



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.



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After the commandment about you personally and your spouse, next comes the commandment about temporal property. God also wants property protected. He has commanded that no one shall take away from, or diminish, his neighbor's possessions. For to steal is nothing else than to get possession of another's property wrongfully. Briefly, this includes all kinds of advantage in all sorts of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor. Now, this is indeed quite a widespread and common vice.

Now, whoever is willing to be instructed, let him know that this is God's commandment. It must not be treated as a joke.

But it is so little considered and noticed that it surpasses all measure. So if all thieves who did not want to be known as thieves were to be hanged on gallows, the world would soon be devastated. There would be a lack both of executioners and gallows. For, as we have just said, to "steal" means not only emptying our neighbor's money box and pockets. It also means grasping property in the market, in all stores, booths, wine and beer cellars, workshops, and in short, wherever there is trading or taking and giving of money for merchandise or labor.

This is, in short, the way of the world: whoever can steal and rob openly goes free and secure, unmolested by anyone, and even demands that he be honored. Meanwhile, the little burglars, who has once trespassed, must bear the shame and punishment to make the former thieves appear godly and honorable. But let such open thieves know that in

God's sight they are the greatest thieves. He will punish them as they are worthy and deserve.

Now, whoever is willing to be instructed, let him know that this is God's commandment. It must not be treated as a joke. For although you despise, defraud, steal, and rob us, we will indeed manage to endure your arrogance, suffer, and—according to the Lord's Prayer—forgive and show pity [Matthew 6:12]. For we know that the godly shall nevertheless have enough [Psalm 37:25]. But you injure yourself more than another.

Beware of this: The poor man will come to you (there are so many now). He must buy things with the penny of his daily wages and live upon it. When you are harsh to him, as though everyone lived by your favor, and you skin and scrape him to the bone, and who you turn him away with pride and arrogance to whom you ought to give things without payment, he will go away wretched and sorrowful. Since he can complain to no one else, he will cry and call to heaven [Psalm 20:6; 146:8-9]. Then beware (I say again) as of the devil himself. For such groaning and calling will be no joke. It will have a weight that will prove too heavy for you and all the world. For it will reach Him who takes care of the poor, sorrowful hearts. He will not allow them to go unavenged [Isaiah 61:1-3]. But if you despise this and become defiant, see the One you have brought upon you. If you succeed and prosper, before all the world you may call God and me a liar.

Whoever now seeks and desires good works will find here more than enough to do that are heartily acceptable and pleasing to God. In addition, they are favored and crowned with excellent blessings. So we are to be richly compensated for all that we do for our neighbor's good and form friendship. King Solomon also teaches this in Proverbs 19:17, "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his deed." Here, then, you have a rich Lord. He is certainly enough for you. He will not allow you to come up short in anything or to lack [Psalm 37:25]. So you can with a joyful conscience enjoy a hundred times more than you could scrape together with unfaithfulness and wrong. Now, whoever does not desire this blessing will find enough wrath and misfortune.

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Large Catechism, I:223-24, 231,246-47, 252-53

Questions for the Week

1. In this commandment, God protects the money and possessions with which he blesses us. How (through what means) does God give us these blessings?

2. According to the following passages, what responsibilities does God place on us regarding the use of our money and possessions?
 - *“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9:7).*
 - *“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8).*
 - *“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).*
 - *“Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” (Romans 13:7).*

3. What are some of the principles which God gives us to help us determine how much we will give back to him in offerings?

4. Does God demand that we tithe? How should Christians today regard the tithe? React to the following: The tithe: impossible for some, insufficient for others.
5. Define and/or give an example of each of the following violations of this commandment.
- *theft*
 - *cheating*
 - *robbery*
 - *fraud*
 - *waste*
 - *greed*
6. What two things did Jesus do to save us from our sins of omission and commission against the Seventh Commandment.

Family Prayer

Everything we have comes from you, Heavenly Father. Help us use our money and possessions in ways that please you, to the glory of your saving name. Amen.

*Answers to these questions can be found at
www.goodshepherdkearney.org/summer-catechism-series*