

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 73. *Which is the eighth commandment?*

A. The eighth commandment is, *Thou shalt not steal.*

Q. 74. *What is required in the eighth commandment?*

A. The eighth commandment requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.

Q. 75. *What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?*

A. The eighth commandment forbids whatsoever does, or may, unjustly hinder our own, or our neighbor's, wealth or outward estate.

With each of the Commandments, the Catechism reveals that there is more than meets the eye. Take the Eighth Commandment: many may believe this applies to not stealing items from a store, or maybe even not stealing "company property" from work, like staples or pens, for personal use. Certainly, this command speaks to those situations. But there is more.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, helps explain the full extent of the eighth commandment. He says, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need" (4:28). Paul highlights three applications of the eighth commandment:

1. Do not use unlawful means to meet your physical needs. This is the straightforward application of the command. Paul commends this. Part of respecting (loving) others and their property is not abusing them for our own good. It's selfish. It's also idolatry. It's a rejection of God and his faithfulness to provide for our needs (see Matt. 6:30-32; James 1:17).

2. Work hard, within lawful parameters, to meet your physical needs. The "honest work with his own hands" is a trusting in the Lord. God made each of us with our unique combination of intelligence, ability, and desires to labor in his creation. He calls us to "work and keep" (Gen 2:15) our portion of creation to meet our needs. The ability to work is God's gracious provision to us.

3. Work sufficiently, and spend mindfully, that you have enough to share with others. The negative, stealing, is not only forbidden, but the opposite good, sharing with others, is commanded in the eighth commandment. Stealing is a form of greed. At the core of "not stealing" is the love and care for others, believing that all God has given should not be hoarded. We should not work, and spend, with only ourselves in view. God calls us to be mindful of others and meet needs.