

How Then Shall We Live

8th Commandment – You shall Not Steal

US

Retailers lose \$15-20 billion each year to shoplifters.

White collar crime - \$426 billion to \$1.7 trillion.

Annual Retail Theft Survey, Hayes International

South Africa

R1.5 trillion – corruption 2014-2019

1,331,000 incidences of theft in 2021/22, affecting 1,105,000 individuals.

Unite 4 Mzansi

“Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need” (Eph. 4:24, 28).

Further two principles ...

1. The Principle of Acquisition

- This commandment teaches the legitimacy and dignity of possessions lawfully acquired and properly enjoyed.
- Part of our design - built into us is this desire to acquire and care for things, it contributes to our sense of self-worth and significance.

What has this got to do with stealing?

- When someone steals from you, you feel violated because that person is trampling on your caretaking rights, they are taking something away from you that was yours to take care of.
- So the Bible does not forbid the right of private ownership; it establishes it.

2. The Principle of Stewardship

We are **not** the owner of those things, but caretakers.

- Christian economics based on the fundamental principle of acquiring and disposing.
- “In capitalism, the money is yours to do with it what you want. In socialism, it belongs to the state, and the state uses it for what the community needs. In Christianity, it’s God’s, and it must be used as He directs.” Skip Ryan

- We are not to steal because it offends a holy God, it disregards His law, and it devalues our neighbour, whose possessions belong to him not by chance, but by God's provision.

Application

How do we steal?

I. Active Stealing

Leviticus 6:1-7.

- (1) Embezzlement - the misuse or misappropriation of something that has been entrusted to us. (Lev 6.2)
- (2) Robbery - the act of taking what belongs to another (Lev 6:2)
- (3) Extortion - gain possession of another's property by the illicit use of authority or force. (Lk 3:13-14)
- (4) Stealing on the job.
- (5) Taking credit for another's labour
- (6) Taxes
- (7) Dishonest gain (Louis Meads' Quote)
- (8) "Good deals"
- (9) Tithes

"Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?' "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me." But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. (Malachi 3:8-10)

II. Passive Stealing.

The failure to give to another what belongs to them or is due them.

1. Negligence which results in a loss to your neighbour. (Exodus 22:1-15)
2. Failure to return something lost to its rightful owner (Dt 22:1-4)
3. Failure to give what belongs to another is stealing. (Lev 19.13 and Dt 24:14-15)

“Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.” (1 Tim 5:18)

How Does the Bible say We Respond?

i. Old Testament

a. Confession - David (Ps. 51:4).

b. Restitution (Ex 22:1-9).

i. Restitution varies, depending on whether or not the stolen animal is recovered.

ii. Restitution varies according to the value and productivity of the animal.

iii. Restitution highlighted the wisdom of God and the failure of our law today.

iv. Restitution is a corrective, but not a cure for the crime of stealing.

Bob Deffinbaugh

ii. **New Testament**

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labour, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need (Eph. 4:28).

We don't just steal by **wrong taking**, we steal by **wrong keeping**.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8.9