

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL!

Scripture

Exodus 20:15

“You shall not steal.”

Introduction: This is an interesting law. The correct interpretation of the law may put us all to shame. Every one of us may have committed this crime knowingly or unknowingly sometime in our lives. I have to start this sermon with a confession. Last week, somebody left a 16oz mango ice tea whole bottle after Sunday service. I saw that sitting on the dining table. The right thing to do was to take that bottle and keep it in the refrigerator. But instead, I just took it drank all of it! Yes, I stole it! I took someone’s property without asking for it! Who is that person here? Now I am forced to pay restitution for it!

This is a huge topic. Psychologists have lot to say about it under the category of kleptomania. Let us see the definition of stealing first so that we can understand the intricacy of this law!

Stealing is removing the object that belongs to someone and using it for someone’s personal gain! The stolen object could be people, livestock, plants, or nonmoving material things such as gold, cash, food etc.

There are ample examples from the Bible:

Rachel stole the household idols from Laban. Gen. 31.

There is a great story about thievery in 1 Kings 3:16-28. There were two prostitutes living together. They both had male child at about same time. But one mother laid over her child accidentally in her sleep at midnight and the baby died. She got up and switched the babies!

Eli’s sons stealing from Lord’s portion.

David stole Bathsheba. He had to commit a murder in order to steal her,

Ahab stole the vineyard from Naboth (1Kings 21).

Judas Iscariot, the Lord’s treasurer was a thief!

Our Lord was hanging between two thieves. It shows how common thieves were during Jesus’ time!

Honesty is a virtue! If it is not yours, don’t covet after it and try to keep it for yourself. You can see that in this western culture!

In a Golf club where I play, they leave \$5 bills on the table for the senior league. Nobody touches that. Some people drop a twenty dollar bill and take the right change back. Honesty can be trained culturally.

A wagon with corn got stuck in the mud for two weeks. When the owner returned, he saw that most of his corn was gone. The owner checked his sack bag, and it was full of cash!

In Abraham Lincoln's youthful days he was storekeeper's clerk. Once after he had sold a woman a little bill of goods and received the money, he found, on looking over the account again, that she had given him six and a quarter cents too much. The money burned in his hands until he had locked the shop and started on a walk of several miles in the night to make restitution before he slept. On another occasion, after weighing and delivering a pound of tea, he found a small weight on the scales. He immediately weighed out the quantity of tea of which he had innocently defrauded the customer and went in search of her, his sensitive conscience not permitting any delay.

Why do we steal?

Because of covetousness. Greed

Because it is too easy and we can easily get away with it.

As a revenge on someone.

Lack of contentment.

Lack of empathy for the person who lost it.

"If I want it I'll take it", kind of inmate attitude! (Rape)

If nobody sees us, we will take what we want and use it.

If we nurture stealing in small things, we may be tempted to steal big things also in future.

School kids see a nice shirt or jersey or nice shoes, they just take it. That is stealing!

We all sometimes steal small things. It could be a nice pen, or if we share the same office, it may be chocolate, or it may be some quarters for soda machine.

We steal time from work. Take longer lunch. Sleep in the job. Have long unrelated idle conversations with the coworkers during work time.

We steal from the vending machine when it drops extra snacks, or the vending machine steals from us when it does not give us what we want at all!

Daughters take moms' clothes. Sons steal father's socks. All we have to do is ask. Why do we take without asking? Is it not stealing? We develop stealing habit at home itself.

In India, merchants steal by adding stones in the rice, or adding water in the milk! In many countries, the merchants deceive through false balances. Bible has whole lot to say about false balances!

Conclusion: Finders' keepers, and losers' weepers?? No, no, no! If it is not yours, it is not yours! Somebody lost it and probably they are searching for it. Use your brain to find the owner, and if you cannot find the owner immediately, give it to the proper authorities.

Actually this stealing habit is closely associated with coveting. I would like to continue that thought next Sunday!

Discussion question: what do we do if we find a nice gold chain in an amusement park?

Do you have any story to tell about stealing? Please share with us.

Pastor Daniel Israel

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