



[Matthew 5:27-28](#)

(27) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, '*You shall not commit adultery.*'

(28) But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

New King James Version

God's Word obviously shows that not every desire is wrong ([Proverbs 4:5-9](#)). It is no [sin](#) to desire knowledge, understanding, and [wisdom](#). [God's law](#) is "more to be desired . . . than much fine gold" ([Psalm 19:10](#)). It is not wrong to desire a godly spouse. Learning is valuable, and desiring godly character is good. Others have good qualities that we might well desire for ourselves.

The word translated "lust" in [Matthew 5:28](#) means "to set one's heart upon." But when the object desired is legitimately beyond the reach of the admirer, when admiration becomes a desire to get, one breaks the commandment. Desire of and by itself is not wrong, but desiring what belongs to another to such a degree that it dominates our thinking and motivates us to take other unlawful actions to possess the object is sin. Such covetousness often suppresses the far more important things of God—and may even cause one to forget them altogether.

When desire builds to the breaking point, people will lie, steal, commit [adultery](#), dishonor parents, and even [murder](#) to have what they lust after. We might also break the [Sabbath](#) and destroy our witness for [God](#) by serving our desires. Truly, Paul was correct in [Colossians 3:5](#): "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is [idolatry](#)." Breaking the [tenth commandment](#) brings us full circle through the commandments and back to the first.

There is nothing wrong, however, in merely wanting something. It is only wrong to want something so badly that we would break every law to get it, be sick with unhappiness without it, or so occupied with it that we push God out of our lives. To desire a better life

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Matthew 5:27-28 (<http://www.theberean.org>) does not break the command; to enter the race to keep up with the Joneses does. To want our children to have it better than we did is natural; it becomes evil only when its purpose distorts the child's values.

To [love](#) pretty things is normal. God loves beauty and has created it. We can appreciate beautiful things, but to desire them to show them off and arouse envy in others is evil. It is not wrong to desire the needs of life and even its luxuries, but a feverish passion for more—and the action it incites—breaches God's law.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

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

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