

# The Ten Words – Me, a Thief?!

## Exodus 20:15

### INTRODUCTION

Please turn in your Bible to **Exodus 20:2, 15**. **Everyone knows that stealing is wrong**. Even people who don't read the Bible know the eighth commandment, which says, "*You shall not steal*" (**Exod. 20:15**). Please note that there is a period on the end of that command – not a question mark. **Why is stealing so common?** Because everyone wants something for nothing. Yet, God demands 100% honesty 100% of the time. That's not easy to do. Most of the time I feel like I can handle 70% honesty 85% of the time. Or perhaps 90% honesty 65% of the time. **As I look at my life I seem to be pretty good at being basically honest most of the time**. I usually am honest in almost everything I do. Graded on a curve, I think my honesty is far above most people's. But that's what this Commandment is teaching. God is not satisfied with:

- Good effort
- Partial honesty
- Better than most people
- Most of the time.

It is easy to overlook this Commandment. It is even easier to break it.

### **Three Reasons for This Commandment**

It will help us get our bearings if we understand why God gave this **Commandment**:

1. To provide \_\_\_\_\_ in society
2. To teach \_\_\_\_\_ for private property
3. To \_\_\_\_\_ honesty and hard work

*First, please note...*

### **I. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Commandment –**

#### **What does it mean?**

Let's talk first of all about the meaning of the commandment. **It all begins with property and ownership**. When it comes to property and ownership, the Bible teaches what we call "*stewardship*." **Psalm 24:1** says, "*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*"

So, the Bible begins with the principle that God really owns it all and that we are accountable to Him for how we manage our possessions. **That leads to the second principle, which is respect for another person's property**. God says in **Isaiah 61:8**: "*For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity.*" Respect for another person's property when it comes to stealing means **two** things: **1) Do not take what belongs to someone else**. And **2) Do not withhold what rightfully belongs to someone else**. As J.I. Packer **writes**, "*It is not God's will for us to have anything that we cannot obtain by honorable means.*"

Incidentally, in case you think this may be one commandment you haven't broken, this about this. If you have broken any of the prior seven commandments, you've automatically broken the eighth commandment. If you have broken the **first commandment**, you have stolen from God the honor that is due Him alone. If you have broken the **second commandment**, you have stolen from God the worship that is due Him alone. If you have broken the **third commandment**, you have stolen from God the dignity that is due Him alone. If you have broken the **fourth commandment**, you have stolen from God the day that belongs to Him alone. If you have broken the **fifth commandment**, you have stolen from your parents the respect God demands for them. If you have broken the **sixth commandment**, you have stolen either another person's life or another person's reputation. If you have broken the **seventh commandment**, you have stolen another person's spouse or another person's sexual purity. One of the greatest lesson parents will ever teach children is how to live with

honesty and integrity and that is what this commandment does in four short words.

*What does it mean? Next, please note...*

**II. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Commandment –**

**How is it violated? In what ways?**

Let's look at some of the ways the Bible says that we steal.

**A. The \_\_\_\_\_ ways: theft, robbery and extortion**

**B. The \_\_\_\_\_ obvious ways**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ - the stealing of a person

2. Rip-offs and \_\_\_\_\_ measures

3. \_\_\_\_\_ to pay debts

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

*Well, I don't want to end on a negative...so, let's consider,*

### III. The \_\_\_\_\_ cure for stealing - Is there hope for the lawbreaker?

The Bible teaches **repentance and full restitution**. Full restitution was required under the law. (**Numbers 5:5-7**) Not only that, but the Law prescribed that full restitution goes above and beyond what was taken. Go ahead and read **Exodus 22 and Leviticus 6 for details**.

**In fact, the Bible tells us that true repentance results in full restitution.** Do you remember Zacchaeus, the very short tax collector who stole from the people? Zacchaeus demonstrated his true repentance when he stood up and said to the Lord, *“Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”* (Luke 19:8)

Here's a New Testament principle for you and me and for every child of God. It's found in **Ephesians 4:28**: *“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.”*

There are **three important truths** that we can draw from this verse as relates to no longer stealing.

A. \_\_\_\_\_: **do honest work for an honest wage.**

B. \_\_\_\_\_: **do something useful.**

C. \_\_\_\_\_: **work so that you may be able to share with others in need.**

### CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? I leave you with some thoughts from A. W. Pink:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ in honest labor, or if a person of means, in some honorable calling, seeking to promote the public good

2. \_\_\_\_\_ against the spirit of selfishness by seeking the welfare of others

3. \_\_\_\_\_ the lust of covetousness by giving liberally to those in need

4. \_\_\_\_\_ the grace of contentment

Stealing is a sin against God in at least two ways. **First**, every theft is a failure to trust in His provision. Whenever we take something that doesn't belong to us, we deny that God has given us or is able to give us everything we truly need. Therefore, keeping the eighth commandment is a practical exercise of our faith in God's providence. Every theft is **also** an assault on God's providence for others. It robs what God has provided for someone else.

**May God help us understand the meaning, the magnitude and the application of these 4 words: You shall not steal. Amen?**