



The Ten Commandments

“Give or Take”

Exodus 20:1-17

Our study of the Ten Commandments continues this week with a focus on the eighth commandment, “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15). In the original Hebrew, it’s just two little words: “No stealing.” But the implications of this commandment are far-reaching.

As the image of God, human beings have the right to personal property. Stealing is not only a sin against persons, but a sin against the God who gives everything we have. It is distrust of his goodness and provision. Stealing also violates the Biblical principle that we should work for what we have. Finally, instead of taking what does not belong to us, we are actually supposed to give things away and store up our treasures in heaven. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Let us pray that God will create at UPC a culture of unselfish generosity and hard work as we seek to obey the eighth commandment.



KNOWING GOD

Read Exodus 20:15 and Ephesians 4:28. In your own words, what does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

Now state the command positively. To what positive good is God calling us in the eighth commandment?

Why do people steal? What's the "sin underneath the sin"?

How does hard work reflect the glory and character of God? Another way to put this question is to ask, what is wrong with being lazy?



GROWING TOGETHER

According to the Heidelberg Catechism, the eighth commandment not only prohibits outright theft, but also "pointless squandering" of God's gifts. In what ways do you think you may be guilty of wasting or being irresponsible with the things God has given you (including time, talents, opportunities, etc.)?

Have you ever been the victim of theft? If so, share what happened, how it felt, and what some of its consequences were.

What obstacles to joyful generosity do you need God to remove?



SERVING OTHERS

The Christians of the first century were a generous lot. Acts 4:32 says, “No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.” According to Acts 4:34, “There were no needy persons among them.” Are we at UPC living up to this standard? What needs to happen for us to become people of such radical generosity?

It is possible to steal from God as well as people. Read Malachi 3:6-12. What does God command in these verses? What does he promise to those who obey? Where are you with respect to giving at least 10% of your income to the Lord’s work?



IN YOUR FAMILY...

- a) Talk about shoplifting with your children. Have you ever been tempted to slip something like a candy bar into your pocket while standing in the grocery store checkout line? Why would that be wrong?
- b) The Children’s Catechism says that the eighth commandment teaches us to be “honest and industrious.” God is glorified when we work hard. When the children have chores to do around the house, do they work hard or just “get by”? 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” Why would the Bible say such a thing?

- c) Does anyone in the family need to return something that was stolen from a friend, another person's home, or a place of business?
- d) Talk about things other than possessions or money that may be stolen from people. What about someone's reputation? What about time? What about happiness? Can you think of other things that one might take from another?

SERMON NOTES