
Covetous Desires

D&C 117:4

On July 8, 1838, at Far West, Missouri, the Prophet Joseph Smith received four revelations (D&C 117–120). In this revelation, given on July 8, the Lord commanded Newel K. Whitney and William Marks to quickly settle their business affairs in Kirtland, Ohio, and gather with the faithful in Far West. The reason Whitney and Marks had not gathered earlier to Far West was because of their properties in Kirtland. Whitney was the successful business owner of the N. K. Whitney & Company. Marks owned a book and stationery business. The Lord told these brethren, “You should [not] covet that which is but the drop, and neglect the more weighty matters” of the Kingdom, for greater blessings awaited them (D&C 117:8).

Whitney and Marks were told by revelation to “repent of all their sins, and of their covetous desires, before me, saith the Lord; for what is property unto me?” (D&C 117:4). The Lord commanded them, “Before I, the Lord, send again the snows upon the earth,” to leave Kirtland and join the Saints in Far West (v. 1). Whitney and Marks were further told that “if they tarry it shall not be well with them” (v. 3).

Even with these admonitions to move from Kirtland, Whitney and Marks delayed their departure. They tarried and faced the wrath of the mob element in Kirtland. They never gathered with the Saints in Far West as commanded. However, they remained faithful. Whitney and Marks gathered with the Saints to Nauvoo, Illinois, where many blessings were bestowed upon them.

The problem with Whitney and Marks was that they coveted that which they yearned to possess. Since antiquity the Lord has admonished his people, “Thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:17). In the Second Book of Timothy we learn, “In the last days, men shall be covetous” (2 Timothy 3:1–2). In the covetous times of the last days, the Lord admonished His people, “Thou shalt not covet thine own property” (D&C 19:26), “cease to be covetous” (D&C 88:123), and “do not covet that which is thy brother’s” (D&C 136:20). The

reason for the Lord's counsel is that coveting results in unhappiness and is an expression of disappointment in the blessings given by the Lord.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson, in his general conference address in October 2009, spoke of a time in his childhood when coveting took precedence over making a correct choice:

When I was about five or six years old, I lived across the street from a small grocery store. One day two other boys invited me to go with them to the store. As we stood coveting the candy for sale there, the older boy grabbed a candy bar and slipped it into his pocket. He urged the other boy and me to do the same, and after some hesitation we did. Then we quickly left the store and ran off in separate directions. I found a hiding place at home and tore off the candy wrapper. My mother discovered me with the chocolate evidence smeared on my face and escorted me back to the grocery store. As we crossed the street, I was sure I was facing life imprisonment. With sobs and tears, I apologized to the owner and paid him for the candy bar with a dime that my mother had loaned me (which I had to earn later). My mother's love and discipline put an abrupt and early end to my life of crime.¹

¹ D. Todd Christofferson, "Moral Discipline," *Ensign*, November 2009.