

God's Laws Regarding Stuff and Speech

Exodus 20:15-17

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Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)

Believers are to love their neighbors by respecting their person and property.

I. It is always morally wrong to take that which rightfully belongs to another.

The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged. (Numbers 5:5-7)

When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people’s hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong. (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. (Romans 13:6-7)

For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. (Matthew 15:19)

Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

II. It is always morally wrong to lie, particularly about others.

“Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness. Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit. (Exodus 23:1-3)

One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:15-21)

There are six things the LORD hates,
seven that are detestable to him:
 haughty eyes,
 a lying tongue,
 hands that shed innocent blood,
 a heart that devises wicked schemes,
 feet that are quick to rush into evil,
 a false witness who pours out lies
 and a person who stirs up conflict in the community. (Proverbs 6:16-19)

Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips
and spreads slander is a fool. (Proverbs 10:18)

A false witness will not go unpunished,
and whoever pours out lies will perish. (Proverbs 19:9)

Got Questions suggests three reasons why the Lord commands that people tell the truth:

A. God's people are to reflect God's character.

The Lord is a truthful God who does not and cannot lie. Numbers 23:19 says,

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19)

B. Bearing false witness destroys the reputation of the person slandered, as well as their trade and business.

C. The judicial system can only function fairly and righteously if witnesses tell the truth.

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. (Leviticus 19:15)

It is not good to be partial to the wicked and so deprive the innocent of justice. (Proverbs 18:5)

“So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law.” (Malachi 2:9)

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. (Titus 3:1-2)

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. (James 4:11a)

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. (1 Peter 2:1)

You must not go about as a slanderer (tale-bearer KJV) among your people. (Leviticus 19:16a)

I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. (2 Corinthians 12:20b)

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)

...speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

III. Covetousness is a sinful desire to have more and particularly to eye jealously what someone else has. (v. 17)

What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. (Romans 7:7-13)

Then [Jesus] said to them, “Watch out and guard yourself from all types of greed because one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15)

But among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind, or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints. (Ephesians 5:3)

...but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14-15)

A. We need God's help (grace) in combating covetousness.

Throw your burden upon the LORD,
and he will sustain you.

He will never allow the godly to be shaken. (Psalm 55:22).

B. Learn to be content in your present condition.

...for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:11b-13)

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. (1 Timothy 6:6-8)

C. Evaluate why we want what we want.

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:31-34)

D. Value spiritual things above material things.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things... Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:1-2, 5)

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ *"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not*

steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother. ^{1d}”

²⁰ *“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”*

²¹ *Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

²² *At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

²³ *Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”*

²⁴ *The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is^{le} to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”*

²⁶ *The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”*

²⁷ *Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”*

²⁸ *Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”*

²⁹ *“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (Mark 10:17-31)*

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)