

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Ninth Commandment is “Do not covet your neighbor’s house or his wife.” Another way to say this is, “Do not covet another person’s happiness or spouse.” Put simply, covetousness is to say, “I want that!” The positive statement of this commandment is, “Be content with your own relationships and your own happiness.”

The real desire of our heart is for God. As St. Augustine said, “He made us for Himself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Him.” Therefore, covetousness is any desire that is for something other than God.

We are commanded not to covet another person sexually because the yearning desire for that which will not satisfy (that is, anything other than God) will not make us happy. Covetousness leads to a never ending cycle of desire. We want more, more, more and we are never happy.

To covet is to desire other things so much that we would do anything to get them. We would live our whole lives for those other things. Therefore, to indulge in constant lust is to commit idolatry, for idolatry is the love of a false god and a false good.

It is easy to excuse ourselves for being covetous. A man is more likely to lust after a woman sexually. A woman is more likely to lust after what she perceives to be a better or happier relationship. We think it is not so bad really to lust. We say it’s only natural, but to covet is to want something else to such an extent that we live for them, instead of living for God. And this is the worst kind of sin because we are excluding God from our lives and choosing something other than Him to live for.

We are called to inner purity and chastity. This is why lust is so destructive, because we are indulging in a love that will not ultimately satisfy, and this longing and this lust keeps us from finding the purity that transforms our lives and draws us closer to God.

We are all called to inner purity and to a love that is higher than all our fleshly and materialistic pleasures. To pursue this greater love and to be content and at peace with God is the work of a lifetime.

We develop this kind of life by gradually weeding out the lustful desires that enslave us. The way this is done is through a life of sacrifice and self denial. By handing over those things we idolize we gain mastery over them and direct our love towards God who is the origin and destiny of all our loves.

Your Pastor,  
Fr. Longenecker