

Back to the Basics

The Ten Commandments Pt. 7

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

This Commandment concerns possessions. In an ideal world, there would be no need of possessions. In our fallen world, however, the ability to possess things gives us the incentive to be productive members of society. The problem comes in when we want something that belongs to someone else. The truth of the matter is that everything belongs to the Lord because He is the Creator of it all. "Everything that I have and am belongs to the Lord, even me."

Like the other Commandments, we must remember not to limit this. The Ten Commandments are the outline for the Law. Our job is not to find loopholes to try and excuse our sinful behavior. "Stealing" covers all methods of dishonest gain: robbery, theft, fraud, usury, exorbitant pricing, cheating, trickery—any unscrupulous practice for gain.

Here are a few things the Bible says about this:

You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity (Leviticus 19:35).

The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives (Psalm 37:21).

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need (Ephesians 4:28).

If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Joshua 7:20-22 relates how a man named Achan kept a few things from the spoils of Jericho when God told the Israelites to destroy everything. I'm sure he thought, "If everything's going to be destroyed, who's it hurting if I just keep a little for myself? Who will care?" God cared and Achan and his family were stoned to death.

We said before that life is all about relationships and stealing is putting things over relationships. This carries over into every arena of life, including the workplace. In **Ephesians 6:5-9**, Paul gives instructions for how employers and employees are to treat one another. He uses the terms "masters" and "slaves" but it applies to employers and employees. This can be interpreted as a "full day's wage for a full day's work." Employers, compensate the employees fairly; workers, don't steal by being late, taking long breaks, slacking on the job, or taking little things for "compensation."

What does God require of us in the Seventh Commandment? Help our neighbor improve and protect his possessions and income. Follow the "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12)—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. We are to not just be concerned with our possessions and what benefits us, but be concerned with what benefits our neighbor, as well (Philippians 2:4). The opposite of

stealing is not refraining from stealing but helping our neighbor in every need (**Matthew 5:42; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:17**).

*The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.*
