

FRIDAY 06/26/2026

» NEWSLETTER «

# MIDDLETOWN SDA CHURCH

ORIGINS OF SIN: COVETOUSNESS



In this newsletter you can expect:

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PRESENTED BY THE COMMUNICATION TEAM



Issue #5



MONTHLY



# NEWSLETTER



## A HEART THAT WANTS MORE...

My heart yearns more for the things I cannot hold,  
Everywhere I go, I just can't let go.  
I whisper to myself, "I deserve so much more".  
Yet deep within, I'm never quite sure.

I've heard it said the things of earth will fade,  
So what is truly worth the price I've paid?  
Should I pursue the treasures of today,  
Or seek the riches that will never pass away?

I know, I know, its often said, "Godliness with contentment is great gain."  
But how can I let go of a hold so strong.  
I see it, I want it—it runs through my veins.

My desires consume me, yet I often think.  
Isn't God's provisions just enough for me?  
Gold may tarnish and silver may fade,  
But God's provisions for me, is enough each day.  
-Reneé Russell

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Vacation Bible School**

Join us July 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> for a fun and exciting VBS Program centered around the theme: Cactusville—"Where Kids are Called to Follow Jesus." A week dedicated to prayer, scripture, and reflection.

- **Youths Day**

Join us on July 29<sup>th</sup> for Youth Day, centered on the theme "The Three Witnesses." Have you ever wondered if God exists, and if He does, which God is the true God? Join us as we conduct this search.



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## ORIGINS OF SIN: COVETOUSNESS



Welcome back to the Middletown SDA Church Newsletter. We pray that each issue has been a source of encouragement and spiritual growth. Over the next few issues, we will explore the origins of sin, its effects on the lives of biblical characters, and the lessons we can apply to our own walk with Christ. In this issue, we begin our series by examining **covetousness**—a subtle yet destructive sin that continues to challenge God's people today.

Just as major tabloids and newspapers often highlight what they consider the biggest celebrity scandals, Christians often focus on the sins that led to Lucifer's fall. We marvel at how such a perfect being, dwelling in the very presence of God, could turn away from his Creator and choose his own path. We shake our heads in disbelief at his rebellion and wonder how someone with so much could desire more.

But are we any different?

Can it be said of us that we do not possess the very traits that led to Satan's rebellion and ultimate demise?

Though the circumstances may differ, the battle within the human heart remains the same. Let's dive deeper into this topic and explore the dangers of covetousness and how we can safeguard against this very same sin.

**Covetousness** according to Webster's dictionary, can be defined as, "the inordinate, eager, or excessive desire to possess wealth, material goods, or – most specifically – something that belongs to someone else." The Hebrew word *hamad* carries the idea of desiring greatly, while *avah* means to lust after or crave. Similarly, the Greek word *epithymeo* conveys the thought of longing for or setting one's heart upon something. At first glance, covetousness may not seem like a particularly serious sin. After all, what is so wrong with wanting something? How harmful can a simple desire be? Yet Scripture reveals that when desire is allowed to grow unchecked and is not surrendered to God, it can lead to devastating consequences—not only for ourselves, but for those around us as well.

The Bible tells the story of a man named Achan who, in direct disobedience to God's command, took some of the accursed things from Jericho. What may have seemed like a private decision to gratify his own desires ultimately affected the entire nation of Israel. Unbeknownst to Joshua, Achan had committed this trespass against God. Confident after their victory at Jericho, Joshua sent men to battle against Ai. However, the men of Ai defeated Israel, and thirty-six Israelites lost their lives. Though the defeat may have appeared small from a military perspective, it was devastating in the eyes of Joshua. In deep distress, he rent his clothes and sought the Lord. God revealed the reason for Israel's defeat, saying, "*Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff*" (**Joshua 7:11**).

Before Israel could stand victorious against its enemies, the sin within the camp had to be removed. In His mercy, God gave Achan an opportunity to confess his wrongdoing and repent. Yet Achan remained silent, hiding his sin and hoping it would remain undiscovered.

Joshua then gathered the people before the Lord. Tribe by tribe, family by family, and man by man they came forward until the tribe of Judah was selected and finally Achan himself was identified. Joshua pleaded with Achan to give glory to God by acknowledging his guilt. At last Achan confessed, saying, "Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them" (Joshua 7:20–21).

Achan as we know perished because of his sin of covetousness. To answer the question, how bad can this truly be? Bad enough that thirty-six men lost their lives. Bad enough that a man and his entire family had to die. Was the sin of one man worth the lives of so many?

Lucifer, like Achan desired what did not belong to him, and the result of that was the death of Jesus. "But though honored above the heavenly host, Lucifer was not content with his position. He ventured to covet the homage due alone to the Creator. He cherished feelings of envy, and these feelings he communicated to the other angels." 7MR 63.1 Both Lucifer and Achan were not lacking in blessings. Lucifer held an exalted position in heaven, and Achan had already witnessed God's miraculous leading of Israel. Yet both desired what God had withheld from them. Their downfall was not caused by a lack of provision, but by a refusal to be content with what God had already given.

As Christians, we often desire good things, but in our pursuit of them, we must seek God's guidance and submit our desires to Him, for only He knows what is best for us. James 4:2–3 says, "Ye lust, and have not... ye desire to have, and cannot obtain... yet ye have not, because ye ask not." The Greek word translated as desire in this passage is *zeloo*, meaning to burn with zeal, envy, or intense longing.

Covetousness is more than simply wanting something; it is allowing our desires to grow beyond God's will and becoming consumed by what is not ours. While our intentions may be innocent, desires that are not surrendered to God can lead to unfavorable results. Christ therefore warns us, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (**Luke 12:15**).

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# HOW CAN WE SAFEGUARD AGAINST COVETOUSNESS?

## 1. **Prayer and constant communion with God-**

Prayer is one of our greatest safeguards against temptation. Through regular communion with God, we allow Him to reveal the hidden motives of our hearts and ask Him to remove any spirit of envy, greed, or discontentment. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” (Matthew 26:41)

2. **Active Generosity-** When we focus on giving rather than getting, we loosen the grip of materialism on our hearts. Generosity shifts our focus from earthly possessions to eternal treasures. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

3. **Intentional Gratitude-** Take time to reflect on God's blessings in your life. It is difficult to be thankful for God's provision while simultaneously coveting what belongs to someone else. “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

4. **Identify Your Triggers-** Pay attention to situations that foster comparison and discontentment. If social media or certain environments cause you to constantly compare yourself to others, establish healthy boundaries to protect your heart. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

5. **Reflect on Eternal Value-** The things of this world are temporary. Remember that life's true value is not found in what we possess, but in our relationship with Christ and the impact we make for His kingdom. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:2)



## REFLECTION

Covetousness is more than a desire for possessions; it is a condition of the heart that places our desires above God's will. Whether in heaven with Lucifer, in Israel's camp with Achan, or in our own lives today, the results are always the same—separation from God and unnecessary sorrow. As we await Christ's soon return, may we learn to be content with His provision, trust His timing, and surrender every desire to Him. For when Christ is enough, covetousness loses its power, and our hearts are free to follow Him completely.



# RELIGIOUS LIBERTY



## MIDDLETOWN SDA CHURCH

**Religious Liberty Can  
Only be Found in Jesus**  
-Claudia Douglas

### MESSAGE FROM RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER

As we enter the month of June, our thoughts naturally turn to themes of freedom, heritage, and the blessings of the country we live in. Yet, as a church family, the Holy Spirit is calling us to look past human legislation and political debates to anchor ourselves in a deeper truth: True religious liberty can only be found in Jesus.



### THUS SAITH THE LORD...

“The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God's witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands.... We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God's word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A “Thus saith the Lord” is not to be set aside for a “Thus saith the Church” or a “Thus saith the State.” The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.

– Conflict and Courage, Page 329

### MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

*Wednesday*

*Children's Bible Study: 6:00 PM*

*Prayer Meeting- 7:00 PM*



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# Religious Liberty Can Only Be Found in Jesus

## By: Claudia Douglas



### **The Source of Conscience**

Earthly governments can grant civil liberties, and they can just as easily take them away. But the freedom to choose, to love, and to worship according to the dictates of one's own conscience is a divine gift from God at creation.

In the scriptures, Jesus beautifully outlined the boundaries of human and divine authority. He famously stated, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Matthew 22:21). Our conscience, our worship, and our ultimate loyalty belong exclusively to God. Whenever human laws try to compel the heart, they step into a realm that belongs only to the Lord God, our Creator.

### **Christ Rules by Love, Not Force**

The very nature of Jesus' kingdom is built on absolute freedom of choice. He never forces us to follow Him. God rules entirely by love and respect for our personal agency, never by compulsion or forced obedience.

When we accept Jesus into our hearts, He builds an impenetrable wall around our spiritual agency. As Ellen G. White (1898) powerfully writes, "The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it except His own" (p. 324).

This is where our ultimate liberty resides. Even if a day comes when physical, civil, or religious freedoms are restricted by earthly powers, a soul anchored in Jesus remains completely free. We must always remember that true freedom of conscience is a matter of personal accountability to God. As White (1911) later emphasizes in her prophetic warnings:

To compel men to worship according to the dictates of a state religion, or to prevent them from worshipping according to their own conscience, is a violation of the most sacred rights of humanity. God has left every soul free to choose whom he will serve. (p. 591)

### **Our Sacred Stewardship**

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have a long, rich history of standing up for religious freedom—not just for ourselves, but for all people. The Apostle Paul admonishes us to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Galatians 5:1).

We are called to be faithful stewards of this liberty. This means we must boldly declare the truth, pray for our leaders, and stand firm when human decrees conflict with God's Word. As the apostles fearlessly declared, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Acts 5:29).

True liberty is not found in the halls of Congress or Supreme Court rulings; it is found at the foot of the cross, where Christ broke the chains of sin and set us eternally free.

### **How You Can Get Involved Today**

As stewards of this divine freedom, we invite you to actively partner with our Religious Liberty Ministry:

**Subscribe and Share:** Please visit the official Liberty Magazine Subscription Portal to sign up for your bimonthly issues. Once you receive it, make a conscious effort to share its timely insights on religious freedom with your family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

### **References**

King James Bible. (2017). King James Bible Online. [kingjamesbibleonline.org](http://kingjamesbibleonline.org) (Original work published 1769)

White, E.G. (1898). *The desire of ages*. Pacific Press Publishing Association.

White, E.G. (1911). *The great controversy*. Pacific Press Publishing Association.

# CHILDREN'S CORNER

## THE SHINY RED BIKE

A Children's Comic About the Dangers of Covetousness

Memory Verse:  
"Take heed, and  
beware of covetousness."  
— Luke 12:15

**1** It was a beautiful Sabbath afternoon, and Jake was having fun playing with his friends.



This is so much fun!

Look what I got for my birthday!

**2** Ethan showed off his brand-new, shiny red bike.



Wow! That's the coolest bike I've ever seen!

As Jake watched Ethan ride, a thought entered his mind.

I wish that bike was mine.

**3** The more Jake thought about the bike, the more unhappy he became.



My bike isn't as nice. Why does Ethan get one and not me?

Jake, what's wrong?

**4** Soon, Jake's jealousy began affecting his friendship.




Want to ride together?

No.

Covetousness was stealing Jake's joy.

**5** That evening, the family had worship together.

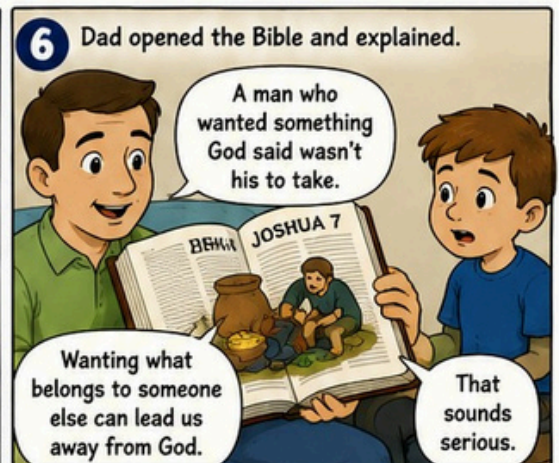


Tonight's story is about Achan.

Who's Achan?

HOLY BIBLE

**6** Dad opened the Bible and explained.



A man who wanted something God said wasn't his to take.

Wanting what belongs to someone else can lead us away from God.

That sounds serious.

JOSHUA 7

**7** Jake went to his room and prayed.



Jesus, I'm sorry for being jealous. Thank You for what You've given me. Help me be thankful.

God began changing Jake's heart.

**8** *Time:* The next day, Jake's heart was different.



Your bike is really cool, Ethan!

Sure!

Thanks! Want to ride with me?

Jake learned that true happiness comes from being thankful for God's blessings, not from wanting what belongs to someone else.

### THE LESSON

Covetousness begins when we focus on what others have instead of thanking God for what He has given us. A grateful heart is a happy heart!

### THINK ABOUT IT

- 1 Have you ever wanted something that belonged to someone else?
- 2 What did Jake learn about covetousness?
- 3 How can we show gratitude for God's blessings?

### MEMORY VERSE

"Take heed, and  
beware of covetousness."  
— Luke 12:15



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## EVENT HIGHLIGHT

### ADVENTURER AND PATHFINDER CAMPOREE- MAY 2026



From May 28th–31st, our Adventurers and Pathfinders embarked on an exciting journey to the **United Camporee**. This special event challenged them to grow spiritually and deepen their walk with Christ. Through worship, outdoor activities, honors, teamwork, and Bible-based learning, they were encouraged to rise above life's challenges and pursue higher standards of faith, character, and service.

The theme "**Climb Higher**" served as a reminder that the Christian journey is one of continual growth. Just as a climber presses upward toward the summit, we are called to draw closer to Christ each day, trust Him more fully, and surrender our lives completely to His leading. We pray that the lessons learned and friendships formed during this Camporee will continue to inspire our young people to climb higher in their relationship with Jesus.

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Thank you for reading!

MIDDLETOWN SDA CHURCH NY	  
<a href="http://www.msdac.org/newsletters">www.msdac.org/newsletters</a>	70 Highland Avenue, Middletown NY 10940

### THERE IS A BURNING IN MY HEART...

There's a burning in my heart, a faint scream I can't contain  
A desire that ripples through the path and courses through my veins

My eyes have seen an object, with beauty so divine  
But its owner has it in his grasp; oh, I wish it could be mine  
Why should he have this marvel that I can only dream to touch  
Wouldn't I be better off since this man has far too much?

The anger rippled in me, and left a color red  
The color had a sound of hate that burned against my head  
The "whys" sprang up within me and rested on my lips  
Why couldn't I just use some force and from his hands I'll rip  
I'll rip this precious object and hide it far beneath  
Way below the chasm yonder  
Six feet underneath.

So I buried it as I promised and obeyed those evil thoughts  
But now my neighbour lies with it  
What a cruel thing I've wrought  
I have given up my life for a thing I couldn't own  
And now I sit within a cell lost and all alone  
Was this object worth this much? With bitterness I moan  
Lamenting all my hatred and the crown of life I disowned

– A.Y. Department