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Ten Rules for Life | Eighth Commandment: You Shall Not Steal | Exodus 20:15
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(Discussion questions on page 10)

Good morning, my name is Michael Weeks, I am one of the pastors here.
It is my joy to open God's word with you today.

Please turn to the Exodus reading, so that you can follow along with me, to make sure what I am saying is trustworthy and true.

It can be found on page 61 of the pew bible or on page 6 of the bulletin.
As you turn there, let me pray for our time together.
<PRAY>

Intro

In 2025, the FBI reported that cybercriminals stole a record total of \$16.6 billion from Americans in the previous year of 2024.

Around \$4.8 billion of that, was stolen from people aged over 60 years old.

The average person losing about \$20,000.¹

The FBI also reported that between February 2025 and February 2026, there were:

- 565,744 motor vehicle thefts,
- 552,818 burglaries,
- 3,291,146 incidents of larceny, which refers to non-violent crimes such as shoplifting and pickpocketing.²

These are terrible stats, that paint a bleak picture of humanity.
And they make it clear that we still need the 8th commandment today.

Context

If this is your first Sunday here, welcome! We are glad you are here. We have been working our way through the 10 commandments found in Exodus chapter 20, and this morning we come to the 8th commandment: "You shall not steal."

We are going to think about this commandment by thinking about

¹ https://www.ic3.gov/AnnualReport/Reports/2024_IC3Report.pdf

² <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>

1. The Reason for love
2. The Rule of Love
3. [Comments] in this command

1. Point 1 - The Reason for love

Let's begin with point one - what does this command forbid?

Now on the face of it, this commandment is pretty simple. Do not steal. That's it. Do not take what does not belong to you.

Typically, when I preach, at this point I would get you to look at the passage to show that what I am saying comes from the bible and not from my own imagination. In this instance I am not sure it is necessary, but let's do it anyway, for the sake of building good habits.

So, look at Exodus 20:15 with me again, "You shall not steal."
As yes, just as I said!

Ok, so what exactly is this command about? What does it forbid?
Is this just a law for professional thieves or teenagers seeking the thrill of sneaking a candy bar out of a gas station?

Well yes, it does forbid those types of theft. But when we look at the rest of the Bible we see that there is much more to it than that.

In the following chapters of Exodus, we see how this command includes many different types of stealing.

In chapter 21, verse 16, we read, "Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death."

Then in chapter 22, verse 1, "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep."

And throughout the rest of the bible, God expands this command to also include;
the "receiving anything that is stolen,"³
fraudulent dealing,⁴
false weights and measures,⁵
(...) injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts,⁶

³ Proverbs 29:24; Psalm 50:18

⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:6; Leviticus 19:13.

⁵ Proverbs 11:1, 20:10

⁶ Amos 8:5; Psalm 37:21

(...) engrossing commodities to enhance the price;⁷
(...) and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him,
or,
of enriching ourselves;”⁸

As you can see this not just about petty theft, grand larceny, or large-scale fraud.

This commandment is about taking from any-one in any-way that deprives them of what is right.

And when we turn to the New Testament, we learn that this law still applies to us today. Listen to 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.**”

And in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 10, Paul says that thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Why Stealing?

Why does God forbid stealing?

It seems like a pretty self-evident question, just take something out of the hand of a toddler and you will very quickly learn that no-one likes having things taken from them.

But as we have seen with the other commandments, this is not just about protecting personal rights.

Though this command does that.

There is something much deeper going on than the protection of personal rights and the right ordering of society.

Because at a much deeper level God is using this command to analyze our hearts.

And when we do that, we see that this is about our attitude towards God.

This command asks the question: do you trust God?

Do you trust in his ability to provide for all your needs?

Do you trust that he cares *for* you?

That he sees you and cares *about* even you?

There are many reasons that people might steal.

Such as desperation, envy, anger, greed, coveting, emotional distress, a lack of impulse control, seeking a thrill, or just peer pressure, among many other reasons.

Sometimes stealing can even seem like a good thing.

⁷ Proverbs 11:26

⁸ Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 141.

We might find ourselves cheering on thieves and robbers.
Such as with the stories of Robin hood as he takes from the rich to give to the poor.
Or like in the Ocean's Eleven movies, as the loveable cast of scoundrels,
steal from the unlovable, evil, and greedy casinos.

But a lot of these reasons, even the seemingly good reasons,
they arise *"from dissatisfaction with what God has given us."*⁹
We are not content with what God has given us,
and we want more, we *need more*.
We are greedy and we must have more, more, more.
From this dissatisfaction with what God has given us, we take from others either *"an object,
possession, or right (...) in order to satisfy our own desires."*
As one pastor puts it, greed is just stealing with the eyes of your heart.¹⁰

Working under the surface of our mistrust of God, is our own selfishness and self-centered hearts.

It is not only a of lack of trust in God to provide for all our needs.
Failing to trust that just as he feeds the birds of the air, and dresses the fields with flowers, that he knows what we need and will give it to us.

But it ultimately comes from putting ourselves and our needs, before others.
It happens when we think we are more important, or more deserving,
than others.

[Sum]- So, we have seen that this command forbids the taking from anyone anything that deprives them in anyway from what is rightly and lawfully belongs to them.
And that this is not just about the right ordering of society but of the right ordering of our hearts.

[2. Point 2 - The Rule of Love](#)

If that is what it forbids, let's now think about what this command encourages.
We have thought about the negative, now let's think about the positive.

So, if God doesn't want us to steal things, what does he want us to do with earthly possessions?
What relationship should we have with the things he has given us?
And what kind of person should we strive to be?

Our Catechism, "To Be A Christian" question 336 puts it like this: *"God desires that I be content, responsible, and generous with what he has given me."*

⁹ Andrew Reid - Reading the Bible Today: *Exodus, Saved for Service*, Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Kevin DeYoung, *The Ten Commandments*. Crossway, p.131.

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The antidote to stealing is being with content with what God has given us.
Being responsible with what God has given us.
And being generous with what God has given us.

Contentment

Contentment strikes at the very heart of greed.
Because instead of wanting more, more, more, and never being satisfied.
The content person says, God has given me everything I need.

In order to be content, you have to have right sized view of God and yourself.
You need to humbly realize that you are not God,
but that you worship and serve a God who is completely in control of all things.
And he can provide for all of your needs.

Providing a Car

As I was driving to the office on Thursday morning, I had the sudden realization that since moving to the U.S. in 2016, first to Birmingham, Alabama, and now here, I have never been without a car.

I have never been in the position that I needed to steal a car,
Or steal money to pay for one.

Time and time again God has provided for me, either through friends giving me a car, or having enough money to buy one.

Now I know I am saying this from a place of extreme privilege.
And that nowhere in the Bible does God promise that I will always have a car.
But this is just a small example of God's providence in my life, and the reminder that he is in control and continues to care for me.
Of which I am so thankful.

I wonder for you, what are you thankful to God for?
How have you seen God providing for your needs?

Just on a pastoral note, if you are in a difficult season right now and you are in a season of want and need, the church has a benevolence fund to help its members. You can ask any of the pastors about it. The people of this church give generously to take care of others in their time of need. And this might just be the way that God provides for you.

Responsible

Second, (this is point 2.b) the Bible also calls us to be responsible managers and stewards of all that God has given us.

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In Genesis we learn that God created humanity to rule and have dominion over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the livestock and everything over all the earth and everything that creeps on the earth. And he blessed Adam and Eve and commanded them to fill the earth and subdue it.

At the very core of what it means to be human is to be responsible with our possessions. That doesn't mean hoarding all of your money or things. But using them for the good ordering of society, for loving our neighbors, and for glorifying God.

God says in 1 Timothy 5:8 "if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

We should be responsible because ultimately everything we have comes from God and belongs to God.

You came into this world with nothing, and you will leave this world with nothing. All of it is God's.

We are ultimately all just renters of everything in life. We don't own anything.

Generous

So, we are to be 1. content and 2. responsible. Third, this command encourages us to be generous.

If you are anything like me, you probably think to yourself, I will be generous when I have a large enough amount of money. You know, when I am a millionaire. But you don't have to be a millionaire, billionaire, or trillionaire to be generous. It is often quite the opposite.

Jesus explains this to his disciples in Mark 12, as they sat opposite the temple and watched people put money in the offering box. They saw "many rich people put in large sums." But "a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And Jesus told his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44)

Where stealing often arises from not trusting God, just as we saw with contentment, generosity comes from a deep trust in God and thankfulness for the abundance he has given us.

When we realize that God is a generous God. Because "he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he (God) not also graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

God has been so, so, so, generous to us.

To our greedy hearts, that are dissatisfied with what God has given us, Jesus says to us in Ephesians chapter 1 through the Apostle Paul, don't you know that in Christ Jesus "you have been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

In Jesus, God has given us everything we could ever need or want.
And from his generosity,
we can give generously to others.

[Sum] – O.k., to summarize where we are at, we have looked at the negative of this command, what not to do; do not steal.

And then we looked at the positive of this command, what to do; be content, be responsible, and be generous. Now, lastly, I want to think about what hope does Jesus bring to this command?

3. Point 3 - [Comments]

Now as we have seen, Jesus doesn't take the foot off the pedal of this command. He doesn't come on the scene and say, its all good, you don't have to worry about stealing, You have been saved by grace, there is nothing to worry about.

No, he doubles down on this command.

He comes and he says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth..." (Matt. 6:19)

He says, "You cannot serve God and money." (Matt. 6:24)

He says, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15)

This command very much applies to us today, on this side of the cross.

But what also we see in Jesus, is hope for the lost and needy, hope for sinners and criminals. As he says to the thief on the cross, "today you will be with me in paradise."

Because Jesus came, not to abolish the law, but to bring sinners to repentance; so that we might find our life and our fulfillment in him.

He came to give us an abundant life. But the abundant life he gives us is not about having treasures in this life.

The abundant life he does give us, is the riches of heaven.

Riches such as eternal life and everlasting glory,

Of relationship with our maker and redeemer,

Of eternal peace and rest,

Things which are not worth comparing to the fleeting joys of this life.

All of which becomes ours, through faith in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

This is what Zacchaeus realized in Luke 19, when Jesus told him he wanted to stay at his house. Zacchaeus, replied:

"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." (Luke 19:8)

All that he stole now meant nothing to him, because he had Jesus.

Without Price

Second, the hope that Jesus brings from this command, is that we look forward to a time when there will be no more stealing, no more scamming, no more theft.

In Isaiah 55, God gives us a glimpse of what this will be like, saying,

***"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost."***

Then in Revelation 21:6 Jesus echoes these words, and fulfill them, saying,

6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment."

There is a time coming when people will no longer need to steal and cheat each other. Because they will have everything that they ever could need.

We look forward to that time with eager expectation, and great patience. Knowing that the Lord's patience in returning means salvation for many thieves, robbers, fraudsters, pickpockets, and all other sinners like you and me.

Conclusion

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
I pray that you would sit with this commandment this week,
and let it examine your heart, as it has mine.

If you are thinking of stealing, don't do it.

But also reflect not just on stealing in terms of big things like cars or money.
But how might you be stealing time from your family or friends,
Or from your colleagues or your boss.
What ways are you being dishonest in your dealings with others?

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And examining your heart before God.

Coming to him in repentance for the ways you have failed to trust in him.

And asking him to help you trust him more.

And then resting in the comfort of knowing that you have a God that loves you,
that cares for you, and who will provide for all that you need.

Let me pray for us.

DRAFT



Small Group Discussion Guide

Week of Sunday, March 8, 2026

Scripture passage: Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 6:19-21

“You shall not steal.” Exodus 20:15

1. Icebreaker (5 minutes): Tell about a time you lost something important to you. How did you feel?

2. Opening Prayer—Pray together this collect from the Book of Common Prayer:
Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly things, but to love things heavenly; and even now, as we live among things that are passing away, to hold fast to those that shall endure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

3. Context recap:

In this commandment, God calls His people to demonstrate trust in Him and love for others through the ways we relate to possessions. Stealing is not just an action—it reflects a heart of discontentment for what God has provided. The Gospel transforms thieves into diligent and generous givers. (See Ephesians 4:28.) Jesus calls us to direct our affections away from temporal riches and instead set our hearts on heavenly treasure.

4. Read aloud together Exodus 20:1-17 (5 minutes)

5. Observe—What does this text say?

- What stands out to you as you read this passage?

6. Interpret—What does it mean?

- Why does God prohibit stealing?
- What does stealing reveal about our view of God’s provision?
- How does this commandment protect the vulnerable?

7. Apply—How should you respond?

- Where do you struggle with contentment?
- How does gratitude combat the desire to steal?
- Are there areas where you need to make something right?
- Identify one area where you can better steward what God has given you.
- What is one way you can practice generosity this week?

8. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Invite the group to pray for:

- hearts of integrity and contentment
- gratitude for God’s provision
- courage to live generously
- restoration where theft has caused harm

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

330. What is the eighth commandment?

The eighth commandment is “You shall not steal.” (*Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19*)

331. What is stealing?

Stealing is the unauthorized and willful taking of what rightly belongs to another. (*Joshua 7:10–26; Proverbs 1:10–19; Luke 19:1–10; Acts 5:1–11*)

332. Why does God forbid stealing?

God is Creator and Lord of this world, and all things come from him. Therefore, I must never take what God has not entrusted to me. (*Exodus 23:19a; Leviticus 19:10–11a, 23–25; 1 Chronicles 29:14; Psalms 24:1–2; 50:7–12; Romans 13:9; Ephesians 4:28*)

333. How did God teach Israel to respect the property of others?

God required restitution when property was stolen or destroyed; and he forbade unjust loans and oppression of the poor. (*Exodus 21:33–22:15; Leviticus 25:35–37; Psalm 37:21–22*)

334. What things besides property can you steal?

I can steal or defraud others of wages, identity, credit, or intellectual property; cheat in school or on my taxes; or fail to pay my debts. I must repay and, to the best of my ability, restore what I have stolen. (*Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 24:10–15, 17–22; Proverbs 20:23; Jeremiah 22:13; Micah 6:11; James 5:4*)

335. What did Jesus teach about this commandment?

Jesus taught that I cannot serve God and be a slave to greed. I should seek first his will and rule, and trust that he will provide for my needs. (*Matthew 6:19–24; Luke 12:13–34*)

336. How does this commandment teach you to view your possessions?

God desires that I be content, responsible, and generous with what he has given me. Everything I own I hold in trust as God's steward, to cultivate and use for his glory and my neighbor's good. (*Genesis 1:28–31; Leviticus 25; Psalm 37:16; Proverbs 16:8; Luke 12:32–34; 1 Timothy 6:6–10; Hebrews 13:5; Articles of Religion, 38*)

337. As God's steward, how are you commanded to use your possessions?

As I am able, I should earn my own living, care for my dependents, and give to the poor. I should use all my possessions to the glory of God and the good of creation. (*Deuteronomy 15:11; Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 30:8–9; Isaiah 58:6–7; Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 14:13; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12; 1 Timothy 6:17–19*)

338. What is an appropriate standard of giving for you as a Christian?

A "tithe," which is 10 percent of my income, is the minimum standard of giving for the work of God's Church and the spread of his kingdom; yet I should generously give of all that God has entrusted to me. (*Genesis 14:17–20; Leviticus 27:30–33; Deuteronomy 14:22–29; Malachi 3:6–12; Matthew 23:23; Luke 21:1–4; 2 Corinthians 9:6–7*)