



[Exodus 20:17](#)

(17) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor's."

[Deuteronomy 5:21](#)

(21) 'You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that *is* your neighbor's.'

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Here, "house" is the equivalent of household. [God](#) lists the remaining items so we clearly understand what He means by "house." In [Deuteronomy 5:21](#), "wife"—or"spouse," since a woman can covet too—is moved to first position as the very crown of one's possessions, and "field" is included as the Israelites were soon to settle in the Promised Land.

One Bible commentator said all public crime would cease if this one law was kept. Another said every [sin](#) against one's neighbor springs from the breaking of this commandment, whether of word or deed. Between the two wordings in Exodus and Deuteronomy, a sevenfold guarding of another's interests shows the underlying concept of outgoing concern. In this command we step from the outer world of word and deed into the secret place where all good and evil begins, the heart ([Matthew 15:18-19](#)). This inner man determines a person's destiny.

Like the [ninth commandment](#), which parallels the third, the [tenth commandment](#) parallels the first. Next to the [first commandment](#), the tenth may be the most important of all. Commentator Robert I. Kahn writes:

The first commandment deals with foundations; the last with motivations.

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The first deals with the Rock of ages; the last with the surging tides of desire. The first is an affirmation of the divine source of morality; the last deals with the well-springs of immorality. The first implies that right thought will lead to right action; the last reminds us that wrong ideas will lead to wrong action.

The last commandment is unique among the ten, and its position in last place is surely no accident. While the others concern actions, this one deals with attitudes. The others prohibit external deeds while this one focuses on internal thoughts. Like an x-ray aimed on the mind, it seeks to curb the restless, greedy, avaricious, jealous, and envious fountain of the human heart. It gets my vote as the most difficult to keep, since breaking it is the most widespread of humanity's moral faults.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Tenth Commandment \(1998\)](#)

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