

[10 Commandments Episode 13]

[Speakers in the audio file: Jon Collins and Tim Mackie]

Jon: We've been studying the 10 commandments, which are not mere commands, but they're words of life. They're 10 ways of thinking about how to be human. And today, we look at the very last one. It's usually translated: "Don't covet." But the word for covet is the Hebrew word for desire.

Tim: "You will not desire your neighbor's house. You will not desire your neighbor's wife or his male slave or his female slave or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Jon: Desire is such an intimate, personal thing, and we often think we can't control it. Yet the 10 Commandments end by reflecting on it. And it's quite fitting, actually, that we end focusing on this deep, energizing force of desire.

Tim: So in a way, the 10th command comes back, and it addresses the thing upstream of murder, adultery, stealing, and bearing false witness.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Why would you do any of those things?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Probably, you have a desire that's driving your decisions. So in a way, the 10th is actually underneath all of one through nine.

Jon: So, how do we train our desire? We'll explore this question as we look at the garden of Eden story in Genesis. In the garden, God tells the humans that they may eat of any of the good trees and that all of the trees look desirable. But there is one tree, the tree of knowing good and bad, that they're not to eat from.

Tim: So this is teaching us, like, the fundamental grammar, the rules of desire, that many things that are desirable are not good for you.

Jon: Yet desire isn't a bad thing. God gave us desires, and he wants them to be fulfilled. As it says in Proverbs 13:12—

Tim: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire that is fulfilled is a tree of life."

Jon: Desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Tim: We're created as creatures with desire. To be human is to desire. All of our desires, however, are created to come to a rest in their one ultimate good: communion with God.

Jon: Today, Tim Mackie and I look at the last of the 10 Commandments: “Do not desire your neighbor’s stuff.” It’s a command that’s an undercurrent beneath all of the commands. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical break (2:27—2:28)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey, Jon. Hi.

Jon: We are working through the 10 Commandments.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: In fact, we are at the 10th and final of the 10 Commandments.

Tim: Yeah. We made it. We’re doing the 10th command, which is famously translated as covet. “Do not covet.”

Jon: “Do not covet.”

Tim: So covet. So this last section of commands that are all neighbor-to-neighbor are all about how you should relate to things that belong to your neighbor. Their life? Don’t kill. Rather, protect their life. Don’t commit adultery. So don’t treat their spouse as yours to have sex with. Don’t steal their stuff, that’s God’s gift to them.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But not yours. And bearing false witness against your neighbor, we learned the focus was, don’t endanger your neighbor’s well-being or economic well-being by getting slippery with the truth.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And then here we are bound to your neighbor’s stuff again. “You will not desire your neighbor’s house. You will not desire your neighbor’s wife or his male slave or his female slave or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” It’s a seven-part list.

Jon: Well, of course it is.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Matching the seven-part list of who gets to rest on the Sabbath day.

Jon: It's the same list?

Tim: It's a different list.

Jon: Oh, a different list. So the word is traditionally covet.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: You're choosing the word desire.

Tim: Yeah. Why?

Jon: What is the word?

Tim: What is the word? The word here in Exodus 20 is *khamad*. So—uh—khet, mem, dalet. *Khamad*. Desire.

Jon: Desire.

Tim: Desire. Now we're going to provide shades of meaning for this word by looking at lots of examples. Remember the 10 Commandments occur two times. Once here in Exodus, and then in Moses' retelling of the Exodus event in Deuteronomy chapter 5. And very interestingly, the Deuteronomy version has a little difference in command number 10. So Exodus 20 began, "You will not desire"—*khamad*—"the house of your neighbor. "You will not desire"—*khamad*—"the wife of your neighbor."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Deuteronomy flips it: "You will not desire the wife of your neighbor." Instead of being second, now it's first.

Jon: And that's *khamad*.

Tim: *Khamad*. Then it says, "and you will not *hit'avvah* the house of your neighbor." *Hit'avvah*, new verb.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: New verb. That means—I think a good English word that captures how *hit'avvah* is different is our word *crave*, which I know is not super common, but I think it's common enough that—do you recognize the word *crave*? That—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Okay.

Jon: Yeah. It's a common word.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If I remember correctly, this word is more about the physical appetites.

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. So now we've got two verbs. Don't desire and don't crave. Don't *khamad* and don't *hit'avvah*. So let's talk about these words. These are the key words here. What does it mean? So I've chosen to go away from covet—the old English word—and embrace the common English words desire and crave.

Jon: I'm down with that.

Tim: Why? Okay. Desire, *khamad*. Both *khamad* and *hit'avvah*—here's what they have in common. They're describing the act of perceiving something. And then when you perceive it or see it, encounter it, it generates this strong internal impulse to possess it. So there's a couple of classic examples—the story of a guy named Achan in the book of Joshua, or Achan is how we say his name in English. Achan, who's an Israelite—they just overcame the walls of Jericho by blowing their trumpets. Then God brought the walls down, and he saw, he says, a beautiful robe from Babylon and a box of treasure, 200 coins of silver, a bar of gold that weighed 50 shekels—“I desired, and I took them.”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So beautiful, valuable goods generated an impulse within him that he gave in to, took. Desire, it's a great English word for it.

Jon: It is. Mhm.

Tim: It's the ideal English word, really.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm. So it's that impulse. You see something.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or you have seen something, maybe it's not the moment of encountering it, but once you are aware of something and you—well, we'll talk about what it excites inside you—but one thing it excites is an impulse to possess it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That feeling that is universal to human beings is called *khamad*. This other word that's used in Deuteronomy, *hit'avvah*, specifically is connected to, like, a physical appetite. So here are a couple of examples to upload it real quick. So when the Israelites are wandering in the wilderness, and they're hungry, and we're told that a mixed multitude or the rabble—likely a reference to the non-Israelites who came with the Israelites up out of Egypt, we're not sure, but we're told that they begin to crave a craving.

Jon: That's NIV?

Tim: NIV. Yeah.

Jon: Crave a craving.

Tim: Yeah. And then the Israelites started wailing and said, "Oh, if only we had meat to eat. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt. It was free! And the cucumbers and the leeks and the melons and the garlic. Now we've lost our appetite, nothing to look at but this manna."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mmm. So notice this verb is used in relation to, like, being hungry, but then what they start talking about—look at what they start talking about.

Jon: Yeah. All the flavors.

Tim: Yes, like they start naming the, like, really flavorful foods, leeks and onions and garlic. That's all—that's pure flavor, man.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: You know what I mean?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Garlic. You don't put garlic in your food.

Jon: For its nutritional value?

Tim: I mean, maybe, but the main reason you do is for flavor.

Jon: Right. Or just the smell of some, like, like, sautéed garlic in the kitchen, right?

Tim: Oh, man.

Jon: Just get you ready to eat a meal.

Tim: Mmm. With mushrooms?

Jon: With mushrooms.

Tim: You down for that? Oh, yeah, you're down for mushrooms.

Jon: Oh, heck yeah. Heck yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Sautéed mushrooms—mmm—with garlic.

Jon: And lots of butter.

[Laughter]

Tim: Okay. So the point is, is these are—it's physical. You feel it in your body. Like, you start to salivate—

Jon: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tim: —when you smell the smell.

Jon: Very s—really connected your senses.

Tim: It's very—yup—very sensuous term. Yeah. So that's *hit'avvah*.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So you could say *khamad* is more general, maybe referring to the emotional, affective experience of desire, which involves our bodies and our minds. And then *hit'avvah* is more locking onto the physical.

Jon: So crave a craving. It's—what's in Hebrew, *hit'avvah*, eh, what?

Tim: Oh, it's a way of, in Hebrew, if you make the verb the same root as the object of the verb.

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: It just, it's emphasizing it. So literally, it's of the verb crave and then the noun craving from this root. So to crave a craving.

Jon: Crave a craving.

Tim: They really. They nailed it.

Jon: NIV nailed it?

Tim: Yeah. Crave. Oh—oh, you know what? It might have been my little tweak to the NIV.

Jon: Oh, you tweaked the NIV?

Tim: Maybe, maybe.

Jon: Let's find out.

Tim: What is that? Numbers 11:4. Mmm.

Jon: Oh.

Tim: NIV has "they began to crave other food."

Jon: Okay. All right.

Tim: Yeah. Sorry. Okay. I usually try and remember when I've adapted. They craved a craving. Okay. Now here's what's interesting. Both of these words, like we've looked at, can refer to inappropriate desire—wanting things that don't belong to you.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So Achan, for example, was just told, along with all the Israelites, "Don't take any of the stuff," but he desired it—the stuff that he wasn't supposed to take. But that doesn't mean that the things in themselves are bad.

Jon: Gold isn't bad in and of itself.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Yeah. It's just in that context, and in that relationship that he was in with God, that was the wrong—wrong thing to desire. So it's not even that the desire was inappropriate. It was an inappropriate object of desire in that moment for him. So when I say this word is often used for inappropriate desire, I'm just qualifying to say that the desire is actually for something that's cool.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Gold and beautiful clothes.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's beautiful, it's shiny, it's valuable, but he was told, "Hands off," and his desire became a disordered, inappropriate one. However, there are uses of both of these words to refer to positive objects of desire.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So this is really interesting. Psalm 10. "The *ta'avah*"—that's our craving word—"the *ta'avah* of the afflicted one you have heard, O Yahweh, you will make their hearts secure. You will listen

and render judgment for the orphan and for the oppressed, so that mere mortals of the earth no longer cause terror.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: You—

Jon: The craving of the afflicted, mean—like, meaning when you’re an afflicted one is one who’s ...

Tim: Yeah. In this case, it’s they’re robbed, they’re cheated in the courts, they have things stolen from them by people more powerful, they—

Jon: So—so they’re craving for things to be made right.

Tim: Yeah. Now, this is the word that I said was connected to the body.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Now, but so what is interesting—so this example, at first, made me think, “Oh, maybe it’s not about the body, specifically,” but notice that these other—what comes right after: “You have heard them, Yahweh, you will make their hearts secure.”

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So we’re naming an actual part of the body.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: I think probably most of us, if we think of a crisis moment that we lived through, you know, your body kind of freaked out.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: And the moment that your heart can calm down.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: You know? I just—it’s interesting to me that the word "heart" is used here.

Jon: Mmm. Mhm.

Tim: When God hears them, their hearts become secure, and the bad guys can no longer cause terror.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Which is also a—

Jon: It's a very physical state of being.

Tim: Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Being terrified.

Tim: Yeah. So that made me think, oh, maybe this is a good example in Psalm 10 here of the longing of the afflicted, when you're afraid, in terror.

Jon: They want their body to be at peace.

Tim: Yeah. The longing of the afflicted is your body wanting—

Jon: Some rest.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Anyway.

Jon: That's a desire. Yeah.

Tim: It is. Yeah. Mhm. Also—

Jon: You can crave rest. I can crave—

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: —peace.

Tim: So the Lexham English Bible translates that as "longing".

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Yeah. Which I think is appropriate there.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Craving might feel a little weird.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Similar context. Look at this example from Psalm 38: "I am faint, and I am crushed greatly. I groan because of the roaring of my heart. O Lord, all my *ta'avah*"—my desire, longing—"is before you. My sighing isn't hidden from you."

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: It's very bodily.

Jon: It's a very emotional state.

Tim: Embodied emotional experience—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —can be referred to as *ta'avah*.

Jon: Hmm. I think it is very intuitive, and it helps you appreciate that most desires really come from your body saying, "You want this."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: It's a very embodied experience.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: Generally.

Tim: Let's look at some other positive desires. Isaiah 26: "Yahweh, your name and your renown are the desire of our soul."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "I desire you with all my soul in the night, and I seek you—"

Jon: Which word is this one?

Tim: —"with my spirit within you." This is both *khamad*.

Jon: *Khamad*.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: Okay. So the *khamad* is for the name and renown of Yahweh.

Tim: Mhm. For God's name to be known, and then just "I desire you."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Psalm 19: “The statutes”—like the commands, like the 10 we’ve been meditating on—“the statutes of Yahweh are true. They are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold.”

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: Here’s a good one. This is like a little riddle.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Okay. Proverbs 13:12: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick. But desire”—or this is the word craving, *ta’avah*—“but desire that is fulfilled is a tree of life.”

Jon: Hmm. A tree of life is desire fulfilled. Wow.

Tim: Mmm. Mhm. Now—

Jon: Contrasted with—

Tim: Hope deferred.

Jon: —anticipating something that you—

Tim: It keeps getting—

Jon: It’s always pushed away.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So first of all, the tree of life comes from Genesis 2 and 3.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This word, desire, *ta’avah*, or craving, is first used in the garden of Eden story. So whoever wrote this proverb has the Eden story on the brain.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And “hope deferred.” So when you’re waiting for something you really—I mean, and the reason you hope in something is because you desire it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So it’s kind of unstated. But—

Jon: Hmm. You’re waiting for the desire to be fulfilled.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. So one way this proverb could have been worded is, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick. But desire fulfilled—”

Jon: Makes the heart glad.

Tim: “—makes the heart glad.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But instead it says, “a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.”

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: What does that mean?

Jon: Yeah, what does it mean?

[Laughter]

Tim: And let’s meditate on it.

Jon: Oh, okay. Desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: The tree of life in Genesis 2 and 3 is—you’ve always used the phrase God’s own life. Now the story doesn’t say that.

Tim: Right. Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: So it’s like an interpretive move?

Tim: It’s an—yeah, it’s an inference from the shape of the story, because the one who creates and generates life in the seven-day story is God. He creates the *nephesh khayyah*, the living creature. And then God also gives living creatures on the land this gift of generating their own life—regeneration of new life.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: But ultimately, the source of that life is God.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And so the fruit of a tree, in a way, can give a gift of life. But ultimately, anything, any life that that tree is giving has to come from God, especially the tree of life that's supposed to give unending life. Like that could only ever, ultimately, come from God, not from a tree in and of itself.

Jon: And we learn in the end of Genesis 3 that that's what the tree of life does.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: It gives unending life.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So hope deferred—something you desire and long for—if you never, ever realize it, that's a miserable existence.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: To constantly be agitated towards something that you long for and to never get it, we all know that feeling.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But man, when you have a significant desire met and fulfilled—oh man, what else can you describe except it's just, it's like a taste of the tree of life, desire fulfilled?

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Which I think should—let's go back to the 10th command: “Do not desire—”

Jon: Yeah, so I, you know, I—

Tim: “—your neighbor's house, or wife, or their stuff.”

Jon: So what's interesting to think about that proverb is, if you desire something that you shouldn't have or don't have, then you are putting yourself in a place where your heart is going to be sick.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So there's actually just kind of just some simple wisdom in, like, don't desire things that are going to make you sick.

Tim: Oh, sure.

Jon: Because you can't have them.

Tim: Mhm. Mhm.

Jon: And so if you're always going around craving other people's stuff, you're just going to have this ongoing, unfulfilled longing, which then begs the question, well, what desire can be fulfilled?

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Or what should you desire?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting thinking of the second half of the commands about neighbor-to-neighbor relationships. Well, first of all, command 10 is different than all the others.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So all the other commands refer to behavior that is observable.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: If you kill somebody, no one may see you, but you'll—

Jon: But it could have been recorded on camera.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. It's actions, actions that you can see—adultery, stealing, bearing false witness in a public setting. "Do not desire."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Desire is completely internal.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Now, it usually leads to a—

Jon: The taking.

Tim: —action that's observable. But that's—

Jon: But—but when it leads to the action, now you're in "Do not steal."

Tim: Exactly. So in a way, the 10th command comes back, and it provides—

Jon: Something underneath everything.

Tim: —the upstream—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It addresses the thing upstream of murder and adultery and stealing and bearing false witness.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Why would you do any of those things?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Probably you have a desire that's driving your decisions. So in a way, the 10th is actually underneath all of one through nine.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. Oh, all one through nine?

Tim: Well, why would you give your allegiance to other gods?

Jon: Ooh.

Tim: "Oh, I want something that Yahweh is not giving me right now."

Jon: Okay. All right.

Tim: Right?

Jon: Yeah. Or why make another idol?

Tim: Yeah. Why would I not rest on Shabbat?

Jon: Oh, yeah. I want to work.

Tim: Well, I actually want to work and get stuff done.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So desire is truly underneath—and so of course, it's the last one, with the list of seven. Complete. That's a signal of completion. It's like, it's the thing underneath all the other things.

Jon: It's the undercurrent for everything.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. So how do you know a good object of desire from a b...? If desire in and of itself is not bad. Actually, if a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: That means the act of desiring is not, in and of itself, bad. But that doesn't mean that every object of my desire is a right one.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: I could have disordered desire. So how do I know the difference? And the 10th commandment doesn't say.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So we need some bigger, like, ethical compass. And so let's go back to the Eden story that Proverbs directed us to and see if there's some wisdom there.

[Musical break (22:39—22:41)]

Jon: "Yahweh Elohim planted a garden in Eden." And that word means delight.

Tim: Mhm. Delight. Yeah. An object that excites desire.

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And that's the region the garden is in.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And that's toward the east?

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: “He placed there the human whom he had formed, and Yahweh Elohim caused a sprout from the ground. Every tree desirable for sight and good for eating.”

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Yeah. We spent a whole session—

Tim: Yeah, we did.

Jon: —on this.

Tim: Exactly.

Jon: “Desirable for sight and good for eating.”

Tim: This is the word *khamad*. Desirable to see. Mhm. And then good for eating. Every tree.

Jon: Every tree.

Tim: Has this—

Jon: Yeah, this is the thing that you were pointing out was—it was every tree.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Like, you would just go around, and you’d be like, “That tree’s good and desirable. That tree’s good and desirable. That tree’s good and desirable.”

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: You would not encounter a tree where you’d be like, “Oh, maybe not that one.”

[Laughter]

Tim: Yeah, right? Yeah, I have trees like that all over my neighborhood.

Jon: Imagine walking through a garden. Everything just looks—

Tim: Looks.

Jon: —good.

Tim: Yeah. Okay. So what I drew attention to last time was these two little descriptions. “Desirable for seeing.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “Good for eating.” Desirable and good are in parallelism. Seeing and eating are. What is interesting is desire has to do with that impulse. Something that generates a desire to possess.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: An impulse to possess. And it’s desirable for seeing. In other words, when you see it, it generates a desire. So that’s one thing. Parallel to that is “good.” Like it is actually good. It brings goodness for eating. And eating involves the act of having taken and then consuming it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, not just taking it, but act—taking it into myself.

Jon: We started talking about, yeah, uniting with it.

Tim: Uniting with it. Okay. So this is teaching us that, within God’s world that is seven times declared good, there are objects that, when you look at them, they excite desire.

Jon: Yeah. Every tree in this garden was that way.

Tim: That’s right. That’s right. However, then, God’s going to give a command: “There’s one tree that you are not to eat from, because it looks good for eating, but it will kill you.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So this is teaching us, like, the fundamental grammar, the rules of desire, that many things that are desirable are not good for you. Many things that are desirable are good for you. And they are all good to look at.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: So really, the Eden story was—because let’s go back up to our proverb: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick.” So you’ll experience anguish when something you desire is withheld from you.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And if it’s a good object of desire, that’s really hard. But also, when it’s an inappropriate object of desire, it makes our hearts sick, too, right?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And not every fulfilled desire is a tree of life.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because some desires, like my neighbor's house or wife or donkey, like—that's not mine. And fulfilling that desire will not bring the tree of life to me or to them. Isn't that interesting? So the proverb is actually only really true—

Jon: For the right kind of desire.

Tim: —for the right objects of desire.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: But it is good to stop and consider that it is a biblical framework to say that what God wants for us is desire fulfilled.

Tim: Yes, that's right. And the naming of certain objects of desire as actually not good for you is in the service of the greater vision of giving you the object of your desires. In other words, the goal of God is to give us the fulfillment of our desires.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: The problem is we don't know the difference between good and not-good objects of desire. So we drew attention to this. I just want to come back to it because, for me it was significant that when we get to the moment at the tree in Genesis 3, the ordering of the descriptions is different and the words have changed. So let's come to it, Genesis 3: "When the woman saw"—and the first thing is that it was good for eating.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: That's exactly from chapter 2. But the difference is that in chapter 2, it was the second description of the tree.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: So you can desire something and see it, and then just—and just see it. "Man, that thing's good."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "And it excites desire in me. May or may not be good for me. I—I don't know—I'll need some other indicator to tell me that." But the moment you take and eat, you've—right?—you've

made the move. You've made the judgment call. So what's interesting is that, here, the first thing she noticed is how it's good for eating, the utility that it will have for her.

Jon: Yeah. Can I say it back to you? Because I—

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Jon: This—this did land when you described it before.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Which was—you can see something is desirable.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And that moment of seeing something as desirable isn't the problem, right?

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Like, seeing something as desirable is just a natural thing that happens.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Wow. Look at it.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And you gave the example of riding your bike home and seeing all the restaurants, seeing people eat at the restaurants.

Tim: Mhm. Mhm.

Jon: And you're like, "Wow, how great."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And you can start to imagine yourself in that restaurant eating.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So it's excited your desire. But then stopping and eating there, that's then deciding it's good for me. I'm going to take it.

Tim: It's good for me. That's right.

Jon: But what was good for you was to go home and have your meal with your family.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Yup.

Jon: And so—

Tim: Yeah. This is it.

Jon: —when—

Tim: We're back to that.

Jon: —when we talked about—it was good, it was desirable to see and then good for eating, there's kind of this two-step process where you can say, give yourself permission to be like, “Yeah, I desire that. But then, is it good for me to take?”

Tim: Mhm. Right.

Jon: And then when we came here, the woman doesn't give herself that space.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: It's just straight to “That's good for me—”

Tim: That's good for me.

Jon: “—to take.”

Tim: Yup. That's right. And then what she also sees was that it was—and I don't know if I'm making up an English word here—it was craveable.

[Laughter]

Tim: It's the word crave.

Jon: Yeah, okay.

Tim: From Deuteronomy's version of the 10th commandment—crave. Seeing it excited the bodily urge.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then the third thing is it was desirable for—“Whoa, wisdom! Because God says somehow this is connected to the knowledge of good and bad. He told me not to. I could—whoa—I could strike out on my own here in defining wisdom.” So what's interesting is that both words get used in the actual narrative, and they follow her having made a judgment of that it's good for her.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So I think this gives insight into what the 10th commandment is doing at the end of the 10 Commandments.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. Because you can look at “Do not desire” and just stop there and think, like, “Okay, yeah, I need to live a pretty stoic life, or I need to just repress all my physical appetites. Like, that’s the holy thing to do.”

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. That’s right. And I think the Christian tradition is often understood by people to be basically about the negation of desire, a negation of things that seem good. And that’s just depriving yourself of that. And that’s the—

Jon: But the tree of life is desire fulfilled.

Tim: It’s the desire fulfilled. So I think really what the 10th commandment is inviting us into—it doesn’t say this on its surface, you have to think through the hyperlinks—is that I am going to be confronted with moments where I see something that is good for seeing. And that’s going to excite an impulse inside of me that’s going to start an internal debate. Right? I desire my neighbor’s house. My neighbor has a great setup and a killer patio and backyard. We used this in the last couple of conversations, you know?

Jon: I get whole magazines that make me desire other people’s houses.

[Laughter]

Tim: Oh, dude, totally. What else is—

Jon: Catalogs.

Tim: What else is—so much of social media? It’s just like—

Jon: Oh, social media, yeah.

Tim: —a desire generator.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Actually, it’s trying to excite desire by making you dissatisfied with your own life. Yeah, so when I see something that’s good for seeing, I’ve got this decision to make about the things that are desirable that I do have. And I guess it’s just this question—

Jon: Wait, say that again?

Tim: Oh, well, first of all, I probably do have some things in my life that I desired, and now are a part of my life.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Like, that's already happened.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: That process has already taken place.

Jon: Sure.

Tim: So seeing another thing that's good for seeing, and then I'm wanting it, is saying, "Well, okay, I think that that might be good for me." And if I were to have it, what?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, what then?

Jon: Right.

Tim: And this is so interesting that the biblical authors are really interested in this, like, hamster wheel of desire.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So here's a couple—there's, like, a reflection from Ecclesiastes. This is great. Here's another riddle: "Every stream flows into the sea, but the sea is never full."

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: That is fascinating.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's so much water going into the ocean.

Jon: It's rushing into the ocean constantly.

Tim: But somehow the ocean doesn't ever just keep rising and rising and rising.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's—that's weird.

Jon: Well, it's evaporation.

Tim: Yeah, well, sure. If we have that category now.

Jon: But yeah.

Tim: It's pretty wild.

Jon: You can imagine. You look at that.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Mhm. All things toil continuously, and no one—in fact, no one could even ever finish describing all the toil happening in the world.

Jon: Mhm. You know—you know where I feel that?

Tim: Hmm?

Jon: Have you ever worked on your house and just realized how much work every little thing is?

Tim: Totally.

Jon: Just maintenance.

Tim: So much.

Jon: Maintenance.

Jon: So much toil.

Tim: I'm finishing a yard project right now, and I'm so aware of all that needs to happen.

Jon: So now when—when I do that, and then I drive around the city, and I look at all these other buildings and all these other homes, this is the feeling I have.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I go, "How much toil is there in this world? All the people fixing all of this stuff?"

[Laughter]

Jon: "Who are all these people fixing all of these things?"

[Laughter]

Jon: “All these roofs that are going to start leaking. All the siding that is—I mean, it’s just, like—”

Tim: It’s just too much work. So much work.

Jon: It’s too much toil.

Tim: Yeah. Too much. Yeah. There you go. Okay.

Jon: I feel it.

Tim: So those are the two examples. The rivers flowing into the sea, never full.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: All the work happening in the world constantly, but yet no one’s ever finished.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Like, when is the work of the world ever done?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It never is. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, and the ear is never filled up with hearing.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

[Laughter]

Tim: It’s insatiable.

Jon: Insatiable.

Tim: Things that are insatiable—always working but never fulfilled. The rivers never fill full the ocean.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Humans never finish the work.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Eyes never get fed up with seeing.

Jon: Right. Yeah.

Tim: They always want more.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Isn't that interesting?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Desire is, it seems, infinite.

Jon: Right.

Tim: For finite, little creatures that we are, we seem to have an infinite appetite.

Jon: So what—so what in the world could it mean to fulfill a desire, then?

Tim: Yeah. Okay. Here. Here's—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Here's Proverbs' way of doing it: "Just like water reflects face-to-face, so the heart of a human reflects that human."

Jon: Hmm. So water can mirror your face.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Your heart can mirror—

Tim: Yeah, your being.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: "The grave and destruction are never satisfied. Neither are the eyes of a human ever satisfied."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So everybody's dying. "The grave is never satisfied."

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: The grave will take us all.

Jon: It always wants more.

Tim: Yup. Yeah. No matter how many people are dying. And this is written from a pre-resurrection point of view, so—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: In the history of the human race, says a follower of Jesus, there's only one person the grave hasn't held onto. And that's the hope of the universe.

[Laughter]

Tim: But other than that, the grave is never satisfied. So the heart of a human and the eyes of a human are never satisfied.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So it's just another way of saying the same thing. The inner desire of a human reflects that human. But yet, paradoxically, that desire's never fulfilled fully.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So you just asked the question.

Jon: So what could it possibly mean, then—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: —for desire to be satisfied?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Or fulfilled?

Tim: Fulfilled.

Jon: Desire fulfilled.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What could that possibly actually mean?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Because the eyes are never filled full.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. So if the tree is an object that is good, and it generates desire—we're back to this, what we talked about all those episodes ago—who or what is the source of all of the good?

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And in the framework of the seven-day creation narrative, God is the one who is the generator of life and of goodness. What is goodness? Goodness is valuing something as being the good, the beautiful, the true, the thing that fulfills my existence.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: And if I mistake a good thing in God's world for the thing that will truly fulfill my existence, that's like the ultimate deception. Which it has to be why the garden of Eden story is like the template-setting story for what's wrong with humans in the rest of the biblical narrative.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: We mistake good things, the only thing that can ever truly meet our desire, which is not anything at all, except the one who is the source of all things. You know, there's this kind of—there's a move made in my experience of the branch of Christian culture that I've been in, that talks about, like, the God-shaped hole in the human heart.

Jon: Right.

Tim: And I think I was introduced to that early. And then, at some point, it kind of became so familiar that it became a little cliché. And I think I'm coming to appreciate what a vitally important truth that is, because the biblical authors, actually, are really exploring it, I realized, a lot—that mistaking some good thing within God's creation for God, as the thing I long for the most—like that is, that's it. That's a way of naming the whole human tragedy.

[Musical break (38:30—38:32)]

Jon: So can I ask, though, when God puts the humans in the garden, every tree is desirable and good.

Tim: Mhm. Mhm.

Jon: And the command is to eat.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: The first part of the command is eat.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: So let's imagine there's a thousand trees in there. I don't know.

Tim: Okay.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Okay. Yeah. Great.

Jon: Nine hundred and ninety-nine of them: "Eat up."

Tim: Yeah. Desirable to see; good for eating.

Jon: One tree: "Don't eat of it."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So in general, it's go-time.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Yes.

Jon: Follow your desire.

Tim: Follow your desire.

Jon: That's—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That's going to lead you to the right decision 999 times out of a thousand.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: That doesn't seem to be the case—

[Laughter]

Jon: —like in reality, so maybe this was, like, a special Eden kind of situation. Right?

[Laughter]

Tim: I love your imagination. Yes. Okay. That's a great point. On the whole, fulfilling all of my desires all the time is not good wisdom.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Moderation of fulfilling my desires is usually the best.

Jon: So you can kind of see how a lot of spiritual traditions get to, like, this: "Repress your desire and rein it in."

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Because so often it does become the problem.

Tim: Totally, yeah.

Jon: But there's something, though, in that, and I—I think you use this phrase that when we are experiencing something good, and it's truly good, what we're really experiencing is God.

Tim: That's right. Yes. Yes.

Jon: The taste of this fruit is good, and I enjoy it. But what I'm really experiencing is a gift from God, and so I'm experiencing God.

Tim: Mhm. Mhm.

Jon: And so you kind of left us with this God-shaped hole there ultimately is. That's the only thing that will fulfill us.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But then there's also where that God didn't just put them in a garden with, like, "Hey, you just got me for, you know, the next however many years we're going to be here."

Tim: Sure.

Jon: He gave them 999—

Tim: Yeah, trees.

Jon: —amazing trees to feast on.

Tim: Totally. Yeah. That's right.

Jon: So is there something there for us? It's like God wants ...

Tim: Mmm. Yes. Yeah. Thank you for the way you're asking that question. In other words, humans don't ever desire, like, good in the abstract.

[Laughter]

Jon: Yeah. Well ... okay, yeah.

Tim: Some—well, but really, what we desire is good in some concrete thing or situation.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: So I don't desire just abstract universal goodness. I want every person in my neighborhood to feel loved and to have meaningful work.

Jon: Yeah. To feel safe.

Tim: Safe and belonging. Like that—it's that concrete version of good.

Jon: Right.

Tim: In actual circumstances and in the world. And a good meal with good flavors on my tongue.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, that's what I want.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But I guess it's that interplay of that—the good that I want, I also need to always recognize that, like, there can be too much good for my stomach or my body or my—

Jon: Uh-huh.

Tim: —and imbalances of good—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —can start going wonky in my neighborhood and screw up all that equilibrium and the goodness. And then also recognizing that that concrete experience of good comes from a source of goodness who provided it for me. I guess it's that interplay.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So even to say what we want is God, but God has clearly chosen to relate to us in and through ...

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: ... creation as—

Jon: A meal with your friends.

Tim: Yeah. Through each other.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Or a hike in the woods.

Tim: Yeah. And we can intensify our experience with that connection to God, but it seems like it's always going to be, like—what do you say?—conveyed through some form. And what else is the incarnation? Is God becoming human except to, like, be the physical embodiment of divine goodness, which is ... Who knows what it really is? Like, I don't—I'm a human, right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, I can't transcend humanness to know what abstract goodness is. But when someone named Jesus of Nazareth comes and, like, treats lepers and widows—right?—and tax collectors and prostitutes the way he did, you're like, "That's goodness."

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: And it's not abstract goodness. It's, like, that's goodness in concrete form. That's what I want.

Jon: Yeah. So—

Tim: Sorry, you just—

Jon: This—no, this is great.

Tim: It was a great little mental exercise that your question sent me down.

Jon: Yeah. And then to bring this back to, then, the 10th command is not "Don't desire." It's, "Don't—

Tim: It is "Don't desire."

[Laughter]

Jon: Well, it is, but it's not "Don't desire," full stop.

Tim: Right. Yeah.

Jon: It's "Don't desire," and then it's things that—

Tim: God's gifted your neighbor.

Jon: It's God's gifted your neighbor.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And when you are giving your example of the neighborhood, and we want—the things we want for our neighbors and the things that we want for ourselves, you gave—and you gave me this picture that was really wonderful. And then I just pictured myself going over and taking something from my neighbor because you're, like, "Well, I want that meal. I want that thing."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And now you're causing this strife in the neighborhood.

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: And there's something very communal here, which is one way to start—very basic way to start—is to not desire things that just clearly are not yours. I mean, it's kind of like a basic starting block.

Tim: Totally. Yeah. All right, but let's just—let's play out how many of the other nine commandments would be addressed if I took it as a challenge to really begin to reshape what I desire.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Would lying, stealing, violent seizure, adultery, would those things decrease in average if people were to become more grateful for the things that God has given them, and to realize that my neighbor's things actually will never fulfill my deepest desires? They won't. They simply won't. So stop setting my attention on them and playing the little fantasies. You're just making yourself sick, in the language of that proverb.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: Why make yourself sick?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And why make your neighborhood sick?

Jon: Because if you desire it and you can't have it fulfilled, your heart's going to get sick.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: You desire your neighbor's stuff, and you fulfill it, you're going to make your community sick.

Tim: Oh, whoa! That's a great—that's good. You just made a new proverb.

[Laughter]

Tim: No, that's good.

Jon: That's a good proverb.

Tim: That was a great proverb. Yeah.

Jon: So don't desire it.

Tim: Yeah. Which, you know, might, to some of us, sound like, you know, "Stop being anxious. Stop having anxiety."

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Like, but desire might feel—because it happens to us experientially—it might feel like something that you can't control, but there's deep wisdom in many, many cultural traditions, religious traditions, including the Christian religious tradition, that you actually can control and shape your desires and change what you desire. You can.

Jon: With the way that you think and the—what you believe can shape your desires.

Tim: Habits—

Jon: Yeah, that's interesting. There are certain desires that just come on you.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And you can't control that.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: But then, there's habits—there's ways you can imagine yourself in the world that reform those.

Tim: Yes. Yes.

Jon: And leave you with other desires.

Tim: Yeah. So much of the early Christian kind of spiritual-practice tradition, or spiritual practices of fasting, daily prayer, and service to the poor, commitment to living in close proximity to other people ... All of these practices are about the reshaping of desire.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And how we structure our actual life environments and habits of time and money are directly affected by what we find ourselves daydreaming about and desiring.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's really quite, it's ama—it's a good example of—what is it?—neuroplasticity?

Jon: Oh, yeah.

Tim: Of the moldability of the human brain and psyche that you can—can over time, change what you desire.

Jon: Yeah, so can we flip this over, then?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: “You will not desire.” Now is “You will desire.” And we could start with, then—where I think you brought attention to this earlier—we didn't dig into it, but you have things that you used to desire, and now you have.

Tim: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jon: Right?

Tim: That's right.

Jon: That's your stuff.

Tim: That's your stuff.

Jon: So one simple way to flip this over is “Desire your stuff.”

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. That's right.

Jon: And there's actually something—gratitude.

Tim: Yeah, that's right.

Jon: Right?

Tim: Yeah. That's right.

Jon: There's something just really simple and beautiful about that.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Like, you have what you have, and just, like, relish that.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: There's some real good wisdom in that.

Tim: It's great wisdom in that. Yup. So, do desire your stuff.

Jon: Desire the things that God has given you.

Tim: Mhm. Maybe another way of not desiring is "Interrogate your desires." I used that word—the word came to me, but kind of, like, get—get aggressive with them, like poke around. Like, "Why do I think that having my neighbor's deck will make me happy?"

Jon: Mmm. Yeah, your desires are a signal.

Tim: They're a signal of something.

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: Interrogate your desires, and let them take you on a journey.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: To what it is you really want. What is it you really want?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And if you had it, would that really be the end of your desire, or is it possible that the eye is never full of seeing and the ear is never full of hearing?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that you'll never be done meeting that desire? Yeah.

Jon: And so then this all leads us to something that, to me, I'm—even just saying it aloud and repeating it, it just feels trite to me, and I need it to start to feel deep in some way. We're not going to have time to do that.

Tim: Mmm.

[Laughter]

Jon: But—

Tim: It's a good introduction to a thought.

Jon: But—desire God.

Tim: Mhm. Yes.

Jon: I guess—I guess at the end, this is supposed to lead us there, of like, where are all our desires leading us to?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: And it's to finding life in God.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And in one sense, I think that that's really deep and beautiful and meaningful. And in another sense, when I say that, I feel like I'm—it's like I'm just saying the right Sunday school answer. You know what I mean?

Tim: Mhm. Mhm. Totally. Here, let's listen to the wisdom of a theologian. I found this quote, actually, in the—in the, uh, the book on the 10 Commandments by Patrick Miller that I have quoted throughout the series. But it's by a—I think a theologian ethicist, Reinhard Hütter, in an essay called "Christian Freedom and God's Commandments." He puts it this way. He says, "The command to not covet, the 10th command, stubbornly keeps our desires directed toward God." Well, that's interesting. It doesn't say that.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It just says, "Don't desire things that are not—" Right? So he goes on, "To be clear, desire as such is not the problem. It"—that is, desire—"is not bad. Indeed, we're created as creatures with desire. To be human is to desire. All of our desires, however, are created to come to a rest in their one ultimate good, communion with God. Augustine's famous sentence from the Confessions, 'You have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you,' expresses how our desires find rest and fulfillment only in God. If other created things are elevated to a position of ultimate good in ceaseless exchange, then coveting is the unavoidable result. None of these created things will ultimately bring our desiring to a rest. Without"—here's the good line—"without desire, we would cease to be human. Without God as desire's ultimate end, we become inhumane."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Now, I like his way of stating the tension. He doesn't fully address the tension you raised, which is, "Well, thanks for that Augustine quote."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That "our hearts are restless until they find rest in you." But what does that—what does rest in God mean?

Jon: Yeah. Because the—when I experience rest in God, it's usually related to all these other things that—

Tim: Through something that gave you a taste.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: It's through a conversation with a friend or—

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I mean, I guess it's sometimes in just this moment of silence and feeling connected to God.

Tim: Mhm. And incidentally, learning the practice of silence in prayer is a foundational practice about the reshaping of desire in the Christian tradition.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: But that's a whole other thing. But even then, what you're doing is trying to still your desires.

Jon: You're stilling your mind, too.

Tim: And your mind, yeah. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah. Which, then, creates a sense of peace, which is the thing you're desiring.

Tim: That's right. Yeah. Totally. Safety, belonging.

Jon: So you're still satiating a physical desire back to your heart at rest.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Terror leaving your body.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: Like, this is what we desire.

Tim: That's right.

Jon: So when I'm experiencing that transcendent moment with God, my body is resting.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So how do I separate the two, right? Right?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's the—that's the mystery.

Tim: Maybe, yeah, and maybe part of the mystery is saying, "Well, I know that as much as I might think my neighbor's house or wife or ox or donkey or whatever will meet my desires, it won't."

Jon: Yeah, yeah.

Tim: So I can say what won't meet my desire, and what we're having trouble saying, "Well, what does?"

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And we're like, "Well, my house or my wife and my donkey or husband or child or—might, for a moment, meet my desire. But even that will, like, disappoint me in the end." So we can name what it isn't, but it's very difficult to name what it is, except this metaphor of rest and security, right?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And maybe that's the same way you can describe what God is not more easily than you can describe what God is.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: We're kind of—to that same puzzle in—in what it means to talk about God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: But the 10th command is just expansive. It's in a way—in a way, it's about everything.

[Laughter]

Tim: It's about being human.

Jon: Yeah.

[Laughter]

Jon: So can I try this—

Tim: It's underneath all of the other ones.

Jon: Can I try this on?

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: You have heard that it was said, "Do not desire your neighbor's stuff. Any of it. Don't desire it." And what God has to say for us is to be curious about our desires and to let them take us on a journey that somehow will ...

Tim: Mmm. Lead you beyond what you think you desire into something greater than you ever imagined.

Jon: Which will then, somehow, also fulfill our desires.

Tim: Yeah. That's right. Or reshape them so that you don't mistake fulfillment of desire for just one day's desire fulfilled, and the next day you're hungry again. Hmm.

[Musical break (54:06—54:07)]

Jon: Okay, that was—that was it.

Tim: Hmm.

Jon: We just finished the 10th command, the 10th word.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: And so we're done.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: The journey has ended.

Tim: We worked through the 10—the 10 Words, the 10 matters.

Jon: The 10 matters, 10 ideas.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. It's really remarkable, I'm—that I have been so surprised by these conversations because each one has opened up some of the biggest questions about life and human relationships.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uhm—

Jon: They've been sticking with me more than I anticipated.

Tim: Really?

Jon: I think about them throughout the week now, a lot.

Tim: Hmm.

Jon: Uhm—yeah. I don't want to go in—yeah.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: That's for another time.

Tim: But—but there's something—and even the shape of them, that the first four are all about our relationship to God, and that—uhm—it's re—how we think about God, who we think God is, and what God is like really shapes our behavior. So much so that these four, you know—uhm—matters of relating to God.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Uhm—not thinking that the many forces of nature or the cosmos itself is—God will lead me on a better way forward than a different way. Not crea—not relating to God as if he's something that, in reality, we have made.

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: Uh, representing—

Jon: That's number two.

Tim: —God faithfully and also recognizing that God, ultimately, is pointing creation towards a fulfillment and rest.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Uhm—these—these are, like, really important matters. And then the bridge—I love, like, how we relate to the generation before us that produced us—

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: —is part of how we relate to God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So much wisdom there. And then how we—

Jon: And then the triad.

Tim: Yeah, the triad. How we value each other's lives, marriages, and stuff.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Uhm, how we—our commitment to the truth and then just how we think about—how we feel internally about what our neighbor has. Like, this is the stuff, man. It's the stuff of human life.

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: Somehow—somehow my whole life is addressed in these 10 matters. You know?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: It's hard. I mean, I said it multiple times through—it's now hard for me to think of an area of my day-to-day life that's complex or challenging that isn't in some way addressed by the wisdom of the 10—the 10 Words.

Jon: These 10 words are not—uhm—they're not a checklist to just say, "Well, I haven't murdered someone today."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I haven't lied today.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: I'm doing good. This is like a portal into a way of thinking about reality that—that reshapes you. It's real wisdom.

Tim: Yeah. Yes. And I love flipping them over.

Jon: Flipping them over.

Tim: So instead of not misrepresenting God or thinking of God incorrectly, it's—con—you know, this is a summons to constantly think better, truer thoughts about God and then more faithfully represent God.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And how do I preserve life in my community and—

Jon: Yeah, “Do not murder” becomes preserving life.

Tim: Yeah. How do I help create an environment where we see the things that we have as gifts from God? And celebrate that and name that and honor that from each other. I—that was such a great exercise.

Jon: So the 10—the 10 ways of being.

Tim: 10 ways of being.

Jon: The 10 ways that God gives us life. Yeah.

Tim: The 10 ... yeah. Yup. That's it. That's it. Uhm—it's now more clear to me than ever why Jesus made a number of quotes from the 10 Words, like, the center of his ethical reflections in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Like, he saw a universe of wisdom in here, and I—I really see it, too, for myself in—

Jon: Yeah, me too.

Tim: —a new way after journeying through these.

Jon: Well, thank you, Tim.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Thank you. So we're done, but not really.

Jon: Ha!

Tim: Because this—like, the Sermon on the Mount, is kind of something you just should have on replay in your heart and in your mind. Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: That's it for today's episode. Next week, we wrap up our conversation on the 10 Words. We'll reflect on our entire journey, and we'll discuss how the whole Bible is wisdom literature, connecting us to the most important things in life.

Tim: In Jesus' mind, justice, mercy, and faithfulness are the values of the moral universe. And the commands are, like, surface manifestations of all these different ways you could apply the heavier values. But this isn't Jesus innovating. He's just carrying forward this tradition of seeing all the commands as facets of a diamond pointing to a common core.

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