

“STEALING & LYING” **Exodus 20:15-16** ***Servants’ Guide***

INTRODUCTION

You Shall Not Steal

The positive side of this commandment is obvious. If we are to refrain from taking what belongs to another, we are also to do everything in our power to prosper others, helping them to attain their full potential. The Lord captures this duty in the Golden Rule: “So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12).

You Shall Not Lie

Our duty toward the other person is only half the picture. It is not only that we harm another individual by false witness or swearing. We also dishonor God by our untruthfulness. He is the God of truth and he hates lying (Is 65:16; Jn 14:6). The Bible tells us, “Behold, thou (God) desirest truth in the inward being” (Ps 51:6). It tells us that the one who is obedient to God “does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right” (1 Cor 13:6). It says, “Let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor” (Eph 4:25).

-James Boice, Foundations of the Christian Faith

This commandment is not only applicable to the law courts. It does include perjury. But it also includes all forms of scandal and slander, all idle talk and tittle-tattle, all lies and deliberate exaggerations or distortions of the truth. We can bear false witness by listening to unkind rumors as well as by passing them on, by making jokes at somebody else’s expense, by creating false impressions, by not correcting untrue statements, and by our silence as well as by our speech.

-John Stott, Basic Christianity

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time when were guilty of stealing something or lying to someone.
2. Exodus 20:15 says, “You shall not steal.” In our society today, stealing can take many different forms. Try to list as many different varieties of stealing as you can?
 - The following is an excerpt from Pastor Min Chung’s sermon on this commandment. It is useful because it gives us 10 different varieties of stealing as well as some ways to apply them.

Stealing in the 20th Century

I will list ten ways to steal things in the twentieth century. How do we steal? We are to have ownership legitimately and glorify God through it, but how do we get things illegitimately?

Tax Theft

- Omission of reporting income. Not reporting cash. A lot of your parents do it. When they do, prayerfully pull them aside at the right time and place (ten years later?). “Dad, are you paying my tuition through this?” Lowering tax reports. Falsification. There’s something wrong if you know that something is missing on the tax report. If I were to preach to people with income this would be a hot issue.

Welfare Theft

- They are legitimately able to work, but they receive government funds. That’s stealing taxpayers’ money. You become lazy and receive welfare. That’s stealing from society.

Debt Theft

- Refusing to pay loans or debts. Small to large amounts. School loans. Even small amounts to friends. As best as we can, Christians should live without debt. You are to have debt-free living unless you really have no money and can’t survive on your own—no food and clothes. Don’t borrow, because when you borrow you are living with means you can’t afford. Cut down. As much as you can, do not borrow money. If you really need it, borrow it, but give it back soon. Borrow only out of necessity. Debt-free living.

Begging Theft

- I think for a lot of you, your money has been stolen by the people in this town. A lot of people beg in this town while they can be supported by shelters or legitimate work. I’ve seen people sitting around the church. It feels a little uncomfortable, because some of you have befriended these people—that’s great. Some of these people can work. They can be supported by different means. When the service is over, they come running and sit on

the ground. Why do they do that? It's because when they are sitting there, you feel like giving them money. Almost never give cash to homeless people. Why? Rarely will they use it for food. Most will use it for alcohol and drugs. Almost never give cash.

- Some good things to do: Always be kind. Even if you're not going to give money. You still should say "Hi." Be kind. Maybe give food or a gift certificate. Make sure it isn't something that they can exchange for money. When I meet these people I ask, "Are you hungry? I can give you food. I won't give you money, because I don't know what you'll do with it. I can go with you to Burger King." Most of them will say, "I don't need food." Rarely will people want it. I'm there until they have a bite, making sure they eat or they might exchange it for food. Then maybe I talk to them a little bit. If you're female, be cautious. Maybe some of you can give clothing. Don't give money, because you're helping their bad habits. If they look healthy and can work, by continuously giving them money, we are promoting bad habits. Most likely they'll refuse food. You know if they do, there is a problem. Be careful about those things. That's theft. That's stealing if they can legitimately work. Some of them have a lot of money—at least enough to survive.

Work Theft

- I'll just say a couple of things. People steal at work. There is time theft—coming late. You are getting paid for a certain amount of time of work, but you're not working that much. You come late and leave early. Just a little longer break in the washroom or during lunchtime. Playing computer games when the boss isn't watching. I noticed something on the computer, when I was playing computer games with my kids. There is a "boss is coming" button. I pressed it and it looked like I was doing work. Joshua asked, "What is that?" I told him, "You don't have to know yet." That was so funny. That's stealing time. Calling in sick when you're not and getting paid for that day. That's theft. Work theft, meaning quality of work. Bad work. Colossians 3 says you need to work as if for the Lord, but if you do bad quality or don't give 100%, you're stealing.
- There is a book called *The Day America Told the Truth*. It's an amazing book. It studies the work ethics of America and what kinds of things Americans are thinking. Americans goof off 20% of the time at work. Only one out of four give their best in their jobs. I believe that's stealing.
- Phone theft. Using the company phone to make personal calls. You don't call long distance unless you're at work. That's stealing.
- Company property—stamps, envelopes. Using the copy machine. Company products.
- Expense account theft. Taking friends out and reporting it as business meeting, using company credit card.
- If you become a manager in the future, not giving proper wages, improper profits or wages. Improper prices. These kinds of things are stealing.

Academic Theft

- Uh oh. Cheating. Borrowing someone's answers. "I'm just borrowing." You steal the time spent by another fellow student.
- Plagiarizing. Stealing a paragraph from someone else. *Plagiarizing* in Latin means *kidnapping*. So plagiarizing is kidnapping a paragraph. Cheating. Sorry, I've cheated in my life before. I've repented and am continuously repenting. If you want to excommunicate me, I'll take it, but I suspect a lot of you have done it before. That's stealing.

Computer Theft

- Software. Programs. Copyrighted software. A lot of things like that. Believe it or not, I don't know what's going on in our church. I asked one of the pastors, "Are all of our programs legal?" He said, "No." I said, "We'll give you certain amount of time, we'll make it as legal as possible. We'll try to do it. Even the smallest one."

Borrowing Theft

- "I didn't steal it, I just borrowed it." If you permanently borrow things, it's stealing. I looked at my office, looked through all the things. I realized all the things I'm missing. I have a list of things that people borrow. I write them down and some things are gone with the wind. Then I checked how many things I have that I've borrowed and still have not returned. ! Give me a certain amount of time, and I'll return some tapes, videotapes, and books. I just could not preach this message. I have nothing, I can't say that. I have borrowed many things permanently. If I didn't preach this message, I wouldn't return it, but I have to now. Return those things especially if they are mine.

Reputation Theft

- You can steal someone's reputation. Someone's reputation can be demolished by devilish jealousy and gossip. It is so hard to gain a reputation, and almost impossible to regain it. My reputation, which is not much, has been demolished by a lot of people. We really need to be more careful. Someone's name means a lot. We should be careful to not steal what they've accomplished all their life. Five minutes of gossip can destroy what someone's worked on for years. A lot of people are not faithful to the church because of this. You've heard bad things about the church or different people. A lot of you are struggling because of a shot-down reputation or gossip or false rumors. We need to be careful of reputation.

Tithe

- The skit talked about it, but we'll look into the verses. Malachi 3. There are strong verses in the Scripture about tithing. People in Malachi's time were so selfish. There is a lot of correlation for those of us living in America. People would not give to the Lord. So selfish, building their own houses, living for themselves, for luxury, but would not give to the Lord. 3:8, ""Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 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." There is one command in Scripture where God says, "Test Me." "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." God promises blessings to those people who would tithe. But He says when you don't give God, you are robbing God. As Christians, tithing is the minimum, bare minimum. You must understand background of tithing. It means one-tenth of your gross income, not your net income. Everything you get, before tax. Everything, one-tenth. Before ten chickens. One chicken. Give to the Lord, that's holy before God. The principle of tithing is this. There were 12 tribes of Israel and after the Israelites conquered Canaan, each of the tribes received a portion of the land. 11 tribes received land, but one didn't—the Levite tribe. The Levites were like full-time ministers, taking care of the temple. 11 tribes received land in order to work it, receive produce from it and live by it as a blessing from God. But they were to give one-tenth to the Lord, because the Levites didn't receive any land. The Levites were to use the tithes from the people to live and take care of the temple as full-time ministers. When you don't give your tithe, you're hurting other people, but God takes it personally and says, "You're robbing Me." The Levites, the priestly tribe, had no inheritance; they were full-time ministers. Since they had nothing on which to live, God says, "Give tithes so that they can live." When you don't tithe, you're robbing from others. Robbing others is robbing God. Consider everything we talked about concerning theft in society—when you rob others, you are ultimately robbing God. God takes it personally. God gives dignity in working properly and it is offensive to another's dignity when we steal. We need to have faith in the Lord.

- A pastor was talking to a man who would not tithe. "Why won't you tithe?" He replied, "I can barely pay my living expenses and make my car payments. I have no money left." The pastor said, "OK, for one month, can you tithe? If, by any chance, you lack, I will give you the rest." The man said, "OK, I'll try it for one month, but if I'm short, can you help?" Then the pastor says, "If you can trust this human being and give your tithe, can you not trust God the Father who has promised in Scripture that He would provide for you?" After that, that man gave his tithe every time. Don't get any ideas that I'll help you out. =) I'm not that godly. I'm not that rich.
3. Examine the following verses and try to glean some principles about what it means to lie.
 - *Hebrews 6:18. It is impossible for God to lie. He is the origin of truth.*
 - *John 8:44. Source and origin of lies is the devil.*
 - *John 14:6. Jesus himself is the embodiment of truth. To be a truth-teller is to be Christ-like. To be a liar is the opposite of becoming more like Christ.*
 - *John 16:13. God's people must be characterized by those who tell the truth.*
 - *Proverbs 12:22. Lying is detestable before the Lord while He delights in those who tell the truth.*
 - *Proverbs 6:16-19. One of the top things that God hates.*
 4. Read John 12: 1-8. Examine the motive behind Judas' words in verse 5. Why was Judas stealing & lying? What was he trying to gain? Discuss what motivates stealing and/or lying in our lives? What are the dangers involved?
 - *Notice that Judas saw in the perfume the monetary value. He is calculative. Interest was in the profit he could have gained as the keeper of the moneybag.*
 - *Sometimes stealing can be motivated by our lack of faith. We have to believe that God will provide everything that we need. But sometimes not believing this leads to stealing.*
 - *Lying & stealing can both be motivated by greed. Wanting to illegitimately exalt our level of wealth, position, or status.*
 - *Danger of bad habits. See Luke 22:1-6. Same selfish greed leads to Judas being willing to sell Jesus for his own gain.*
 5. The ninth commandment calls us to not give false testimony against our neighbor. Is it ever justifiable to tell a lie? Discuss this topic after reading Joshua 2: 1-16.
 - *Sometimes telling a lie is a necessity if the ultimate spirit of the law is to seek the **highest good** of others.*
 - *Consider these biblical examples:*
 - *Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah did not obey Pharaoh's command to put to death the Israelite baby boys. (Exodus 1:17)*
 - *Rahab told a lie when she said that she did not know the whereabouts of the spies. (Joshua 2:4-6)*
 - *Lies can be justified in dire circumstances such as life and death situations in order to protect the innocent.*
 - *Polite lies involving showing common courtesy and respect for the feelings of others to seek their highest good.*
 5. The underlying principle in our study of these commandments is that we are called to seek the highest good of our neighbor. What are some ways in which we can apply the teaching of these two commandments?

