

The Eighth Commandment

We have progressed through the Commandments, starting by honoring and respecting God, His Name, His Sabbath, one another's parents, one another's lives, marriages and now possessions. We respect another's possessions by not confiscating nor withholding them from him. Or simply put ...

"You shall not steal."

Exodus 20:15

It is easier said than done, for there are many ways to violate this Command. You do not have to be a bank robber nor a shop lifter to be in violation of God's decree. Any failure to give another person his or her due will mark you a thief just as surely as a burglar who walks away with their entire account. The taking of seemingly inconsequential items from the work place or from an acquaintance will also violate this command. The punishments may differ, but in God's eyes, the transgression is as sure.

'Crime and Punishment'

As mentioned in the previous lesson, God gives us a picture of the seriousness of the Command through the punishment He demands for violating it. Observe the penalties issued for theft below.

- 1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.
- 2 "If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account.
- 3 "But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.
- 4 "If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

Exodus 22:1-4

- Circle what a thief owes for a stolen ox or sheep that is unrecoverable. (v 1)
- Underline what a thief owes if he is killed during the robbery attempt. (v 2)
- Underline what a thief must do if he survives a robbery attempt. (v 3)
- Circle what he owes if what is stole is recovered. (v 4)

What is learned about God from the punishments listed in the passage? _____

In God's economy, crime really doesn't pay. God does not try to rehabilitate the criminal but metes out a punishment that is meant to dissuade a second attempt. But then, perhaps strict punishment is a form of rehabilitation.



Fitting Punishment

The punishments of God make stealing a losing proposition. At best, the thief loses **double** what he stole, but at worst, he pays with his life! It makes you wonder how crime rates would be affected should our judicial system adopt these more stringent standards of punishment!

Theft by Stealth

There are ways to steal right from under people's noses without them even knowing. It can happen to you and maybe it has. And God is against it!

A false balance is an abomination to the LORD,
But a just weight is His delight.

Proverbs 11:1

- Underline what is an abomination to the LORD.
- Circle what is His delight.

What is implied by 'a false balance'? _____

The Bible is filled with scriptures prohibiting fraud in the marketplace. In three thousand years, greed still tempts men to search for ways to defraud their fellow man. Whether in the supermarket or the stock market, **God condemns any deception that defrauds the buyer!**

The Ultimate Theft

There is no greater theft, save taking a person's life (Commandment Five), than to steal the person himself!

"He who kidnaps a man,
whether he sells him or he is found in his possession,
shall surely be put to death.

Exodus 21:16

- Circle what the theft of a person is called.
- Underline the punishment for this crime.

Why does God require such a severe punishment for this crime? _____

How do you explain the difference between the punishments issued by God and that by our modern systems of justice? _____



Amos 8:4-5
Hosea 12:7
Deuteronomy 25:13-16

Theft in the Name of God

The common portrayal of Jesus the Galilean is of a man who was 'meek and mild.' But the following episode dispels that interpretation. And the thing that elicited such a powerful response from Him was the theft that was occurring in the very Temple of God.

- 12 And Jesus entered the temple
and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple,
and overturned the tables of the moneychangers
and the seats of those who were selling doves.
- 13 And He *said to them,
"It is written,
'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER';
but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN."

Matthew 21:12-13

- Underline the people Jesus targeted in the temple.
- Circle what Jesus said God's house should be called.
- Circle what they had made it.

How might this kind of theft occur today? _____

Theft by Omission

Perhaps to gain a measure of the notoriety of Barnabas (Acts 4:34-37), who gave the entire funds of a land sale to the apostles., a husband and wife in the early church attempted to mimic his generosity with an important omission.

- 1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,
2 and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge,
and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.
- 3 But Peter said,
"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit
and to keep back *some* of the price of the land?"
- 4 "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own?
And after it was sold, was it not under your control?
Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart?
You have not lied to men but to God."
- 5 And as he heard these words,
Ananias fell down and breathed his last;
and great fear came over all who heard of it.

Acts 5:1-5

- Underline what Ananias did that met God's disapproval.
- Circle what Satan enticed him to do.
- Underline what happened to him.

A Disciple and a Thief

John 11:4-6

Judas Iscariot was both a thief and a disciple of Christ. The combination of these two seemingly contradictory qualities led to the betrayal and ended in Christ's crucifixion. Whatever Judas' motives, it was greed that sealed his doom, as it will do to all who succumb to its empty promises.

Supporting your answer with the scripture passage, explain Ananias' sin? _____

Did God take Ananias' life? If so, why ... if not, why not? _____

How would an incident like this affect the church today? _____

God's Advice to Thieves

In a word, **WORK!**

'He who steals must steal no longer;
but rather he must labor,
performing with his own hands what is good,
so that he will have *something* to share with one who has need.'
Ephesians 4:28

- Circle what the one who steals must do.
- Circle what he ought to do with his hands.
- Underline why he ought to work.

How is making an honest living through work a good thing? _____

This commandment refutes the age old axiom 'The ends justify the means.' That axiom is the anthem of thieves who justify their thefts by the lifestyle it affords them. Unfortunately for them, God is concerned with the 'means'! For don't you know ...

... that **the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?**
Do not be deceived;
neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,
nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, **nor thieves**, nor *the* covetous,
nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers,
will inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10



It is more blessed to give
Acts 20:35
1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
2 Thessalonians 3:6-12