

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 79. *Which is the tenth commandment?*

A. The tenth commandment is, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.*

Q. 80. *What is required in the tenth commandment?*

A. The tenth commandment requires full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.

Q. 81. *What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?*

A. The tenth commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his.

I remember as a young child thinking that the word "covet" didn't apply to me. It's an unusual word that we did not use in our normal language. Later, a Sunday school teacher explained that this commandment addresses jealousy. Don't be jealous of what others have. That's not a bad explanation. The weight of the Tenth Commandment had yet to dawn on me.

Once again, the apostle Paul helps us understand this command in his letter to the Ephesians (we have looked to Ephesians for insight into the eighth and ninth commands). Paul writes in 5:5, "For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, of who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." Sexually immorality easily is on the list of the "most heinous" sins for many Christians. But covetousness? How does jealousy get lumped in with sexually immorality?

Paul explains, which the ESV puts into a parenthetical thought, that covetousness is the same as idolatry (cf. Col. 3:5). A definition of covetousness helps explain this: Covetousness is the longing for someone or something, believing he/she/it will complete you or bring happiness. A test for this is the fill in the blank question: "If only I had _____, I would finally be happy." Kevin DeYoung says, "For most of us, the blank is our functional god. That's the person, place, or thing we think we can't live without."

Desires and longings are not necessarily evil or covetousness in and of themselves. Our desires and longings become covetousness when we are discontent with what God has provided for us, when we believe that we need _____ to be happy.

Philippians 4:13 is the antidote to coveting (no, it is not the secret to winning championships or getting an "A" on a test). In this verse Paul is expressing that he has found contentment in Christ so that he can endure, with joy, any circumstances in which he finds himself. Let's guard our hearts from the idolatry of covetousness by being satisfied with all God has for us in Christ.