

TEN COMMANDMENTS
(Part Eight)
Respect For Property

Text: Exodus 20.15 (in pew Bible p. 74 / in large print Bible p. 115)

Intro: -in upholding the bond of ownership between persons and things, *God gives us permission to keep things* (Lewis Smedes).

-Part Eight in our series on Ten Commandments.

- Part One = No Other Gods / *respect for God's authority*.
- Part Two = No Idols / *respect for God's uniqueness*.
- Part Three = Respect For God's Name / *God's essence & person*.
- Part Four = Respect For Rest / *sanctuary of time for enhancing relationship*.
- Part Five = Respect For Family / *cornerstone of society*.
- Part Six = Respect for Life / *"love and help others live."*
- Part Seven = Respect for Sexuality / *"authentic wholeness"*
- Part Eight = Respect for Property
 - **illust.** Stradivari Society

-Laura Schlessinger: crisis of ethical vacuum in our world.

- ethics provide direction, meaning, purpose and value to life.
- help us to fulfill our mandate to represent God in this world (Genesis 1.26, 27).

-pattern for the Ten Commandments:

- 4 God-ward = only one God, no idols, name not in vain, keep Sabbath holy.
- 6 man-ward = honour parents, respect life, moral fidelity, honesty, truthfulness, no coveting.

Take Home Point:

-God has called the human race to be "caretakers".

- Lewis Smedes: instead of "live and let live" – "love and help others live."

- transform prohibitions into positive directions.
- do what you can do to help people get the property they have a right to have.

-so let us turn to the eighth commandment / direction: You shall not steal ... (Exodus 20.15):

- in upholding the bond of ownership between persons and things, *God gives us permission to keep things* (Lewis Smedes).
- God calls us to have respect for the property – ours & others.
- stewardship of property demands a lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies above self-centredness, greed, hoarding, and waste.

1. MEANING OF RESPECT FOR PROPERTY

-is stealing wrong *when*:

- its from a company or government *instead of from an individual?*
- it likely won't be noticed or missed – “*they have so much?*”
- I plan to pay it back?

-difficult to keep this command in the crazy way in which things are distributed among the people of our world.

-no one can flourish as the image of God without something to call, to shape, and to make her / his own.

- we were given dominion over things *in order to take care of them* (Genesis 1.28).
- what we create / make actually becomes part of ourselves.

-God has called the human race to be “caretakers.”

- compels us to help others who have nothing to get something.
- when one group enjoys and displays much more property than they need *they alienate others who lack sufficient means to survive.*

-O.T. prophets wanted the powerful and wealthy to seek wellbeing for the poor.

Search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow (Isaiah 1.17).

- **illust.** Out Of The Cold

-Eugene Peterson: things are not only material but they are also spiritual.

- matter has its origin in God – *therefore we cannot plunder at will.*
- we are called to respect the things God has made (in *Praying With Moses*, reading for August 28).

2. WHY WE MUST RESPECT PROPERTY

-if you respect a person, you must respect *his / her property.*

- stealing violates persons – *violates community.*
 - time – stealing from your employer & from God.
 - innocence – seducing others into sin (Matthew 18.5, 6).
 - character / reputation – via gossip or *breaching confidence.*
 - hoarding – not willing to allow others to benefit or use your assets.
 - ideas – plagiarization.
 - pornography – makes people into objects stripping them of humanity.
- stealing from God violates his glory and honour – *violates the church.*
 - tithe's & offerings / our praise & worship / *our obedience & service.*
 - creates a stumbling block for people to come to God.

-stealing or hording may displace another person's image over assets they have shaped.

- may deprive a person of their:
 - ability to earn a livelihood.
 - aspects of their personhood.
- stewardship of property demands the lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies above self-centredness, greed, hoarding, and waste.

3. HOW WE SHOULD RESPECT PROPERTY

-Bible does not simply condemn stealing – *it has much to say about the penalty for it.*

- retribution must include restitution.
 - stealing 1 sheep or ox = *repayment of 5 oxen or 4 sheep* (Exodus 22.1 – 4)
 - stolen property must be repaid 7 times (Proverbs 6.30, 31).
 - **illust.** Joseph Germain Jailed for \$1.2M fraud

-theft is a serious antisocial crime *but difficult to enforce:*

- “open” shops or markets are easier to steal from & *create a great temptation.*
- attitude towards crime of theft is sympathetic – to steal is to be clever – *no stigma.*
 - **honesty training:** if you haven't bought it, made it, earned it, been given it; then it belongs to someone else and that is where it should stay.

-model honesty.

- not lying about your children's ages *to get cheaper meal & entertainment prices.*
 - **illust.** Duke.

-don't manipulate or intimidate others into given you what they do not want to do.

- love it not envious or rude – *does not insist on its own way* (1 Corinthians 13.4, 5)

-don't rob God of his glory or of our offerings.

“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!

“But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’

“You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,” says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.

“Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies (Malachi 3.8 - 12).

p. 4

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-God has called the human race to be “caretakers.”

- compels us to help others who have nothing to get something.
- when one group enjoys and displays much more property than they need they alienate others who lack sufficient means to survive.

-matter has its origin in God – therefore we cannot plunder at will.

- we are called to respect the things God has made.

2. Know how to do what God wants.

- avoid the excuses often made.

- I didn’t know that it was stolen.
 - do your best to ascertain if the item is stolen.
 - do not become an accessory to theft.
- finders keepers.
 - only if it is impossible to find the owner.
 - turn property over to authorities to decide.
- when you receive something because the other person made a mistake.
 - **illust.** ATM machine & \$40.00
- everyone does it / it’s not hurting anyone.
 - **illust.** T.A. @ W.L.U.

-accept the divine value system as yours.

- God said NO STEALING – end of reason.
- relief from guilt-ridden rationalization of making something wrong seem right.
- gives you peace of mind & heart.

-own up to your stealing if you have stolen.

- O.T. = 20% penalty if you confess and restore stolen property instead of manifold fine (Numbers 5.5 – 7).
- **illust.** Judge’s Disposition During Preliminary Trial Business.
 - saves the community & victim from a costly legal battle.
 - first step toward true repentance.
 - **illust.** Stolen Cookies.

-stewardship of property demands the lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies above self-centredness, greed, hoarding, and waste.

- God brought Israel up out of Egypt on the wings of an eagle (Exodus 19.4).

3. Know that you will do it. - **Closing Hymn:** Wings Of An Eagle.

Stradivari Society

The Stradivari Society of Chicago performs an important role in the music world. The society entrusts expensive violins into the hands of world-class violin players who could never afford them on their own.

Top-flight violins made by seventeenth– and eighteenth – century masters like Antonia Stradivari produce an incomparably beautiful sound and now sell for millions of dollars each. Their value continues to climb, making such violins highly attractive to investors. But “great violins are not like great works of art,” writes music critic John von Rhein. “They were never meant to be hung on a wall or locked up under glass. Any instrument will lose its tone if it isn’t played regularly; conversely, an instrument gains in value the more it is used.”

And so it is that those who own the world’s greatest violins are looking for first-rate musicians to use them. The Stradivari Society brings them together, making sure that the instruments are preserved and cared for. One further requirement made by investors in such violins: the musician will give the patron at least two command performances a year.

Like the Stradivari Society, God also entrusts exquisite “violins” into the care of others. He gives us spiritual gifts of great value, which remain his property. He wants them used. He delights to hear beautiful music from our lives. And he wants us to play they for him.

Joseph Germain Jailed for \$1.2M fraud

Joseph Germain, the owner of an ATM company, who defrauded the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority (SIGA) of \$1.2 million left a Saskatoon courtroom in handcuffs and pulling a blue carry-on suitcase. He was sentenced to 3 ½ years in prison and ordered to repay the \$1,199,800 he diverted to his own bank accounts.

Germain kept money intended for SIGA as reimbursement for ATM transactions at its casinos. He used the money to pay business debts and to buy luxury goods.

The restitution order will not be affected by bankruptcy if Germain seeks that protection. Germain will be bound by the court order for as long as it takes to repay the money.

Crown prosecutor Robin Ritter said the crime was motivated by greed, noting Germain spent almost \$1.2 million in five months (*StarPhoenix* A3 October 13, 2010).

Duke

Duke, a listener to Laura Schlessinger's radio program, wrote about his family's recognition of right and wrong:

Anytime my wife would take the kids to the movie, she would buy them candy from the grocery store for them to eat while watching. I figured the theatres have rules against bringing your own goodies, but I didn't really know for sure and was too embarrassed to ask – but nevertheless, I always felt a little sheepish about bringing in candy to save money. One time we were headed to the movie and I participated in buying the candy beforehand, but I told the kids to not display the candy openly in the theatre because it was against the rules.

One of my kids spoke up and said, "Well, if it's against the rules, why are we doing it?" And I have to tell you that neither I nor my wife ever tried that again" (*The Ten Commandments* Laura Schlessinger, p. 267).

Stolen Cookies

Greg, a listener to Laura Schlessinger's radio program, wrote about how he helped his son Daniel overcome a stealing problem:

My son Daniel, the oldest, now a freshman in high school, while in the eighth grade, saw a small bag of cookies on his teacher's desk. I know that it wasn't due to starvation that he took those cookies because he had had his breakfast – but anyway, he decided to have a mid-morning snack. I received a phone call from the principal who was trying to play down the seriousness of Daniel's misdemeanour. I told the principal not to make light of this and to throw the book at Daniel. Call it what it is: stealing.

Daniel was suspended for one day. I took off from work the next day in order to supervise his one day suspension. My wife had the idea to have a work day for Daniel. He weeded the vegetable garden, cleaned the yard, shovelled dirt, washed the car etc. until his five siblings came home from school.

Although Daniel thought his discipline was over, it was now time for the restitution. I told him to get his allowance from his room and hop in the van. We went to the nearest Stop 'n Shop and purchased flour, sugar, butter, pecans, and chocolate chips. Daniel made five dozen cookies. I took an early lunch the next day and went to Daniel's school, found the class, and called Daniel and his teacher out into the hall. Daniel apologized to his teacher. Then I told him that he also owed the class an apology, and if he needed persuasion I would accompany him into the class.

Daniel quickly grabbed the cookies and walked into the class and said, "I just want to apologize to the class because I'm the one who stole the cookies off our teacher's desk. I made a bunch of cookies for us to all share."

The class erupted with applause. I walked down the hallway and didn't touch the floor until I reached the parking lot. Later that day Daniel told me that more than one of his friends told him that it was cool that he told the truth and shared with the class.

Although this was not an easy thing to do, this is how we tell our kids to be responsible and make restitution for our actions – pay back what you owe plus ... (*The Ten Commandments* Laura Schlessinger, p.p. 239, 240).

- He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need (Ephesians 4.28).
- But Zacchaeus 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."

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19.8, 9).