

GOD'S GUIDE TO A GREAT LIFE
Sermon Series on the Ten Commandments

STOP STEALING, START SHARING Exodus 20:15

Not stealing is probably the one commandment of the ten that is most taken for granted. But its violation has caused untold dislocation and misery throughout the history of mankind. It is not too much of a stretch to say that perhaps all of the major economic and financial upheavals of the modern era find their roots in this singular fact — that someone took something that was not his.

We find ourselves still in the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments that the Lord handed down to the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. With this the Lord framed His covenant relationship with His chosen people, to demonstrate to all the other nations how those who love the one true God were to conduct themselves in their daily lives.

Exodus 20:15 is a negative imperative (only two words in the original Hebrew — “no stealing”); a command not to take what has not been granted to us by God. To understand this commandment we will look at three things — The Principle, The Prohibition, and The Prescription.

A. THE PRINCIPLE: GOD OWNS AND CONTROLS EVERYTHING

1. The Lord owns His whole creation (Psalm 24:1; 89:11) and no one else can usurp His authority to do with it as He pleases (Job 41:11). To steal is a violation of this authority.
2. The Lord grants people the right to private property — to use and enjoy the earth and everything in it (Psalm 115:16; Gen. 1:28). To steal is a violation of this God given privilege.
3. The Lord provides for His people and distributes His blessings according to what is best for them (Phil. 4:19). To steal is to doubt His ability to provide equitably.

B. THE PROHIBITION: TAKING WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO OTHERS

There are a myriad of ways by which we steal and commit thievery. . .

1. By taking what does not belong to us (Exodus 21:16; Deut. 24:7; John 12:6; Malachi 3:8-10)
2. By not conducting our business honestly (Lev. 19:35-37; Deut. 25:13-16)

3. By not dealing fairly with our employees (Deut. 24:14-15), or our employers (Titus 2:9-10)

4. By not paying our debts (Psalm 37:21)

5. By not paying our taxes (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7)

These actions are usually motivated by certain wrong attitudes and lifestyle choices. . . .

1. "Out-smarting" instead of "out-working" others

2. A "get-rich-quick" mindset

3. Living beyond our means

4. Borrow now pay never

C. THE PRESCRIPTION: SHARING WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU (Ephesians 4:28)

1. This prescription is for those who "... have been called" (Ephesians 4:1)

2. The command does not end with just "not stealing;" it continues on to "start working" — "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands..." (1 Thes. 4:11-12)

3. The admonition also does not end with just "start working," it continues on to "start sharing" — "... so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." (Acts 20:35).

CHALLENGE

If we will be honest with ourselves before God who sees our hearts, we will come to the conclusion that we have all violated this commandment one way or another. So let's stop stealing, and start sharing (Galatians 6:10) for it is always better to give than to receive.