

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What does this Mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

Dear Friends in Christ,

A little boy showed his mom his birthday money. *“Do I have to give some to Jesus?”* The mom said, *“No. That is your money. You can do use it for yourself.”* Was the mother right? The answer is “no.” The Bible tells every gift originates with God and it belongs to him. Psalm 24:1 informs. **“The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.”** But what about gifts? James writes in chapter one, verse 17 of his letter, **“Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of the heavenly lights.”**

Giving something back to God as a thankyou applies not just to wages, stock market gains, but even to gifts. Does that mean the child must give some of his birthday money? Not necessarily. God wants us to give with a cheerful and willing heart. There may need to be some more educating, before child is ready to bring his own gift. However, if the boy wanted to do it, it wouldn't be wrong.

This is just one example of how the principals and truths surrounding the Seventh Commandment impact our everyday lives. I am sure that most you were aware before you came to church that there is a commandment against stealing. We must be aware that the Scriptures teach us other things about possessions and money. We are also to help our neighbor keep his property and improve his or her life. As we have seen with the other commandments, we struggle to avoid bad behavior and we fail to do what we should do. Jesus, our Savior, will helps us with this commandment also. Today we want to remember that Christ has made us rich. (2 Cor 8:9) And so **In Christ I Handle God's Gift of Possessions.** He enables us to loosen our grip on our wallet or purse. We use our money and possessions in a positive way.

1. The gift and purpose of our possessions.

Steve and Marie received gift check in the mail from Uncle Jack. It was an early Christmas present of \$1000. The couple eagerly planned a needed vacation. However, the next morning their aged car wouldn't start. The bill for repairs came to \$1000 and change. They had one use in mind for the gift, but God had another purpose. You and I need to remember that when God gives us his gifts of money and possessions, he has a purpose in mind.

A. How can we say that everything we have comes from God?

1. Moses writes in Deuteronomy 8, **“You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”** Without God giving life to our bodies in our mother's womb. Without God causing our bodies to grow and mature into adulthood, we would be without strength and ability. So, everything we have directly or indirectly comes from him. Remember our money, our homes our cars are all created out earthly materials that he owns. We own nothing. We are temporarily using God things.

2 His gifts come to us in different forms. He gives us an education and then helps us get a job, so we can use the muscles and brains to earn wages. He gives us gifts on our birthdays, wedding days, and holidays. He may give us special gifts through people who like us or want to help us. He may also allow us to receive an inheritance. Although he gives us these gifts, he retains ownership and we have to give them up when our life is over.

B. When God gives us his gifts, he expects us to be good stewards or managers of our money and possessions.

1. The first thing we should do is set aside some of what we have to give back to him for Gospel ministry. Dollars are needed to not only buy Bibles and have ministers, but to pay the electric bill and trash bill. St. Paul approaches Christian giving with these words in 1 Corinthians, **“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income.”** (16:2) About the amount he says in 2 Corinthians, **“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”** (9:7) Some want to give 10%, others more or less. We do it with a cheerful heart as God moves us.

2. The apostles of Jesus in the New Testament also warn and encourage us to use our treasures to take care of care of our family, pay taxes, help the poor, saving for retirement, etc.

3. In my illustration earlier I spoke of the couple wanting to use gift money for a needed vacation. Taking a needed vacation or one to visit family and friends is certainly a God pleasing use of our money and possessions. But it is also true with all our responsibilities and needs, a person has to plan. This usually means a budget, so that we can reach God pleasing goals.

2. In Christ we find peace from our greed.

When I was in school, one of the students in the dormitory was stealing money from the snack bar. The snack bar had ice cream, candy and soda which students could purchase during a school breaks and in the evening. The circle of students who had access inside the snack bar was small, so they set a trap, I believe it was with invisible dye. Then they examined the hands of the students and they found the one who had been stealing.

Why would a Christian do such a thing? Why did Judas, one Jesus' apostles, steal from the money bag that belonged to Jesus' ministry? The answer has to do with greed. We also want to see that in Christ we find peace from our greed.

A. Since the fall into sin our human nature is not happy with what our heavenly Father gives us. We want more.

1. St. Paul warns us in 1 Timothy 6, **“Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”** (9,10) Greed

leads people to stealing in its various forms. Gehazi was a man who was the prophet Elisha's servant. He took something that was not his to take. God punished him with the disease of Leprosy. You can read about in 2 Kings 5.

2. Besides robbery or theft, the Bible speaks against fraud, excessive borrowing and paying unfair wages. So we may not rob a bank, but if we lie and commit medical fraud to get benefits we don't deserve, that is a sin. We may not write a bad check, but if we cheat on our taxes, that is a sin. There are other things such as wasting God's gifts, vandalism that are also sins.

3. Another area in which you and I sin, is that God intends us to help our neighbor keep his property and means of income. If our neighbor loses his

dog, and we saw where it went, but we say nothing, that is a sin. If someone breaks into our neighbor's house and we see it, but we remain silent, that is also a sin. The Lord who helps us to keep our money and property, wants us to help our neighbor when and where we can.

B. When we look at this commandment, we know we need Jesus and the peace he brings.

1. This commandment helps us to understand that while we may not have robbed a bank, it shows that we are guilty when we have taken things from work or school. We are guilty when we short change the clerk at the store and then we don't report the mistake. Even if we stole a quarter or nickel from our brother or sister's piggy bank, God calls that a sin.

If we did not repent we would be under God's judgement forever. God cares and he calls us to repent through this commandment. We all have experienced greed and discontent in our hearts. It robs us of the peace that God want to give us.

2. As St. Paul writes about using our money and about giving back to God he writes in 2 Corinthians 8:9 that for our sakes Jesus, God's glorious Son, became poor. The reason is that we, who are poor spiritually and loaded with sin, might become rich through his poverty. Jesus paid the price for our sins at the cross. No silver or gold could do that. He paid with this holy body and blood. Through Jesus we have peace through the forgiveness of sins. We have salvation. We are rich and motivated to keep God's commandment.

3. We work at using God's gifts properly.

What does God want us to do? We are to work at using his gifts properly.

A. The right attitude will help. St. Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6, **"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, be content with that."** How do we stay content? We stay in God's word and remember what we have in Jesus. In Ephesians the apostle Paul encourages us to keep busy. If we are doing what God wants and help others, we don't have to worry about what we are missing. We know the Lord will take care of us. In Proverbs 28:25 we have a promise, **"The greedy stir up conflict, but those who trust in the Lord will prosper."** God isn't promising we will be rich, but we will get by and be blessed. In **Romans 8** St. Paul promises that God who gave us his Son will also give us all needed things. (31-32)

B. What we do is go about our business trusting in the Lord. We help spouse and family. We help our neighbor and those in need. We bring offerings to church. We do our best at work and school, even our past times, hobbies. If we work at this, we are giving glory to God.

Conclusion: I have a stewardship or discipleship story from a catechism class. A boy of thirteen, after a careful study of stewardship, good use of our possessions, gave this definition: *“Stewardship means that life is a great ship loaded with a rich cargo of many things to be delivered to many peoples in many places. God is the owner of the ship, but I am the captain. Everything I have on board, all my possessions, my talents, my health, my strength, my personality, my privileges, my money, is a cargo to be delivered. God has entrusted it to me for his children in every place. I do not own what I possess; I owe it. God has made me the captain of his ship, his steward, and it is my job to bring the ship to the right port and discharge the cargo.*

(Oswald Reiss BIC, teacher’s manual page 42) Through power and love of Christ Jesus, I can do just that. Amen.