

# Catechesis Minute

## The 7th 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.

I want to call your attention to a Bible passage in the ***Explanation of the Small Catechism*** that illustrates the breaking of this Commandment.

### 2 Kings 5:20-24

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, "See, my master has spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not accepting from his hand what he brought. As the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him." So Gehazi followed Naaman. And when Naaman saw someone running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him and said, "Is all well?" And he said, "All is well. My master has sent me to say, 'There have just now come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothing.'" And Naaman said, "Be pleased to accept two talents." And he urged him and tied up two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of clothing, and laid them on two of his servants. And they carried them before Gehazi. And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and put them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed.

When Naaman had been healed by Elisha, he tried to give him gifts, but Elisha refused to accept anything. When we think of stealing, we usually think of taking by force or with the threat of violence or taking something when someone's not looking. What Gehazi did was not stealing in the legal sense. Naaman had brought gifts, he tried to give them away. What was wrong with Gehazi taking these gifts from Naaman?

First, he lied. Gehazi misrepresented himself when he said that Elisha sent him because two men had just come from Ephraim. He took the gifts under false pretenses. He said they were for two other men, and he was going to keep them for himself. Although Naaman had intended the money and clothes to be gifts, Gehazi had no right to them since Elisha had refused them. He tricked Naaman into thinking Elisha had changed his mind. These "gifts" were not his to take. He knew he had done wrong, because later, when Elisha asked him where he had been, he lied.

There are many ways we can break the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment without breaking a law. Anytime we try to get something from others by trickery or conniving, whether we think we have a right to it or not, we are breaking this Commandment. Let us be honest in all our dealings with others as we go through our lives.