

In quick succession, following these two major items, the law mentions the servants and livestock of the neighbor. The servants include all those who are obligated to another's will while the livestock are typical of the possessions one has gained. Your neighbor might not have servants but don't envy those who do his will or his work. He may not have oxen or donkeys, don't envy his hobbies or the means of his livelihood. According to the law, it is not your right to want to have for yourself what your neighbor has as his.

My impression is that these particular items are mentioned so that we cannot generalize the law and forget it. Many of us have that weakness and if a general truth is pronounced we nod in agreement but do nothing about it. To avoid this the Lord mentions some particular items so that one must stop and think when the law is stated. When we do this we often become aware of areas where we are weak and where we need the Lord's help in order to take the proper corrective action.

Apparently covetousness in these areas springs out of greed and lack of contentedness with our own things. It is not fair to generalize totally but if we unfavorably compare ourselves with others we will never be content with what is ours, as we have already commented. Instead of rejoicing and enjoying what God has granted, we will be grumblers and those who desire what is not properly theirs. We can, if we wish, always find something in life that we think would be better than what we now have. That is dangerous and should be avoided.

Coveting: The New Testament view

The New Testament is most emphatic on matters of covetousness. If anything the nature of the evil is "upgraded" and made to seem as severe as possible. In a passage showing typical selfishness, Jesus treats this matter soberly. The events transpire in Luke 12. Someone in his own company