



December 1-2, 2012
Exodus 20
“No Stealing”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

There are certain things to which God attaches value and honor. We see beneath the surface in commandments five through seven, that we should attach value and honor to other people’s property.¹ The Hebrew translation of this commandment is *Lo tignov*, which means, to carry something away, as if by stealth. By definition, stealing means to take by force, threat, intimidation, coercion, or deception that which belongs to someone else.

Pastor Gary’s account of the time he and his sister were involved in stealing – by stealth – Easter eggs from a neighborhood girl helps us understand that we instinctively know that stealing is wrong. God has placed within the heart of every human being an innate awareness that we have no right to take what doesn’t belong to us, however big or small. So, not matter if it’s a hotel towel or grand theft auto,² it’s clear what God’s opinion is on the matter: “*You shall not steal.*”

By the way, regarding the theft of hotel towels, it is estimated that the cost to the hotel industry is approximately \$100 million dollars annually. And, according to the Los Angeles Times, 18% of hotel guests admit to having stolen towels, and 14% admit to stealing ashtrays. The study found that 2% of respondents admitted to stealing bathrobes and/or bathmats!³ The stealing of hotel towels is such a huge problem that some major hotel chains have started to having RFID chips sewn into their towels and bathrobes in an effort to prevent theft. One hotel chain in Hawaii has reduced their

¹ 5th – the family and parents; 6th – life; 7th – marriage; 8th other people’s property.

² A 2009 report on the number of auto thefts in the United States indicates almost 800,000 vehicles were stolen in a single year. This represents property loss of \$5.2 billion dollars!

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motor_vehicle_theft

³ <http://articles.latimes.com/2004/jul/04/travel/tr-insider4>

operating costs by \$16,000 a month. This new technology has reduced the number of stolen towels from 4,000 to 750 a month.⁴

Why do people steal towels from hotels and office supplies from their employer? It's because they have a mindset that companies are big enough and profitable enough that they won't miss these things, and that somehow people believe they need the item more than the company does.

Why is stealing such a big deal to God? To understand the answer to this question, we need to first understand the basic premise of the 8th Commandment: Everything belongs to God. God is the owner of everything and people are simply the stewards (managers) of it.

Scripture bears this out in [Psalm 24:1](#), which says, *"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."* David said in [1 Chronicles 29:11](#), *"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours."*

If we don't already consider the reality of [Psalm 50:12b](#), in which God says, *"... the world is mine, and all that is in it,"* we need to come to the realization that it's God who has given us the house we live in, the car we drive, the job we have, and the money we have in our purse, wallet or bank account. While it's true that we may have worked hard to earn and buy these things, God is the one who gave us the talent, intelligence, and ability to make it happen.^{5 6} The simple truth is that everything we have is on loan from God for us to manage and enjoy.

We learned in last week's study that the sixth through tenth commandments have a negative aspect, however, they also have a corresponding positive. The positive aspect of this commandment is that God has established the rights of individuals to possess private property and to be stewards (managers) of everything God owns. Therefore, stealing is not only a sin against the one who possesses the property, but it's also a sin against the one who loaned it in the first place, namely God!

In this study we're going to learn about a number of ways we can violate the 8th Commandment, as well as ways this commandment should challenge and motivate us to holy living.

⁴ <http://money.msn.com/shopping-deals/article.aspx?post=7c277dfc-160d-4581-850c-cc2456b6fa28>

⁵ [Deuteronomy 8:18](#) - *"But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth..."*

⁶ [James 1:17](#) - *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father..."*

This Commandment Should Motive Us To
Live By the Ethic Of Honest, Hard Work

1. America was built on this principle.
 - a. There was a time when an “honest day for an honest dollar” was a slogan accepted by all.
2. The increase in the entitlement mentality our society possesses has crept into every aspect of our culture.
3. Income redistribution by government is a form of stealing.
 - a. Income redistribution never cultivates a sense of achievement and worth among those who get something for nothing.
4. The Bible gives instruction concerning the ways we are to care for those less fortunate: hard work and generosity.
 - a. **Ephesians 4:28** - *“He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.”*
 - b. **Genesis 3:19** - *“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground...”*
 - c. **2 Thessalonians 3:10** - *“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat.’ ”*
 - d. **1 Timothy 5:8** - *“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”*

This Commandment Should Motive Us To
Trust In God’s Provision To Meet All Of Your Needs

5. When we steal, we make ourselves our own supplier rather than God, which aligns us with Satan (The Taker), instead of God (The Giver).
6. **John 10:10** - *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*
7. **Philippians 4:19** - *“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”*

This Commandment Should Motive Us To
Respect Other People's Property

8. This commandment “motivates us to hate all fraud, all wrong, and all extortion that can possibly be done against another’s property.” – John Calvin
9. Pastor Gary stated that this commandment also teaches us not to misuse the property of others.
 - a. Simple things, like not putting your feet on someone’s coffee table and not putting your drink on their end table without a coaster are part of respecting the property of others.
 - b. The Scriptures instruct us to extend common courtesy, consideration, and respect for another person’s property.

We Violate The 8th Commandment By Taking

10. The most common forms of stealing the property of others include:
 - a. Burglary – Breaking into a home or building to commit theft.
 - b. Robbery – Taking property directly from another by using violence or intimidation.
 - c. Larceny – Taking something without permission and not returning it.
 - d. Hijacking – Using force to take goods in transit or seizing control of a bus, truck, plane, vehicle, etc.
 - e. Shoplifting – Taking an item or items from a store during business hours without paying for them.
 - i. According to information and statistics provided by the National Association for Shoplifting Prevention, more than \$13 billion dollars worth of goods are stolen from retailers every year, which amounts to about \$35 million dollars every day of the year.⁷
 1. There are approximately 27 million shoplifters (about 1 in 11 people) in the United States.
 2. More than 10 million people have been caught shoplifting in the last five years in the U.S.
 - f. Pickpocketing and Purse-snatching.
 - g. Embezzlement – The fraudulent taking of money or other goods entrusted to one’s care.
 - h. Extortion – Getting money from someone by means of threats or misuses of authority.
 - i. Racketeering – Obtaining money by any illegal means.

⁷ <http://www.shopliftingprevention.org/main.asp>

11. Other forms of stealing that do not involve taking material things or money, per se, include:
 - a. Intellectual property – The stealing of ideas, songs, and creative works.
 - b. Identity theft.
 - c. Stealing someone’s innocence.
 - d. Stealing someone’s reputation.
 - e. Premarital sex is stealing what doesn’t belong to you.

We Violate The 8th Commandment By Borrowing

12. Some people have made a career out of “borrowing” something with no intention of returning it or maybe they have good intentions, but they never follow through; nevertheless, this is a form of stealing.
 - a. Just because you borrow something with the full knowledge of the owner, doesn’t make it less than stealing if you don’t return it or compensate for it.
 - b. Not returning something in as good or better condition that you received it is stealing.
13. The easy way to look at borrowing is to consider that unless it’s a gift, you need to return it!
14. Plagiarism is “borrowing” someone else’s work without their permission.
 - a. A Rutgers University study found that 58% of high school students admit to plagiarism.⁸

We Violate The 8th Commandment By Withholding

15. An employer who underpays or withholds pay from their employee(s) is taking their productivity and robbing the person(s) of what they’ve earned.
 - a. **Leviticus 19:13** – *“Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.”*
16. An employee who doesn’t give an employer an honest day’s work because they goof off, make personal phone calls while they are supposed to be working, surf the Internet, Tweet, arrive late and/or leave early, amounts to stealing from their employer.
 - a. According to an article in *International Business Times*,⁹ workers who waste time cost U.S. employers \$134 billion dollars annually due to lost

⁸ <http://plagiarism.org/resources/facts-and-stats>

revenue from non-productivity, not to mention the \$1.1 billion dollars a week in lost time due to people tending their fantasy football teams!

17. Not paying an invoice or a bill for products or services received qualifies in this category, just like when someone doesn't return money to a cashier or clerk who has given too much change.
18. Not tithing is robbing God.
 - a. **Malachi 3:8** - “ *‘Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. ‘But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ ‘In tithes and offerings.’ ”*
 - b. God gives us 100% and generously tells us we can live off as much as 90% of it.
 - c. The tithe (1/10th) belongs to God.
 - d. **Malachi 3:10** - “ *‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.’ ”*

We Violate The 8th Commandment By Defrauding

19. Making false claims and representations about a product is defrauding.
 - a. **Hosea 12:7** - “*The merchant uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud.*”
20. Price-gouging, swindling, and cheating on your income taxes are forms of defrauding.
21. Receiving money by submitting false insurance or workman's compensation claims is stealing.
22. Excessive taxation by government is a form of stealing.
 - a. If you owe taxes, you should pay taxes.
 - i. **Romans 13:7** - “*Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*”
 - ii. The issue is that at some point, if government takes in more than it needs or burdens people because of overspending, it's stealing from the individual and their relatives.

⁹ <http://www.ibtimes.com/workers-wasting-time-cost-us-employers-134b-lost-effort-infographic-903334>

The Roots Of Stealing

23. Tracing the roots of stealing brings you to the discovery of the ugly twins of greed and selfishness.
24. **Romans 13:9** - *“The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Exodus 20:15** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Review the statistics concerning theft of hotel towels, etc., and vehicles.
4. Allow the people in your group to share their “I took something I shouldn’t have” experiences.
5. How has your understanding changed regarding the fact that God owns everything?
 - a. When you’ve taken something that doesn’t belong to you, did you understand that you were taking something that belonged to God?
 - b. Read and discuss **Psalm 24:1; 50:12b; Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 29:11** and **James 1:17**.
6. In what ways has the entitlement mentality in our culture changed the foundational principles of the American work ethic?
7. Do you agree with the statement Pastor Gary made concerning income redistribution being a form of stealing by the government?
8. Read and discuss the biblical instructions given in the following Scriptures concerning the ways God wants us to help take care of those who are less fortunate. (See #4a - 4b - 4c - 4d above)
9. Allow the people in your group to share examples of the ways God has demonstrated the simple truth that he is the one who provides for our every need.

- a. Read and discuss [John 10:10](#) and [Philippians 4:19](#).
10. Read and discuss the quote by John Calvin. (See #8 above)
11. Provide an overview of the different forms of stealing. (See #10 and #11 above)
12. Read and discuss [Malachi 3:8-10](#).
 - a. What is your understanding of the reason(s) why we should tithe?
 - b. How have you seen the Lord bless you for your faithfulness to tithe?
13. Have you been guilty of defrauding others in some way, and in so doing, violated the 8th Commandment?
14. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: seek God's forgiveness for specific incidents when they've stolen something or any other of the 8th Commandment as outlined in Pastor Gary's message; purpose in their heart to honor and respect the property of others.

- i. You shall have no other gods before me
- ii. You shall not make for yourself an idol
- iii. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
- iv. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
- v. Honor your father and mother
- vi. You shall not murder
- vii. You shall not commit adultery
- viii. You shall not steal
- ix. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
- x. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).