

#8. Do Not Steal

(Exodus 20:15)

Introduction

I bet everyone here is a thief! We have all stolen; even me! Every one of us, at one time or another, has taken what was not given to us, lifted what was not purchased, kept something that wasn't ours, or ruined something that belonged to someone else.

Whether we have taken a piece of candy from a grocery store or wrecked a friend's toy, or borrowed something from our own brother or sister and just never got around to returning it, we have all broken the 8th Commandment: You must not steal.

Have you ever gotten into your mother's purse and taken money out? Have you ever been given too much change back at the store? Have you ever found money that wasn't yours on the side walk and kept it? That's stealing! We're all guilty.

And what are our excuses?

- Finders, keepers
- They made the error
- I deserve this
- They won't notice it's missing
- Everyone is doing it
- No one will notice

We've all taken what was not ours to take or kept what was not ours to keep.

As we take a deeper look at this 8th Commandment today, let's understand what causes us to sin against God in this way is not really believing that God takes our breaking this commandment seriously.

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, You give me everything I need and more. You give me food, clothes, and a family. You give me friends, a church, and love. Please help me to never dishonor You by stealing. Help me to become a giver and not a taker. Help me to have open hands, not hands that sneak and take things. I want to be known as one of Your special people. Thank You for making me one of Your treasures! In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

You must not steal. (Exodus 20:15)

Lesson

We have been learning the Ten Commandments. Can anyone say the first seven without looking?

1. *Do not have any gods but Me* – God wants us to recognize that He is the *only* true God who created all things. He doesn't want us to let anything or anyone become more important to us than He is.
2. *Do not worship idols* – God wants us to worship only Him. Don't let anyone or anything steal God's place in your life.
3. *Keep God's Name Holy* – God doesn't want us to ever think anything, say anything or do anything that would bring dishonor to His name.
4. *Set aside a special day for God* – God wants us to dedicate one day a week to Him. It shows others how important God is to us, plus it refreshes our spirits.
5. *Honor your father and mother* – God promises us that if we respect and obey our parents, we will live a long and happy life.
6. *Do not murder* – God wants us to honor and respect life by choosing to say *no* to violence.

7. *Do not commit adultery* – God wants you to be true to your husband or wife.

The first four commandments teach us to love God with all of our hearts. And the other six commandments teach us to love others with that same kind of perfect love. By learning how to honor and love God first, you learn to honor and love others.

Today we're going to learn the eighth commandment.

Exodus 20:15

You must not steal.

Stealing is taking or keeping something that is not your own. Robbing a bank and shoplifting are not the *only* ways to steal. Can you think of other ways people steal things?

- Copying answers from somebody else's school paper is stealing.
- Cheating in a game is stealing another's chance to win.

The Bible says we should love our neighbors as ourselves. If we love others as we love ourselves, we will want the best for them and will not steal things from them.

We are God's special people, His precious treasure. So we need to show the world how to be *givers*; not *takers*.

Punishment for Theft

There was a time in Israel before Jesus was born where whole families were punished for the sins of an individual family member.

- Do you think it would be fair if you were punished for something your brother or sister did?

After Moses died, Joshua became the leader of the Israelites. It was Joshua that led the people over the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. They had to fight many battles to get their land back

from the Canaanites. The first battle they fought was the Battle of Jericho. Remember? They marched around the city seven times, blew the trumpets and all the walls came tumbling down!

Joshua had ordered the people to take nothing from the city for themselves. If they found any silver, gold, bronze or iron they were to give these to the Lord so they could maintain the house of God. The soldiers were not to take anything for themselves.

So after they entered the city of Jericho, the soldiers went through the rubble, collecting the gold, silver, bronze and other riches. And every soldier brought everything he found to the treasury of the Lord. But, Joshua did not know that one man, Achan (AY-kuhn), disobeyed.

When Achan saw a beautiful robe, some silver and gold among Jericho's treasures, he desired them for himself and decided to steal them. When no one was looking, Achan took the robe, silver, and gold and buried them underneath his tent!

When Joshua found out about this, he was shocked and horrified! This was a very serious crime! Who would steal from God?

Joshua sent some men to search Achan's tent and they found the stolen goods hidden there. God told Joshua he had to punish Achan's whole family for what he had done!

This, I am sure, made Joshua very sad but he had to punish Achan for disobeying God's command. Joshua put Achan and his whole family to death then burned all of his possessions. God showed the Israelites that disobeying Him has serious results.

What a shame that Achan's whole family had to suffer because of Achan's greed. Aren't you glad you don't have to be put to death when one of your family members sins against God?

Since then God, in His mercy, has changed those customs:

Ezekiel 18:20

The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.

Now everyone is responsible for their own actions. Stealing is always wrong. It is never right. And God says if you are a thief you must be punished.

Did you know that there are places in this world today that have some very serious punishments for crimes? In Saudi Arabia if you are caught stealing, they will cut off one of your fingers! If you got caught stealing twice, how many fingers would you have left? 8! That's how we're going to remember the 8th Commandment: You must not steal!

Robbing God?

Did you know that some of us are guilty of stealing from God? Every day, millions of people all around the world steal from God!

Malachi 3:8 [God said...]

"Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! "But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' You have cheated Me of the tithes and offerings due to me."

How did the people rob God? The people failed to give their offerings to God.

How many of you get an allowance from your parents? Do you get money for doing your chores? Do you baby sit in the neighborhood? How many of you get money for your birthday or Christmas? Have you faithfully given God your tithe? God asks us to give to him 10 percent of everything we receive. That's what a tithe is: 10%. That means for every ten pennies we get, he wants us to give Him back one penny. That's not much, is it?

[Teacher, bring in a pile of pennies, enough that kids can gather around a table and count out ten pennies in a row. Challenge some of the older kids to figure out how many pennies is a tenth of 50 cents and/or a dollar, and so forth.]

It costs a lot to keep our church going. We have rent to pay, supplies to buy, electricity and many other bills to pay. God expects people to help out with those expenses. When you don't give your tithe to God, it's like robbing Him.

Can you imagine stealing from God! Everything we have comes from Him in the first place!

You know, some people think they can get away with breaking God's Commandments. They think they can hide their sin from God.

Hide the Elephant!

Okay.... Let's say that I give you a real live elephant. Then I ask you to hide that elephant in your bedroom. When I say go, try to hide the elephant in your room! Then I'll try to find him.

Do you think you could hide an elephant in your bedroom? You could try to hide him in your closet, but parts of him would be sticking out. You could try to put him under your bed, but parts of him would be showing. You could try to hide that elephant, but that elephant would just be too big!

Did you know that is exactly what sin is like? Sin is so big in God's eyes, that no sin can be hidden from Him. When we sin, it sticks out all over the place! We cannot hide our sin from God.

Some people don't know that God is all-knowing. They go into a store and stick things into their pockets and think they are getting away with stealing. They may hide it from the store manager, but not from God. God knows they are stealing. He looks at them and sees sin sticking out all over the place. No matter what we do, we cannot hide our sin from God. God knows everything about us—everything we think, say, and do.

This commandment tells us not to steal. Stealing is a sin. And, if you have ever stolen anything, whether it's just a small thing or not, you deserve to be punished for your sin!

But, God wants everyone to have eternal life.

Ezekiel 18:21

But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my decrees and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die.

God is gracious and merciful. He's not willing that anyone should die in their sins. The sinner who comes to faith will be forgiven and given a brand new start. But, your old habits must change! You can't keep on stealing or lying. God expects you to obey all Ten of His commandments!

What can we do if we've broken the 8th Commandment? We must confess our sins to God and come to Him for forgiveness. He wants you to come to the foot of the cross, confess your sin and thank Him for sending Jesus to take the punishment for your sins and my sins.

God wants us to be givers not takers.

Acts 20:35

And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than receive."

God wants us to be kind to others and to serve one another. We are to lend to others without hoping for something in return.

Luke 6:35

Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.

If we love people the way God loves us, we will want to treat them the way we would want them to treat us. We will want the best for them. We won't want to take things from them. We'll want to give things to them. Let's be "givers" and not "takers!"

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for leaving Your home in heaven. Thank You for becoming one of us. Thank You for suffering. I know You did it for us. It was our sin that put You on the cross and God's power that caused You to burst out of the tomb. All of us have sinned. All of us have stolen in big ways or little ways. Please help us to obey Your eighth commandment, "*You must not steal.*" We want to be givers, not takers. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Use the following questions in a game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. Robbing a bank and shoplifting are not the *only* ways to steal. Can you think of other ways people steal things? (Copying answers or cheating in a game.)
2. What happened to Achan's family when Joshua found out that he had kept a beautiful robe, some silver and gold for himself instead of giving it to the Lord? (He and his whole family were put to death.)
3. When you sin who is responsible? Who is the one that deserves to be punished? (me)

4. What do they do to you if you are caught stealing in Saudi Arabia? (They cut off one of your fingers.)
5. What is a tithe? (It's a tenth of your income.)
6. How do millions of people rob God? (By not giving their tithe to Him.)
7. Why do you need to give God money? (It takes a lot to keep a church going.)
8. Why do some people think they can get away with breaking God's Commandments? (They don't believe that God is serious about them.)
9. Why can you not hide a sin from God? (He knows everything about us—everything we think, say, and do.)
10. What can we do if we've broken the 8th Commandment? (We must confess our sins to God and come to Him for forgiveness.)
11. What is it that God wants us to be instead of "*takers*"? (He wants us to be "*givers*.")
12. If you really love other people, how will you treat them? (I will treat them the way I want to be treated.)

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