

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

Contact Dr. Frantz on the web at www.mlcchurch.com

A key to success and inner peace: don't covet. Recently, my youngest daughter was interviewed by a *Think Tank* near Washington D.C. for an employment opportunity she really wants. She's highly qualified and may very well land the job. As we were discussing her prospects for receiving an offer, it occurred to me the importance of not *coveting* the position.

Thou shall not covet, of course, is a mandate well inscribed in the psyche and spirit of western culture. It is the tenth commandment given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Those of us who grew up in the Church/ Synagogue Schools of America had to memorize it as children.

To *covet* is to want something more than we should want it. It is to desire something too much. Like wealth or fame, success or prestige, status or power; it may even be a boyfriend/ girlfriend.

Easily, in our consumer-driven culture, we covet possessions. We covet all the trappings of what we consider to be *the successful person*. We covet the resources to be totally independent, beholden to no one.

When we want something too much, our *wanting*, our *coveting*, becomes like an idol in our spirit, distorting our sense of balance and perspective. In ancient, biblical times, people *coveted* the possessions of others, including their wives. And when they acted on their *coveting* impulses, trouble soon followed; thus, the tenth commandment.

Furthermore, when we *covet* a job situation, we lose the *big picture* of where the job fits in to the greater scheme of things. There is no employment opportunity that is bigger than God or greater than the highest values and commitments to which we aspire.

Compromising our freedom. Another aspect of *coveting* is the compromise of our personal freedom. At the point that we *covet* the job or the relationship, we're no longer free. Our freedom is lost to our more base impulses, like greed or prestige, fame or status. In compromising our personal freedom, we give up too much of our self.

Such compromise—in pursuit of a job or a relationship, for example—diminishes us as a person. Right away, we no longer stand for the highest values seeking expression in our spirit. And in the process—sadly—our character becomes flawed.

The truth of it is, people know. People can discern when desire creates an imbalance or a disproportion in our spirit. They know; they can feel it. And it's not a good feeling. Always, it casts us in a negative light.

In other circles, we casually refer to such persons as superficial, or flaky or lacking substance. However, in the larger scheme of things, it's primarily a *character* issue.

To want things or desire things is normal—like wanting to win or to excel or achieve, utilizing our gifts in pursuit of excellence along the way. The issue is wanting things in a balanced perspective.

Staying on our game. One of the negative consequences of *coveting* is that it throws us off our game. We lose a sense of who we are and what our lives, at our best, are about.

As the Bible suggests, *coveting* is a sin. In this light, it initiates a distortive function in our spirit and in our lives. That's what sin does. It distorts. And one distortion leads to another, and then another to the point where our identity becomes confused and shaky.

For example, when we want a relationship too much, compromising our self in the process, suddenly our actions and words lack authenticity. Rather than speaking and acting from our heart (our core self), our behaviors become exaggerated and uneven, to the point where we lose a sense of who we are.

The larger truth of our lives is that when we stay humble, working hard, giving whatever we are doing in life our best shot, success comes our way. It's the way life works. Wisdom teaches us to not *covet*, have a humble spirit, and be genuine—all the time, keeping our eyes on the *big picture* of our lives.