##### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**Lesson 11 - The Eighth Commandment - Thou Shalt Not Steal**

**Exodus 20:15**

**Introduction:** In the eighth commandment, like the others, we marvel at the wisdom of God, because this command is exceedingly simple and at the same time profoundly deep. We could not nearly exhaust the possibilities of the mere four words of the commandment. “As the holiness of God sets Him against uncleanness in the command, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’, so the justice of God sets Him against robbery in the command, ‘Thou shalt not steal’.” (Thomas Watson)

In Matthew 22, a doctor of Jewish law asked Jesus concerning the great commandment in the law, tempting Him. Jesus answered that to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind was the first and great commandment and that the second is to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Then He said, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

As God’s people, our obedience to His commands is to be founded upon *love*. The basis of our obedience to His commands is love for God and love for man. Jesus Himself said the second commandment is to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Then, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) He taught us that every man is our neighbor.

To do murder is the opposite of love; the law of love speaks clearly, “Thou shalt not kill.” To commit adultery violates the law of love. Love desires the best for the object of love, and adultery is violently contrary to the definition of love. “Thou shalt not steal!” But of course! The most simple-minded know it violates the law of love.

Carroll Simcox said, “Anybody above the level of a moral moron can see the wrong in plain stealing.” He goes on to say that he is primarily concerned in bringing conviction to the hearts of the vast majority of our population who engage regularly in what he calls “fancy stealing.”

# I. Man, possessions, and god

## A. Our possessions in relation to God.

### 1. First, we acknowledge Divine ownership.

#### a. We own nothing! In relation to God, I own no house, clothing, cars, money . . . nothing.

#### b. We are stewards (managers) of what God commits to us.

#### c. G. Campbell Morgan: “Man … is ever compelled to own that nothing he possesses can be held to be outside of the right of Divine interference.”

### 2. Second, we cannot serve God and mammon.

#### a. Matthew 6:24 I may use mammon (material possessions) in the course of my living. I may control mammon, even very much mammon, for the glory of God.

#### b. But if mammon controls me, I commit idolatry.

#### c. We own nothing but what God has committed to our stewardship. God can take all or any part and be just.

## B. In relation to man, we have possessions.

### 1. While nothing we claim is outside the right of Divine interference, man may indeed claim to possess that which is outside the right of human interference.

### 2. This fact is clearly understood by the mere stating of the eighth commandment.

### 3. To steal means “to take away, implying deceit; to get by stealth.”

4. So, in our relationship to one another, human to human, you possess what is not mine and I possess what is not yours. To take it from one another would be to violate the command.

# II. The means by which man has possessions

(**Note**: I give credit to G. Campbell Morgan for this excellent analysis of how we come into “our” possessions.)

## A. Three ways of obtaining possessions (personal property).

### 1. By receiving a free gift from another person.

### 2. By toil and labor; receiving something as legitimate return.

### 3. By theft; taking that which belongs to another person, from him or her.

## B. God’s Word gives two essential laws in the human inter-relation. In other words, in society, we are to be governed by two essential laws.

### 1. The two laws are: love and work. They both have to do with how we obtain our possessions in a legitimate fashion.

#### a. Love – possessions may change from one hand to another on the basis of love; freewill giving. It is moral, good, and right. This would also include inheritance.

#### b. Work – one renders service to another and is fairly compensated for the toil and labor.

### 2. A challenge to consider:

#### a. Find in the Bible another legitimate means of obtaining possessions or personal property that does not fall under the law of love or work or both.

#### b. I feel fairly secure in saying that obtaining possessions by any other means would be a violation of God’s will and constitute a form of thievery.

# iii. Ephesians 4:28 The new testament application in the clearest of terms

## A. Paul’s advice to thieves: “Steal no more.”

### 1. This great verse is found in the midst of Paul’s very practical instruction, given in a highly doctrinal letter.

### 2. There is no attempt by Paul to cover stealing by use of psychological terms. He did not say “Let him that stole, get help. Let him be analyzed for kleptomania and then get therapy and let his health insurance pay for it, even though it will skyrocket premiums of non-thieves and send us into social health care (excuse the sarcasm).”

### 3. Do you steal? Stop it! Don’t talk of compulsive behavior, etc. Quit stealing!

## B. In the place of stealing, try this for therapy: Work! Live within God’s law and plan.

### 1. It is good for men to work.

### 2. If you wish to have, then work! Earn your way.

## C. Furthermore, practice part two of God’s laws of inter-relations among men: The law of love.

### 1. Proverbs 23:4 Labor not to have, just for the sake of having for yourself; just to be rich.

### 2. Ephesians 4:28c Rather, work to have, so that you may “give to him that needeth.”

### 3. This is the law of love. It is fulfilling, gratifying, and rewarding to *give!* It is therapy to give what has been earned by toil and labor.

**Conclusion:** To take by stealth allows for a very broad description and would include more than shoplifting, car jacking, bank robbing, and the obvious. It would also include “fancy stealing.” These simple laws also will convict the person who lies to the IRS, who gouges people for labor or products, who does not give fair pay for a day’s work, who does not give a day’s work for a day’s pay, or who own possessions bought with money that was God’s tithe or offering, . . . you know, “fancy stealing.” Consider also how the lottery, bingo, casinos, and Remington Park fit under these simple laws of love and labor. It is thievery of a “fancy” sort.