We have been walking through Exodus and have taken one of the Ten Commandments each week. Can you list them? There was a survey that showed Americans cannot list the Ten Commandments but they can list the ingredients on a Big Mac. They could also name more of the Brady Bunch kids than the Ten Commandments.[1] Let's dp better! This week we come to the Eight Command. Commandments #6, 7, 8 are only 2 words, three syllables in Hebrew.

Let's consider the sin of stealing, the cultivation of contentment, the gain of giving. Do not steal. What is stealing? It is ill-gotten gain at an another's expense. It is taking what does not belong to you. Calvin said this command is concerned with all forms of unjust gain at the expense of others.[2] Here is how the Heidelberg Catechism puts it: Q110. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment? A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. But in God's sight theft also includes all scheming and swindling in order to get our neighbor's goods for ourselves, whether by force or means that appear legitimate, such as inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God. In addition God forbids all greed and pointless squandering of his gifts."

What is the heart behind this command? God wants a stable society. The nation of Israel will not be stable if there is no respect for each other and for each other's things. Stealing will breed distrust and strife (Hos 4:2, 7:1, Isa 1:10, 23, Jer 7:8-11, Hos 2:1-2, 8-9, 3:2-3, Ps 50:16-18). So we see that God values personal property. It is all God's, but he does let us steward his things. The OT has some 50 laws governing private property: theft, fraud, property damage, boundaries, restitution, wages, loans. Communistic efforts to abolish private property are a violation of the Eight Commandment. Socialism is stealing. / Man, as we have walked through Exodus we have seen clearly that God is pro-life, pro religious freedom and pro-private property. The West was built off these values.

This Eighth Command is really a command to love your neighbor. Don't do him wrong. Leave his stuff alone. It is there to curb the human propensity to greed, which is there in every person. We are just a few weeks past Halloween and this greed can be illustrated by those homes that set out a bucket of candy with a sign that says, "Just take one." Have you not accounted for the human condition my friend?

If people kept the Eight Command, we wouldn't need locks! In TX, wouldn't need that 20 gauge by the door. Wouldn't need passcodes. Since passcodes are apparently not enough to keep thieves from thieving, we wouldn't need two factor authentication. Wouldn't need security guards at Walgreens. Where there is widespread theft, there has been clear social breakdown. Turn on the news.

You may not think this applies. Stealing is so petty, right? But it is fairly comprehensive in its coverage. What did Heidelberg say? "In addition, God forbids all greed and pointless squandering of his gifts." Stealing more broadly defined happens all the time, actually. Workplace theft has doubled in recent years. It is estimated that some $40B a year is stolen by employees each year. How much time do you scroll social media or YouTube while on the clock? Or fudging your expense report? Or taking office supplies home?

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[1] https://www.archbalt.org/survey-americans-know-big-mac-not-commandments/

[2] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony Vols. I-IV* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852-55), III: 111.

Then there is plagiarism. Have you ever claimed another's work as your own? Failed to attribute? Have you used AI but claimed it as your work? / What about pirated movies? You know what the most pirated movie was the year of its release? The Passion of Christ![3]

Remember back in the 90's? Before the days of Spotify or Apple Music, some of us deviants used Napster: illegally downloading music without paying for it! Cofounded by Sean Parker, the first president of Facebook. Napster was sued by Metallica and shut down.
Maybe at fast food joints, you ask for a water cup but then fill it with Coke. And by Coke, of course I mean any kind of soda including Dr. Pepper. Its all called Coke if you're new to TX. We're glad to have you. You cheat a company and dishonor God to save $2.50.

I didn't know this but apparently hotel pillow theft is a huge deal. That's just gross. That is why they tend to bolt down the lamps – otherwise people would walk right out the door with everything they could. Then there's insurance fraud. Happens regularly. What about the IRS? An estimated $20B is stole each year by lying about taxes.

We the people of God need to be honest. We should never steal anything. So many of these things are actions done in private. So we think. Ring cameras have changed the game. Package pirates getting blasted. But listen, God sees. Prov 15:3: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Jer 23:24: "Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD." Heb 4:13: "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." Remember how the book of Ecclesiastes ends: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccles 12:13-14). Do not steal.

What about tithing? Listen to Malachi 3:6-10: "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?' Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."

God says if you are not tithing you are robbing him! Now, some who want to hoard rather than give say the tithe is only for the OC but its first mentioned long before that in Gen 14. The consistent pattern from Gen to Rev is a tithe to the storehouse as the first fruits off your income. The question is if OC Israel, who did not have the gift of the Spirit, had very little Scripture, had no Jesus, no death burial resurrection and ascension, who had only seen a glimpse of the grace we NC Christians now experience – the question is do you think the Lord would expect more or less from us? All of us will stand before him – 2 Cor 5:10 Rom 14:10 and give an account of how we have stewarded his stuff for his glory and the good of others.

And when there is robbery, repentance required restitution. Remember Zaccheus the tax collector? The wee little man? If you didn't grow up in church you don't have a clue what I'm talking about. He

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[3] DeYoung, *The 10 Commandments,* 131.

had been robbing his own people but gets saved and says this: "'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham'" (19:8-9).

Okay, we don't want to be thieves. Got it. What's the alternative for the people of God? What's the opposite of stealing? Contentment and generosity. The cultivation of contentment and the gain of giving. First, we are content. We won't take from others because we are content. We don't need more stuff. We now know that the idea that more things leads to more happiness is a lie. That's fool's gold. It won't bring lasting happiness. The new wears off quick and we're quickly back to where we were before we obtained it. / **Luke 12:13-21**

Heb 13:5-6: "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me'?" Our lives are not defined by stuff and things. We cultivate contentment. Phil 4.11-13: I have learned in whatever circumstance plenty or needy to be content. 1 Tim 6:6-8: "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content."

Prov 30:8-9 nails the balance: "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God." / **Matt 6:19-24** / Luke 12:32-34: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

We don't take things because we are content, and second, we are generous. We are not takers. We are givers. Why? God is a giver. God so loved he gave. To become like God – Godly – is to become generous. This was the pattern from the beginning. We are blessed to be a blessing. **Ps 67.** That's the Abrahamic order. Blessed to be a blessing. **2 Cor 8:9.** As Christ has been to us so we are to be to others.

Eph 4 has been so helpful in this series on the Ten Commandments. Turn over to **4:20-32.** Verse 28 addresses the Eight Command directly. Let the thief no longer steal but let him do honest work. The flip side of stealing is a strong work ethic for God's glory and the good of those you're benefitting from your work. Col 3:23 we work with all our heart as for the Lord. But did you catch that purpose clause? Why do we work according to Ephesians 4:28? *So that* he may have something to share with anyone in need. / How do you view your work? Self or sacrificial generosity?

HC Question 111 asks: But what doth God require in this commandment? A: That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may; and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others: further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy." For Christians, a key part of our work is for others. 2 Cor 9:11: "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God." / Our goods are like the gifts the Spirit gives us: they are ours, but they are not for us. They are for others. For the building up of the body, the edification of the saints and the glory of God.

Mature Christians are content and generous. Life is not about us. We don't own anything. We are stewards of God's stuff. Do you operate as an owner or a steward? Are you a "What's mine is mine"

person or a “what’s mine is God’s” person? Pastor Kent Hughes said, “Every time I give, I declare that money does not control me. Perpetual generosity is a perpetual de-deification of money.”[4] We are not takers we are givers.

So, this command indicts us all in some form or fashion. Just like all of these commandments so far. But there is One who never stole, never coveted. He paid a debt he did not owe. By dying on the cross for sinners. And on that cross Jesus was placed between two *thieves.* One of them mocked him. But the other trusted in him and asked him: will you remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Jesus died in the place of thieves. As Paul put it in 1 Cor 6:9-11 “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor *thieves*, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

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[4] DeYoung, *The 10 Commandments,* 136.