

Cast Down This Thought Before It Gives Birth to Deadly Sin

Note: This is the second of a two-part series. Part 1

Coveting begins with a thought, so the thought life must be kept under control. If a covetous thought is entertained, it can blossom into imaginations of what it would be like to possess the object in question. As these imaginations capture the affections of the heart, lust is conceived and the individual rationalizes actions that he or she would never do under normal circumstances.

These deceptions (vain imaginations) usually take the form of thoughts, such as *I'll never truly be happy unless I can have a certain person's wife, husband, job or property. Or, ... unless I can do this or become that.*

These types of thoughts are maneuverings of the conscience that will lead a person to steal what belongs to another. These lusts are insatiable and, ironically, once the object of the lust is obtained, there is no joy in the possession, only sorrow and heartbreak. The only thing that gives satisfaction to a longing of our hearts is when we honor God and His ways and care for people. Much pain and suffering will be avoided if we will rely on the Lord and take control of these vain imaginations before they lead to covetousness, then to lust, then to a place of license and then to stealing that which belongs to another.

The apostle Paul taught about bringing thoughts into conformity with the truth of God's Word. He urged the Corinthian church to diligently fight the war to control the thought life by the power of God's Spirit:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but

mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5, KJV).

The longer a covetous thought is pondered, the more entrenched and powerful it becomes. Any imagination, argument or internal conflict that is entertained in the thought life can become a stronghold that can only be pulled down or destroyed by force.

It is vital that we recognize covetous thinking immediately and “cast it down” by believing God’s Word instead of thoughts that are contrary to it. According to the Bible, Christians have the power to resist vain imaginations and bring all thoughts into captivity or conformity to the truth of God. Through prayer and meditation on the Word, we become immersed in the very nature and character of God. As the mind is renewed and washed through God’s truth, a stability takes place that makes it difficult for the lies of the enemy to take hold and lead to sin.

It is renewal of mind and spirit and not the power of the will (the flesh) that causes our thoughts to obey Christ. When a person attempts to resist vain imaginations in the power of the flesh, conflict and stress increase. Only by submitting to God and the leading of the Holy Spirit can the victory ultimately be achieved.

Satan has deceived many sincere believers through their failure to promptly cast down vain imaginations. Once the door to fantasies and speculations has been opened, it becomes difficult to discern what is true versus Satan’s lies.

Oftentimes, those closest to God are targeted by Satan’s attacks. A certain pastor and apostolic leader was used as a peacemaker in a strife-torn region. In a time of great ethnic tension and devastation, the leaders of the Christian

community came to this man and asked him to act as a mediator to end the violence and killing. Because of the high profile of his ministry, he had many enemies who threatened his life and his family. A bodyguard was retained and, even with great personal risk, the leader remained faithful to the call of God on his life.

During this time, his wife began to entertain vain imaginations against her husband. All of a sudden, she thought he wasn't loving enough, or that he was emotionally unavailable, and before long she entered into an adulterous affair with her bodyguard. Satan planted the thoughts in her mind, but she did not bring them captive to the obedience of Christ. When her deception had completed its work, Satan had his man there to make sure that her covetousness was fulfilled. Despite many pleas by her husband for reconciliation, she refused to return to him and the marriage failed.

We can go on with story after story. Husband cheats on wife. Wife cheats on husband. People steal reputations, or they want credibility by association. Each time, covetousness begins with a vain knowledge or desire for something that belongs to someone else. We need to be content. And if we are faithful to what God has called us to do, He will give us an increase of responsibility and stewardship.

We should never covet something that belongs to someone else. Instead, we need to respect them, honor them and rejoice in their blessings instead of bringing them down to our level so we can take from them what we want.

A Perfect 10

The prohibition against coveting is a fitting capstone to God's commandments because it relates closely to all the others. After all, how can you say that you love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength when you are

coveting the possessions of others? How can you say that you love others as yourself when you are scheming to possess what belongs to them?

The late Dr. Edwin Louis Cole defined love as “the desire to give to others at the expense of self.” Lust, he said, desires to get, take or receive at the expense of others. It is never satisfied. It screams, “Me, me, me! I want, I want, I want!” It acquires, but is not fulfilled. It obtains, but is not satiated. There is no appeasing the covetous desires of our hearts except by subduing them through the contentment and peace that come through a relationship with Jesus Christ and a mind that has been renewed to think and act in agreement with God’s Word.

It is not easy, but through the power of the Spirit, the battle against covetousness can be won. If we become aware of areas of covetousness that are attempting to control our life, we must resist them by the mercy and grace of God.

When the Lord reveals to us that we are entertaining vain imaginations, we simply must humble ourselves before Him and say, “Lord, now that You’ve exposed this situation to me, help me to bring these thoughts into obedience to Your truth. Wash my mind through the power of Your holy Word and the presence of Your Spirit that I might subdue every wicked thought and pull down every vain imagination or argument that exalts itself against Your truth. Help me to overcome the desires of the flesh and be obedient to Your will and not my own.”

As we humble ourselves in this manner, God will replace our covetousness for unholy things with a pure desire for the things of God.

(You can also listen to the “10 Commandments and Golden Rule” series on A Word in Season with Doug Stringer and Friends podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network or your favorite podcast app.) {eo}

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