

Key Scripture:

Exodus 20:15 (NLT)

15 *"You must not steal.*

Ephesians 4:28 (NLT)

28 *If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.*

Hebrews 13:5 (NLT)

5 *Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said,*

*"I will never fail you.
I will never abandon you."*

1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (NLT)

9 *Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, 10 or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 11 Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Matthew 6:25–34 (NLT)

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- If you could steal one thing in the world and get away with it, what would you steal? Would you keep it or return it?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- Have you ever stolen something from a store, a person, or a place of employment? What was your motivation for stealing? Did you get caught?
- **Read Exodus 20:15 & Ephesians 4:28.** What is God's opinion of stealing? Why is God so opposed to stealing? (Hint: Think about the character of God.)
- **Read Hebrews 13:5.** What is the correlation between God not leaving us and us loving money? How does stealing reveal an unhealthy love for money and a lack of trust in God?
- What would you say to a fellow believer who says to you, 'So what's the big deal if I "borrow" some office supplies or tools from my work? They'll never miss it.'
- **Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.** Are the sins listed in these verses worse than any others? What point was Paul making in v. 11?
- As you look back at your Christian life over the last few years, do you see that God is transforming your mind and character? If not, why not? If so, what are you doing that's making the biggest difference?
- The sermon explores how stealing reveals a lack of trust in God's provision. **Read Matthew 6:25-34.** How do these verses challenge us to trust in God's provision, and how might this influence our actions towards others?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Reflect on your daily interactions and financial decisions this week. Identify any areas where you might be unintentionally taking more than you should, whether it's time, resources, or credit for work. Commit to making one restitution this week, whether that involves returning something, acknowledging someone else's work, or correcting a mistake in a financial transaction.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray for a heart that trusts fully in God's provision. Ask for the courage to make things right where we may have taken what is not ours. Let's pray for transparency and generosity to permeate our lives, reflecting our faith and trust in God.

Question: "Why is 'You shall not steal' in the Ten Commandments?"

Answer: “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15) is one of the Ten Commandments people can readily recall, even though it is number eight in the Decalogue. And while there may be those who attempt to undermine the authority of the Ten Commandments by suggesting it is part of the Old Covenant, our Lord Jesus, speaking to the rich young ruler, quoted five of them, including this one (Matthew 19:18). The Ten Commandments are part of the moral law of God and, unlike the ceremonial and sacrificial laws of the Old Testament which were given to Israel, they apply to all men in all ages.

Stealing is defined as “taking another person’s property without his or her permission.” However, there are many other forms of theft. For example, taking longer over our lunch breaks at work or arriving late and leaving early are actually forms of stealing from our employers, stealing time they have paid for. Taking advantage of employers in that way indicates a lack of love for others. The apostle Paul, when discussing God’s commandments, sums up the entire law in the same way as our Lord Jesus did, with “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31; Romans 13:9). And, again like Jesus, he states that this is the fulfilment of the “Law” (Matthew 22:39-40). So, we know from such instructions that “Do not steal,” as with all of the Ten Commandments, is about “loving one another” (John 13:34-35).

Victims of theft know the horrible feeling it produces. The very act of someone taking what may have been an especially precious gift from a loved one really pierces our hearts and makes us feel vulnerable and unsafe. Theft has a tremendous impact not only on individuals, but on society as a whole. Theft disturbs societal stability and the results are feelings of fear and insecurity and a desire for revenge. One has only to look at some third world countries where laws against stealing are ignored to see how detrimental it is to the population. God’s laws are not only moral and spiritual; they are infinitely practical as well.

Christians have received tremendous physical and spiritual gifts from God, and we should desire to give back to Him all that we have. When we withhold the things that are rightly His—our time and talents, our possessions and our finances, indeed our very lives—we are in effect stealing from Him. The prophet Malachi put it this way when addressing the Israelites: “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' 'In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse — the whole nation of you — because you are robbing me. 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’” (Malachi 3:8-10). One day we will be judged by God and expected to give an account of what we did with the gifts God has so generously bestowed on us (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 4:13).

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