

COMMANDMENTS

Do Not Steal (Exodus 20:15)

Bottom Line: Stealing is a sign that you don't trust God to provide your needs.

Have you ever had anything stolen from you? How did it make you feel?

This commandment is short and to the point with no other explanation given. You shall not steal. It's as simple as that. Little explanation is given because little is needed. With every other commandment, excuses are made to try and justify the breaking of them, but not so with stealing. Stealing is wrong, and is considered wrong, in virtually every culture throughout all history. When you take something that does not belong to you without the permission of the owner, there is no excuse for what you've done. It's a wholly selfish and unloving act.

What are some ways that we can steal that we don't usually think of as stealing?

Just like we've done with the other commandments, what is the heart of the matter behind this command? What does stealing say about a person's relationship with God and their trust in Him?

When we steal, we are showing a complete disregard for the rights and property of others, but even more so we are demonstrating a complete lack of trust in God's provision for us. The Psalmist says that the Israelites "put God to the test in their heart" and "spoke *against* Him", saying "can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" (Psalm 78:18-19). They doubted that God could provide for them in their season of lack and the attitude of their heart was one of distrust that actually put them in a position of being against God. The act of stealing reveals a heart that is not fully convinced of God's ability to provide. This attitude affects so many areas of our lives that we may not realize.

How does a lack of trust in God's provision affect how generous you are? How does a lack of trust in God's provision affect your attitude towards your job? How does a lack of trust in God's provision affect your attitude towards money? How does a lack of trust in God's provision affect how you view your time, resources, and possessions? How does a lack of trust in God's provision affect how you view your relationships with other people?

The sin of stealing is born out of a heart that doesn't fully believe that God "will supply all of your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). When we don't fully trust God in matters of provision, so many other aspects of our life are hurt. We are not able to love God like we should, completely trusting His good plan for us. We are not able to love people like we should, seeing what we can give to them rather than what we can get from them. We are unable to think about our possessions rightly, finding security and stability in them rather than seeing them as dispensable tools to further God's Kingdom on the earth.

Read Ephesians 4:28. According to Paul, what action is the opposite of stealing? What, then, is the main point, or intended outcome, of God's command not to steal?

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Why do people struggle with developing a mindset and behaviors of giving rather than getting? What cultural influences are at play that make it hard to be generous and sacrificial?

How does the end of verse 28 challenge your thinking about your work and your possessions? Is being able to bless others a motivation for why you work?

When our hearts are content with what we have and we trust that God will provide for us, it frees us from the temptation to steal and it allows us to flourish in many other areas of our lives. But also, like the other commandments, the negative command not to steal has a positive implication—something that the command is trying to get us to *do*. If we are not to take, then we are to give. Generosity towards others is a big way that we show our trust in the Lord. But there is also another way.

Read Malachi 3:8. Why does God say that a failure to give tithes and offerings is robbery against Him? What does that imply about your money and possessions? Now read verse 10.

If we are to fully trust the Lord to meet our needs, then we will fully trust Him to take what we give Him, multiply it, use it for His purposes, and we know and trust that we will somehow, someday reap the benefit.

The Bible says that “each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). What have you decided in your heart about giving to the Lord? Will you take God up on His offer to “test Him in this” (Malachi 3:10)?

God commands us not to steal, but by commanding us not to steal, He is encouraging us to trust Him, be generous, and be content with what we have.

Reflection: Read these aloud, using your discretion about which questions should be pondered and which questions should be discussed.

Do you trust that God will provide all of your needs? What about your need for righteousness? If you could earn righteousness on your own, you would be worthy of glory and honor. The reality, of course, is that you can't. But if you haven't fully trusted in God to provide the payment you need for your sin, and you are looking elsewhere, then you are robbing God of the glory that is due only to Him. If you spent the rest of your life giving away every dollar and possession you had, but you have not given God the glory that is due to Him by trusting in Jesus, then your generosity and sacrifice are meaningless. Have you trusted in Christ for your salvation?

Do you work hard and to the fullest of your ability? Or do you cut corners and, in effect, steal? Do you needlessly waste time while you're on the clock and take advantage of your employer? What does repentance look like to allow you to give your best effort and truly earn what you make? How can you then fulfill the spirit of Ephesians 4 and use what you earn to bless others?