

## High Cost of Theft

Being robbed violates our personal security. And having our car broken into right in our driveway inflames our sense of justice. But stealing happens in so many other ways, some scary and some “respectable.” Theft is a problem of epidemic proportions in our society, and it’s costing all of us big time.

Consider time-theft—wasting time at your employer’s expense. The Robert Half Personnel Agencies calculated that time-theft costs the American economy as much as \$70 billion a year. Arriving at work late, leaving early, taking unjustified ‘sick’ days, extensive socializing with co-workers, turning the water cooler into a conversation pit, inattention to the job at hand, reading novels and magazines on the job, operating a business on the side during working hours, eating lunch at the desk and then going out for the ‘lunch hour,’ excessive personal phone calls, on-the-job daydreaming and fanticizing, long, frequent coffee and snack breaks—all these are ways we steal time and money from our employers. How widespread do you think this is? Add to that the results of a recent survey in which nearly half of employees admitted to illegal activity on the job.

Fraud is killing us. Medicare/Medicaid fraud runs in the billions of dollars each year and costs all of us. Closer to home, how many of us have been fooled by internet ads or phone calls promising to fix a harmful virus on our computer. Mailings and responses to a Craigslist posting defraud people in our community every day. Buyer beware!

These large-scale thefts are real and growing worse. We’re right to be concerned. Yet it’s easy to focus on the “big sin” of stealing and rationalize the many ways we can break the 8th Commandment. God says (literally) “*Each of you shall not steal*” for a reason. Theft is not just a national epidemic and a serious community issue, it’s also a *personal* temptation for every one of us. Lying about our child’s age to get a discount on movie tickets is stealing. Accessing cable TV or the internet without paying for it is wrong. All these more common and, yes, more “respectable,” ways of stealing are just as wrong and are costing us just as much. Don’t minimize it or rationalize it. Don’t steal.

### ***What to do when our child takes something that doesn’t belong to them?***

Don’t over-react but don’t minimize it either. Require an apology and restitution (Exodus says 2x what was taken) to the person stolen from. God requires not only compensation for the material loss, but also for the personal violation of the person wronged. (If you’ve ever been robbed, you know this feeling.) The thief gives up himself what he would have taken from another. Teach your children that stealing in all its forms offends God and hurts others—even ourselves.

**Getting Stuff God’s Way**  
*the TEN series*

## Work to Own

*If you didn't put it down, don't pick it up.* Jewish saying

1. Have you or someone close to you ever been robbed? What happened? How did you (or they) feel?
2. What other, more common ways do many people steal these days? List them below. Do you all agree as a group that these are wrong? Why or why not?
  - Lying to get a discount price on movie tickets.
  - Getting cable/satellite TV, internet, software, music, or movies without paying for it.
  - *What else?*
3. Is stealing just about taking stuff? What more is happening when we take something from someone else? Consider these Scriptures:
  - Leviticus 6:1-7—
  - Leviticus 19:33-37—
  - Proverbs 1:10-14—
  - Ephesians 4:20-28—
4. Read Exodus 22:1-9. How did God instruct His people to handle theft? How do we—or should we—apply these truths in our families and society today?
5. Pastor Dan explained that God wants us to work honestly to provide for ourselves, our families, and others in need. What do these verses teach about Christ-centered work?
  - Ephesians 4:28—
  - 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12—
  - 1 Timothy 5:8—
  - Acts 20:32-35—
6. How has God spoken to you personally through this study? What do you need to stop doing or start doing? Is there something you need to return or make restitution for?

*You shall not steal.* Exodus 20:15