

Thou Shalt not Covet  
Read Genesis 3:6

The original sin of Adam and Eve was not in eating forbidden fruit. Yes, the consequences were due to having consumed the tempting product yielded by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—they would die. The origin of their sin occurred, however, when Eve “**saw** that the tree was good for food..., a delight to the eyes..., and desirable to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6). Only afterwards does the Scripture state that Eve “**took** from its fruit and ate.” Thus, the source of their transgression was their intense desire to have that which was not theirs to have, for the fruit belonged to God.

“The Fall” is the bedrock for the rest of Scripture. It therefore is not surprising that other Biblical narratives resemble this one. To demonstrate, one need only observe that words and concepts from this first story are repeated in other narratives. This repetition joins the diverse stories. In addition, a mutual theme is present in all of them: covetousness.

The first illustration of the author knitting together a story with that of The Fall is found in Genesis 6:1-2. Men specified as “sons of God” are presented. We learn that they “**saw** the daughters of men” (v. 2). This information would not be noteworthy but for what comes next: a description of what they saw—they were “beautiful”—and that they “**took** wives for themselves” from amongst them (v.2). As in The Fall, these sons of God saw something, a description is provided, and they took what they saw. Additionally, just as Adam and Eve would die, so these sons of God would: in the flood.

Judges 14:1-3 provides another example. Samson, one of Israel’s judges, traveled to a gentile city, which should have been off limits to him. There he “**saw**” one of the “daughters of the Philistines” (v. 1). Apposing his parents’ wishes, he insisted that they “**take** her” for him as a wife, because “she is right in my eyes” (vv.2- 3). These descriptive words prepare us for the final chapter in the tale of Samson. “Eyes” that continually “**saw**” as potential mates those who were not of like common faith were eventually “gouged out” by the Philistines. Ultimately, he died because he craved the forbidden: an unbeliever.

King David’s heinous sin of adultery is uncovered in 2 Samuel 11. David, absent from the battle scene kings normally attended, had time to wander “around the roof of the king’s house” (11:2). Hence, he “**saw**” the “beautiful” Bathsheba bathing (v. 2). According to previous patterns, David “**took** her” and “lay with her” (v. 4). In this narrative, death comes to a week old infant born to them.

The violations described in these prior instances are identified as coveting in Joshua 7. In the afterglow of Jericho’s conquest, following the people’s obedience to God in dedicating the town and everything in it to Him, a troubling problem erupted. Unbeknownst to Joshua, an Israelite named Achen had confiscated some of the goods from the banned town and buried them. As a result, Joshua’s men were defeated in their next campaign. Once Achen was recognized as the culprit, he related that when he “**saw** among the spoil” a “beautiful” Babylonian cloak and some silver and gold, he “coveted and **took**” them (Josh. 7:20-21). Achen’s sin led to an indictment of death (v. 25).

These four examples demonstrate how Scripture knits together several narratives through duplicate terms. Moreover, they reveal the offensive nature of covetousness: it is inordinate desire for that which does not belong to us. Adam and Eve desired the fruit

that was not theirs to have; the sons of God fancied women who were not theirs to have; Samson yearned for unbelieving mistresses who were not his to have; David lusted after a wife who was not his to have; Achen had an appetite for luxurious wares that were not his to have. All died as a result.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:6, discloses that these things “happened,” as “examples for us” so that Christ followers “would not crave evil things as they also craved.” That “craving” is revealed as coveting. And the tenth commandment states, “Thou shalt not covet.”