THOU SHALT NOT COVET
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Nathan watched the shiny-black sports car turn the corner, then he stepped away from the curb and started down the sidewalk to his home. Randy had everything. Everything! You name it, he either had it or was in the process of obtaining it. And Randy Cabbott was the same age as he, Nathan, was!
"It isn't fair!" Nathan stormed aloud to no one but himself. "Some people have everything and others have nothing."

Realizing that his statement classified him in the "have nothing" category, and that said statement was far from being accurate and truthful where he was concerned, Nathan modified it slightly, saying, rather, "others have little."

He was almost at his home when he heard the revved-up motor of Randy's new car coming down the street again. Randy was showing off, Nathan thought with disgust.

"Hi, Nathan," Randy called, slowing the car down slightly, making sure that Nathan got a look at his new car -- a good look -- before he went racing away down the street again with screeching tires.

"Talk about conceit!" Nathan muttered in disgust.

He watched until the smart little job had turned the corner, then he started up the sidewalk to his home. Even their house looked shoddy compared to the Cabbotts' house, Nathan thought, dreaming idle dreams of when he would be working full-time and what he would do and buy with his money.

He looked at the modest but well-kept house which his parents owned and suddenly he wished they had as much money as Randy's parents had. Why, they could then move out of this end of town and could buy land up in Mountain Heights, too, like the Cabbotts. They could build a house every bit as beautiful as the one in which Randy and his folks were living, Nathan thought, feeling quite unhappy and dissatisfied with everything his folks had, and which they had been able to provide for him.

He heard Randy's car coming down the street again and with three giant steps he was up on the porch and inside the house, muttering, "Show off!"

He bypassed the kitchen, knowing full well his mother would question his mood. She had a strangely-peculiar but powerfully-accurate detector system somewhere in her inner being that seemed always to pinpoint what was taking place in him. Today he wanted to avoid this. It was bad enough
being too poor to have even small nice ties like other fellows his age, let alone not being able to own even a small, older model car he could call his very own.

He shut the door to his room and walked over to the window. Statue-like, he stared through the open window to the neatly-kept lawn and flower beds beyond. Birds and butterflies flitted from trees and flowers in happy and carefree abandon. A gentle breeze came silently in through the open window and ruffled the curtains playfully and a mocking bird broke out in beautiful mimicry of the borin, wood thrush, towee and, finally, a raucous cry like the blue jay, ending, at last, with another softly-sweet trill like the wood thrush.

Nathan walked away from the window and dropped down into the nearest chair. Somehow, he had to earn more money. Mr. Bierns wasn't paying him enough, he thought again, as he had done numerous other times. Mr. Bierns was a good man, to be sure; but he didn't seem to take into consideration the fact that most every young man owned his own car and that if he were paying him, Nathan, more, he, too, could be owning one. He and the bank, that is. But under the present setup, Nathan knew there was no way he could buy a car. Not even a "second-hand" car.

He got to his feet and began pacing the floor. He should go down to the store and tell Mr. Bierns he needed more money, he thought. Didn't he always go far beyond the normal work schedule and work overtime?

And for no extra pay whatever, too! Indeed he did. If only he could go full-time, he thought, running his fingers through his thick, dark brown hair. But he had one more year of school to finish.

"Nathan. Nathan." His mother called from the kitchen.

"What do you want?" he asked, opening the door and answering his mother's call.

"Mister Bierns called a short time ago. He needs you down at the store as soon as you can get there."

"Oh, no! I get so tired of this . . . this. . . ."
"This what, Nathan?" Mrs. Morrison asked, as she made her way down the hallway to where her son stood in the open doorway.

"Oh, forget it!"

"Nathan, you don't talk like this to me; I am your mother. What's bothering you; Randy's new car?"

Nathan almost jumped in surprise. How did she know? How? It was almost unreal, the way his mother could pinpoint his feelings and his problems and battles. " 'Thou shalt not covet.' "

Her quotation of one of the Ten Commandments hit his heart like he had been shot with an arrow.

"Covetousness is sin, Nathan. It will land one in hell the same as murdering and committing adultery will. God doesn't make concessions for sin; not for any sin. Just because Randy got a new car doesn't mean you need to get one."

"That's a joke!" Nathan exclaimed bitterly. "I can't even afford an old car, let alone a new one. Worse still, my parents can't do a thing to help me!"

That stung; he could feel it, and he was sorry after he had said it.

Mrs. Morrison looked at her son in profound shock. When she spoke, her voice quivered with emotion. "No, we can't help, this is quite true, Nathan. But your kind father and I have tried to give you things that money can't buy. Our home is a home where love and peace reside and abide. Is Randy's home supplied with these virtues? We have tried to instill in each of you children that 'Godliness with contentment is great gain'; not that new sports cars and palatial homes and elegant furnishings and large bank accounts are 'great gain' and constitute happiness, which they don't. And, until today, I had thought you were happy and content with such things as we could provide for you.

"I feel sorry for you, Nathan; my heart is heavy over you. You have allowed the greatest Source of peace and contentment to slip silently away from you without much notice on your part. Your father and I have felt it happening for some time and we have been doing a lot of praying about it."
"I'm sorry I said what I did about you and Dad not being able to help me," Nathan said humbly. "Forgive me, please, Mother. That was nasty of me. But I guess I'm just full up with not having so much as a decent older model car to call my own."

"But are you lacking, Nathan? I mean, you can easily walk to where you work; or, if you'd rather, you can ride your ten-speed bicycle. What's so wrong with that? True, it isn't a car. But you have always gotten around to wherever you need to go. Your father gives you the car when you and the church young people want to go to youth gatherings and special services, or such like things. Our house, though nothing at all like the Cabbotts', has always been open to all your friends, and to many a happy time with the church young people.

"Do you think Randy has enjoyed anything equal to this? From what he has told Tammy Brown, whose mother told me, Randy is an extremely lonely young man. His parents are seldom home. To make up for their absence and their much-lacking parenting, they buy Randy 'things.' Like the new sports car, for instance. The Cabbotts just got back from a trip abroad. Randy stayed at an elderly aunt's home. To make up for their long absence, they appeased him with the car."

Nathan gasped. "Mom, how do you know this?" he asked. "I . . . I mean . . . well . . . that . . . that's awful! Are you saying that Randy has little, if any, decent home life?"

"Exactly so."

"But . . . but how do you know? I . . . I mean . . . well, is it the truth?"

"Do you believe in and have confidence in Amanda Brown, Nathan?"

"Do I ever! She's a real saint."

"Then ask her sometime about Randy. She's the Cabbotts' cleaning lady; has been ever since they built up in Mountain Heights. She's not a gossip, Nathan, as you know. And very few people know this about Randy. He's extremely lonely and he's equally unhappy."
"I . . . I'm honestly sorry, Mother. Again I ask you to please forgive me for what I said and for the bad, bad attitude I've manifested, too. I've been extremely covetous of Randy -- of his new car, their mansion-like house and, well, I guess of just everything they have. They seem to have everything!"

"Except the lasting, enduring, eternal things, Nathan," Mrs. Morrison answered. "Things that money can't buy; things like salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and holiness of heart; things like a conscience void of offense toward both God and man; things like love, joy, peace, happiness, faith and contentment and, ultimately, things like crossing death's river knowing all is well between your soul and God and having a safe and joyous landing on the shore of Heaven. We are rich, my son! Extremely rich, in eternal things! Why don't you return to your Heavenly Father and to His kind of riches? My heart is breaking over you. . . .

Like a dammed-up river, Nathan's tears flowed down his cheeks. "I'm positively miserable and unhappy in my present state," he cried. "Oh, Mother, do help me find my way back to God. It's a desolate life without Him and His wonderful presence. Please, will you pray with me? I'm sorry. Sorry. . . .

The joybells were soon ringing in Nathan's heart; he prayed until he knew his sins were all forgiven and were washed in Jesus' precious blood. Randy's new car seemed like trash in comparison to the peace and soul rest in his soul. This time, he purposed within his heart, he would go on into holiness; he would seek until God's purging, refining fire had utterly purged and cleansed his heart from all inbred sin. There would be no more coveting; none whatever, after he was wholly sanctified.

Getting up from his knees, he felt God call him to a certain, specific mission, that of reaching out to a very lonely, much-neglected young man with the love of Christ. Joyfully he answered, "Here am I, Lord; I'll go!" What joy it would be to help Randy find riches which money could not buy; riches in Christ!

Giving his mother a loving hug, he said tenderly, "You're the greatest, Mom! You and Dad! I love you. I'll see you later, God willing. Mr. Bierns needs me. He's a good man."

Mrs. Morrison watched as Nathan rode away on his ten-speed bicycle. "Thank You, kind Father," she cried joyously. "Thank You!"