

## **Micah 2:1–13: The Case Against Judah**

### **Discussion Questions and Topics**

1. The very first verse of chapter 2 finds Micah rebuking leaders in Judah for both *planning* sin and then actually *practicing* sin merely because they have the *power* to sin. Compare Micah 2:1 with Proverbs 3:27 and James 4:17. How do the leaders in Judah differ from these verses?

Do you ever find yourself in a situation similar to the leaders in verse 1—that is, do you ever *plan* to sin? What can you do to replace planning to sin with planning to do what is good and right?

2. In the last session, we mentioned that *idolatry* was the key sin that brought about God’s judgment on both Samaria and Jerusalem (see Micah 1:5–7). In Micah 2, we see this idolatry in more detail in the form of the covetousness of the people in Judah.

What makes covetousness such a terrible sin? How does covetousness (the tenth commandment) differ from the other Ten Commandments? (see Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:1–21).

Read Colossians 3:5, Ephesians 5:5, and James 4:1–2. How do these verses help clarify the nature and danger of covetousness? What do these verses tell us about the relationship between the first two commandments and the tenth commandment. How does that change the way you think about covetousness?

3. In verse 11 Micah notes that the people he is preaching to would have listened to him if he’d been preaching to them about things they enjoyed, like “wine and liquor,” while he is admonished “do not speak out” (verse 6) even though he is telling them the truth.
  - a. We all have a tendency to think that we would listen if God were correcting us or rebuking us, but is that really the case? How do you regularly respond to the Word of God? How do you respond to the correction others bring us through the Word? Do you try to justify our own sin and blame others? What can you do to prepare yourself to be humble and teachable when corrected? Who in your life have you asked to offer correction to you based on the Word of God? Does it actually happen?
  - b. We also have a tendency to, like those in Micah’s day, seek teachers and counselors who will tell us what we want to hear, which usually amounts to hearing that we are in the right and others being in the wrong (see 2 Timothy 4:3). How can we guard ourselves against such “advisors”?

## Francis Schaeffer on Covetousness<sup>1</sup>

(underlining added)

The climax of the Ten Commandments is the tenth commandment in Exodus 20:17: “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.” The commandment not to covet is an entirely inward thing. Coveting is never an outward thing, from the very nature of the case. It is an intriguing factor that this is the last command that God gives us in the Ten Commandments and thus the hub of the whole matter. The end of the whole thing is that we arrive at an inward situation and not merely an outward one. Actually, we break this last commandment, not to covet, before we break any of the others. Any time that we break one of the other commandments of God, it means that we have already broken this commandment in coveting. It also means that any time we break one of the others, we break this last commandment as well. So no matter which of the other Ten Commandments you break, you break two: the commandment itself, and this commandment not to covet. This is the hub of the wheel.

In Romans 7:7–9, Paul states very clearly that this was the commandment which gave him a sense of being sinful:

*What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.*

Now he did not mean he was perfect before; this is clear from what Paul has said. What he is saying here is, “I did not know I was a sinner; I thought I would come out all right, because I was keeping these outward things and was getting along all right in comparison with other people.” He would have been measuring himself against the externalized form of the commandments that the Jews had in their tradition. But when he opened the Ten Commandments and read that the last commandment was not to covet, he saw he was a sinner....

Coveting is the negative side of the positive commands, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... [And] thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Love is internal, not external. There can be external manifestations, but love itself will always be an internal factor. Coveting is always internal; the external manifestation is a result. We must see that to love God with all the heart, mind, and soul is not to covet against God; and to love man, to love our neighbor as ourselves, is not to covet against man. When I do not love

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<sup>1</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), 7–8.

the Lord as I should, I am coveting against the Lord. And when I do not love my neighbor as I should, I am coveting against him.

“Thou shalt not covet” is the internal commandment that shows the man who thinks himself to be moral that he really needs a Savior. The average such “moral” man, who has lived comparing himself to other men and comparing himself to a rather easy list of rules (even if they cause him some pain and difficulty), can feel, like Paul, that he is getting along all right. But suddenly, when he is confronted with the inward command not to covet, he is brought to his knees. It is exactly the same with us as Christians. This is a very central concept if we are to have any understanding or any real practice of the true Christian life or true spirituality. I can take lists that men make and I can seem to keep them, but to do that, my heart does not have to be bowed. But when I come to the inward aspect of the Ten Commandments, when I come to the inward aspect of the Law of Love, if I am listening even in a poor fashion to the direction of the Holy Spirit, I can no longer feel proud. I am brought to my knees. In this life I can never say, “I have arrived; it is finished; look at me—I am holy.” When we talk of the Christian life or true spirituality, when we talk about freedom from the bonds of sin, we must be wrestling with the inward problems of not coveting against God and men, of loving God and men, and not merely some set of externals.

This immediately raises a question. Does this mean that *any* desire is coveting and therefore sinful? The Bible makes plain that this is not so—all desire is not sin. So then the question arises, when does proper desire become coveting? I think we can put the answer down simply: desire becomes sin when it fails to include love of God or men. Further, I think there are two practical tests as to when we are coveting against God or men; first, I am to love God enough to be contented; second, I am to love men enough not to envy.