a divorce and sees how hard that is to live with
- Wanting children and begging God for children to the point of demanding – then the child doesn't turn out the way you want them to

Point: Covetousness will take you to the place in life where you hate the very thing that you had to have.

Act III The Consequences of Covetousness

- Read Numbers 11:31-33
- * **Covetousness destroys the capacity to discern sufficiency!**
“Now I’m not saying that money or possessions equal sin. I am not saying that the most covetous person is the wealthiest person. There is no direct correlation between wealth and covetousness. The most covetous person you know may also be the one with the least. There is no direct connection between what you have and what you desire. It has everything to do with your attitude.” – p. 79
- * **Covetousness cannot avoid the Law of the Harvest! (what you sow, you reap!)**
 Notice v. 33: *“While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very severe plague”*
- **1 Timothy 6:9** But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.
- **1 Timothy 6:17-18** Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. **18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,**

Conclusion:

- As we look at these soul-searching questions, we can begin to put in place some solution steps.

1. *Am I a covetous person?*
2. *Am I reaping the consequences of covetousness in my relationship with God?*
3. *Am I willing to repent?*

ABF Study Guide
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II. The Practice of Covetousness

Act I: Yielding to Covetousness and Why God Hates It

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- 1) How do you _____ when you don't get it?
- 2) Are you _____ in order to get it?

2. When we dwell on desire, _____ is only a matter of time!

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