

The Ten Commandments

A Study in Luther's Catechism¹ - Lesson 8

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.

Property

Use Possessions as God's Gifts

God warns us against attaching too much importance to our possessions. Many people mistakenly believe that they will be happy and secure if they have a lot of money and many possessions. But trusting that happiness and security will come from having lots of money and possessions is dangerous. Wealth can become our god. To get that wealth, we can be tempted to do things that are wrong.

God actually wants us to have possessions. He gives us what we need for our lives, and he even invites us to enjoy the things that money can buy. Though God obviously doesn't want us to worship our possessions or take what belongs to others, the Seventh Commandment teaches us to appreciate the possessions God gives to us (p. 91).

Consider and discuss:

- What's wrong with the statement, "Money is the root to all kinds of evil"?
- If you were to list many of your possessions what percentage would be categorized as "Needs" versus "Wants"?

78. How does God give us our money and property?

Genesis 3:19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." We hear that some among you are idle.... Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and *earn* the food they eat.

Deuteronomy 8:17, 18 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.

Genesis 24:35, 36 (When Abraham's servant went to find a wife for Isaac, God directed him to the family of Bethuel. The servant described how God had blessed his master.) *The Lord has blessed my master abundantly*, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns.

Genesis 23:1-18 (Abraham used some of the wealth God had given him to purchase a field and a cave as a burial place for his wife.)

Luke 15:11-20 (The prodigal son asked for his *inheritance*.)

1 Kings 21:1-15 (Naboth had *inherited* his vineyard.)

Matthew 7:11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Consider and discuss:

- As an adult, one of the main ways God gives possessions is through the work he enables us to do. Is it acceptable to take a step back and admire the work you have accomplished? Can a Christian properly take pride in the work he or she does?
- A young child receives nearly everything as a gift. How can a parent teach a child about the source of those possessions as the child grows up?

¹ This study will use *Luther's Catechism* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2017). You may purchase a copy at nph.net.

79. Because God is the source of all of our blessings, what will our attitude be toward the things we have?

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Psalm 107:8, 9 Let them *give thanks* to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Psalm 24:1 *The earth is the Lord's*, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

1 Corinthians 4:2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust *must prove faithful*.

Matthew 25:14–30 (God teaches us that we are to manage the gifts he has given us to the best of our abilities. *We are stewards of his blessings.*)

Consider and discuss:

- Materialism is the tendency to consider material possessions as more important than spiritual values (Oxford Dictionary). Based on that definition, would you classify our culture as a very materialistic? List some examples to support your answer.
- Would the average American claim that materialism is a good thing?
- How does knowing that God is the sources of all things guide our attitude toward our possessions?

80. Our money and possessions are blessings that we can use in many ways. For what purposes does God give these blessings?

1 Timothy 5:8 Anyone who does not *provide for their relatives*, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 John 3:17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

Romans 13:6, 7 This is also why you *pay taxes*, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

2 Corinthians 9:7 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.

Mark 12:41–44 (A widow gave all she had.)

81. Because of our sinful nature, we aren't content with the abundant blessings God gives to us. Our lack of contentment leads us to sin against this commandment. What are some ways people sin against God in the way they use the gifts that he gives?

Luke 15:11–20 (The lost son *wasted* his possessions by sinful selfish living.)

Luke 10:30–37 (Several men beat and robbed a traveler.)

Leviticus 19:35 *Do not use dishonest standards* when measuring length, weight or quantity.

Proverbs 11:1 The Lord detests *dishonest scales*, but accurate weights find favor with him.

Proverbs 22:16, 22 One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty. Do not *exploit the poor* because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court.

Psalm 37:21 The wicked *borrow and do not repay*, but the righteous give generously.

1 Corinthians 6:8 You yourselves cheat and *do wrong*, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

1 Timothy 6:9, 10 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. 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.

James 5:4 Look! The wages you *failed to pay* the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

Malachi 3:8 Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet *you rob me*. But you ask, "How are we robbing you?" In tithes and offerings.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 Even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is *unwilling to work* shall not eat."

James 2:15, 16 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?

Consider and discuss:

- That passages above list a variety of ways in which we sin against this commandment. Whatever the sin may be, greed is at the heart of the matter. How does greed impact our relationship with others? How does greed impact our relationship with God?
- How may greed show itself in the life of someone who has many possessions? How does it show itself in the life of someone who has very little?
- **2 Thessalonians 3:10** rebukes “*the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.*” **James 2:15,16** rebukes the one who “*does nothing about [a neighbor’s] physical needs.*” Are these passages in conflict with each other? Explain.

82. An Old Testament prophet stated a sobering truth that applies to all of us: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Our sinful nature is alive within us and taints our use of God’s gifts with sins such as selfishness and greed. **How can we be sure that our sins against the Seventh Commandment are forgiven?**

2 Corinthians 8:9 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.*

Romans 5:19 Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also *through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*

Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”*

83. Because of sin we were under a curse. Yet, in his amazing mercy, Jesus took our curse upon himself. He freed us from our curse and forgave us. Freed and forgiven, we want to honor him with our lives and with our possessions. **How does the Seventh Commandment serve as a guide, showing us how to serve God with our possessions?**

Hebrews 13:5 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*

1 Timothy 6:6–8 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, *we will be content* with that.

Luke 12:15 He said to them, “Watch out! *Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.*”

Ephesians 4:28 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.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should *set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up.*

Colossians 3:22, 23 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.

1 Corinthians 10:24 No one should seek their own good, but *the good of others.*

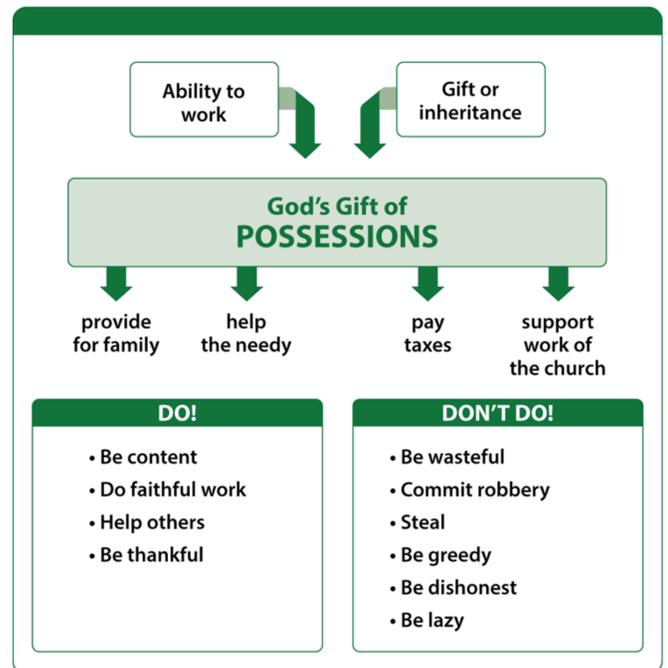
Genesis 13:5–12 (Abraham helped Lot prosper by allowing him to choose the best land for himself.)

Proverbs 28:25 The greedy stir up conflict, but *those who trust in the Lord* will prosper.

Romans 8:31, 32 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Consider and discuss:

- Define generosity?



- How does generosity show itself in the life of a Christian?
- Why does generosity show itself in the life of a Christian?

Connections

As we trust that God will provide all we need and all that is good for us, not only will we be able to resist taking the possessions of others but we will also be glad to help them keep and improve their property. Once, Abraham risked his life to rescue Lot and the wealthy leaders of some neighboring lands. When he was offered a reward, Abraham declined. He wasn't greedy and eager to take whatever he could get. Instead, he expressed his trust that his blessings would come from God and was confident God would provide him with whatever he needed.

Genesis 14:1-24

Abraham trusted God to provide all he needed and chose to do what would benefit Lot and his neighbors. Make a list of ways you could use your possessions to help others.

Luther

Consider a manservant or maidservant who does not serve faithfully in the house, does damage, or allows damage to be done when it could be prevented. He ruins and neglects the goods entrusted to him, by laziness, idleness, or hate, to the spite and sorrow of master and mistress.... I say the same also about mechanics, workmen, and day laborers. They all follow their evil thoughts and ever know enough ways to overcharge people, while they are lazy and unfaithful in their work. All these are far worse than burglars, whom we can guard against with locks and bolts and, if caught, can be treated in such a way that they will not commit the crime again. (Large Catechism, I, par. 225, 226)

Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (Stanzas 1, 2)

Lord of glory, you have bought us
 With your lifeblood as the price,
 Never grudging for the lost ones
 That tremendous sacrifice,
 And with that have freely given
 Blessings countless as the sand
 To th' unthankful and the evil
 With your own unsparing hand.

Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you
 Gladly, freely, of your own.
 With the sunshine of your goodness
 Melt our thankless hearts of stone
 Till our cold and selfish natures,
 Warmed by you, at length believe
 That more happy and more blessed
 'Tis to give than to receive.