

The 8th Commandments – “Who Are You Stealing From?”

Micah 6: 9–16; 2nd Thessalonians 3:6 -15; Malachi 3:6 – 12; **Ephesians 4: 17 – 28 (Sermon)**

The 8th Commandment is ***“You shall not steal”*** (Exodus 29:15)

The 8th Commandment is very brief and to the point.

However the 8th Commandment is broad and it is far reaching just like the other nine commandments are.

“You shall not steal” is a command that applies over every aspect of a society’s social, economic, cultural, and religious activity.

So we need to look at the commandment ***“You shall not steal”*** closely.

Stealing is taking anything that does not rightly belong to you as well as refusing to give someone what is rightly theirs.

There are several synonyms for stealing; robbery, burglary, defraud, misappropriate, cheat, embezzle, rob, swindle and extortion.

Most people do not think of themselves as a thief.

Most people limit their thinking about stealing to professional criminals who steal for a living.

But since stealing is taking anything that does not rightly belong to you and / or denying someone of something they are entitled to we all are guilty of stealing.

Some of us steal from other people.

For example; we steal from our employer when we do not give them eight hours of work for eight hours of pay.

This includes showing up late for work and / or leaving early.

It includes taking an extended lunch period and / or breaks.

We steal from our employer when we take office supplies home or use the office copier for personal use.

Teachers steal from their students when they fail to cover all of the required material.

Teachers steal from their students when they do not adequately explain the material and they steal from their students when they fail to give their best to their students.

Nurses steal from their patients when they do not show compassion and / or give their patients quality health care.

Doctors steal from their patients when they do not listen to their patients and when they just treat the symptoms and do not do their best to diagnose to cause of the problem.

Remember, Colossians 3: 17 says; ***“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of The Lord Jesus, giving thanks to The Father through Him”***.

Pastors steal from their congregations when they tell jokes and funny stories instead of proclaiming God’s Word.

Pastors steal from their congregations when they fail to preach on topics that are contrary to today’s morals and / or culture.

In 2nd Timothy 4:1 – 5 The Apostle Paul charges all pastors; ***“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.***

Notice those verses includes warnings, correcting, rebuking as well as encouraging.

Stealing also includes refusing and / or neglecting to return a borrowed item that another person let you use.

Romans 13:8 says; ***“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law”***

Amos 8:5 warns merchants about stealing from their customers by using false weights and measures. ***“... the ephah is small and the shekel is great.”***

We steal from a needy neighbor when we refuse to give them something they need when we have something we are not using.

James 2: 16 – 17 says; ***“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

We steal when we do not pay our bills by the due date.

When you do not pay your bills when they are due you damage your credit rating but more importantly you damage your character when you do not pay your bills when they are due

Time is a person’s most valuable possession.

So we steal a person’s time when we are late to an appointment.

In addition to prohibiting stealing another person’s property the 8th commandment prohibits stealing another person’s good name, their honor and / or their self-respect.

That is why the Bible warns against gossip and slander (Romans 1:29)

We are also guilty of stealing when we are negligent and inadvertently take another person’s life.

We call that manslaughter.

And in Numbers 35 we can read about sanctuary cities.

The 8th Commandment also prohibits stealing from God.

There are several ways Christians steal from God.

Christians steal from God anytime they withhold anything that is due to God. (Matthew 25: 14 – 20)

Christians steal from God anytime they take credit for the God given talents they have.

Christians steal from God anytime they take credit for obtaining the physical possessions they have.

Christians steal from God anytime they withhold the glory that is due God. (Isaiah 42:8 & 1st Corinthians 1:27 – 29)

In our lesson from Malachi we read; ⁸ ***“Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.” But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty.*** (Malachi 3 8:11)

A tithe is 10% of your income, 10% of your talents, and 10% of your time.

Abraham originated the tithe; Moses commanded the tithe; Jacob continued the tithe, and Jesus commended the tithe.

The person who tithes their income is in effect is telling God; *“I am trusting you with my finances. I believe 90 % of my money will go further with your blessings than 100 % of my money will with your curse”.*

The spiritual storehouse we read about in Malachi 3:10 is the place where you are fed spiritually.

Then in verses 10 & 11 we have God’s wonderful promise to richly bless a person when they are faithful in tithing.

“Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty.

And a curse is promised upon those who continue to rob God of the tithe and the offerings God has commanded. (Malachi 3:9)

Tithing is not just giving of 10% of the money you earn tithing is giving God the **first** 10% of the money you earn.

We see this in Proverbs 3:9 ***“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops”***

Christians steal from God anytime they are not generously giving their money to The Lord.

The bottom line is this; Christians who do not tithe really do not trust God to provide for all of their needs.

Christians often say; *“How can I pay for my bills and provide for my family’s needs if I generously give to The Lord each week.”*

The people that think that or say that fail to realize that it is The Lord who provides for everything they have.

Deuteronomy 8:18 is crystal clear It is The Lord who gives you the physical ability, the mental ability, and the opportunity to earn money.

And The Lord can take away any and / or all three of these things in a split second.

We all are totally dependant upon The Lord.

Christians steal from God when they do not give their money to The Lord every week.

1st Corinthians 16: 1 - 2 is very clear; we are to bring our tithes and offerings to The Lord every week.

You are stealing from God when you **only** bring your tithes to The Lord when you come to worship.

If you are unable to come to worship one week then your offering should be a double offering the next week you are in church.

What if The Lord only blessed you on the weeks you brought your tithes and offerings to Him?

Remember God does not need our money.

God wants our hearts and God wants us to trust Him. .

Tithing is not God’s way of raising money; tithing is God’s way of raising Christians!

God promises to richly bless all those who give generously and joyfully

Jesus said; ***“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*** (Luke 6:38)

Jesus also said; ***“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*** (Matthew 25:40)

If we are grateful for Jesus taking our place by dying on the cross we will want to give generously.

If we are grateful for Jesus giving us eternal life and for God’s Indwelling Holy Spirit we will live like Jesus taught.

In Ephesians 4:17 – 19 we read; ***“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed”.***

And the saddest part is that those people who steal from other people and those people who steal from God are also stealing from themselves.

When we take something from another person we leave our morals, our honor, and our good name behind.

When we steal we are sinning and we are jeopardizing our relationship with The Lord.

When we steal we miss out on God’s wonderful promises to bless those who love Him and obey Him.

And when we steal we should expect to experience God’s discipline.

God is very serious about stealing and there are many passages in The Bible warning us about stealing and telling us the penalty for stealing.

For example: Isaiah 61:8 says; ***“For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing”.***

In Malachi 3: 9 we read; ***“You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.”***

And in 1 Corinthians 6:9 -10 we read; ***“do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”***

Ephesians 4:28 gives us this advice; ***“Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need”***

And in Luke 19: we can read about Zacchaeus the tax collector meeting Jesus and being saved. Zacchaeus said; ***“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 I will pay back four times”.*** (Luke 19:8)

You see making it right not only involves confession but making it right also includes making restitution.

The bottom line is this; there are givers and there are takers in this world.

A Christians is a person who wants to think like Jesus, talk like Jesus, and act like Jesus.

Jesus was a giver.

Jesus gave His life for you.

So if we are a Christian we will be givers not takers.

Remember those people who steal from other people and those people who steal from God are also stealing from themselves.

AMEN