

Discussion Questions: Living in Freedom 8th Commandment: Do Not Steal - Exodus 20:15

Drawn from the March 2, 2025 sermon by Dr. Jeff Chandler

Opener: Have you ever been the victim of a theft? If so, how did you feel at the time and how did you respond?

Exodus 20:15 says *“You must not steal.”*

Read Ephesians 4:28 (New Living Translation)

If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.

The eighth command prohibits not only robbery but also extortion, embezzlement or injury to another’s property.

I. How we violate this commandment

It’s amazing the number of creative ways that people steal, finding ways to rip off someone else. A person might not try overt theft, but there are plenty of other ways to steal that people engage in, and they somehow don’t see it in the same way.

Read Amos 8:5 (New Living Translation)

You can’t wait for the Sabbath day to be over and the religious festivals to end so you can get back to cheating the helpless. You measure out grain with dishonest measures and cheat the buyer with dishonest scales.

Cheating customers: Overcharging, unnecessary tests or repairs, not disclosing problems with a car or house are a few of the ways one can profit unethically at the expense of another.

Cheating employers: Not just taking home pencils or other office supplies, but not putting in a full day’s work.

Cheating the government: Omitting hidden income or other types of lying on the income tax return is the most common form of stealing in our country

Cheating in school: This not only misrepresents a person’s work, it may end up stealing a grade from someone else who worked honestly.

Cheating God: Malachi 3:8 says, *“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.”*

1. Have you ever justified any of these forms of stealing? Do they seem to be in a different category than stealing a physical item or money? Why or why not?

2. Pick one of the above categories where you have been tempted to bend the rules in the past. When we cheat we usually minimize in our own minds the consequences on others. It's easy to say, "I'm just one person, a drop in the bucket." Take this particular area and spell out what would happen if everyone did it.

II. Why we should we live with integrity

Read Matthew 25:23 (New International Version)

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

3. How does the promise that faithful stewardship leads to more responsibility help motivate you to be honest?

Read Job 34:21-22 (New Living Translation)

For God watches how people live; he sees everything they do. No darkness is thick enough to hide the wicked from his eyes.

4. Has the reminder that God is holding you to account ever stopped you from doing something wrong?

5. How has the watchful eye of your children or other people in your life motivated you to have integrity in the little things?

Read Proverbs 21:6 (New Living Translation)

“Wealth created by a lying tongue is a vanishing mist and a deadly trap.”

Whatever you give out in life is what you’re going to get back. If we are honest and maintain integrity in our decisions, God says we will be blessed.

6. Has God ever rewarded your honesty? Explain

Read Luke 9:25 (New Living Translation)

“What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?”

7. What do you think motivates dishonesty? What does it say about a person’s character?

Group Prayer Time: This session has challenged our ideas about theft and integrity. It’s unlikely that anyone in the group got away without at least one area where more thought and prayer needs to be applied. Pray for one another that you will continue to go deeper with God and experience His blessings in your lives. Pray also for any needs people are facing in this time.

For personal reflection in the group or on your own:

Read Luke 19:1-10, the account of how Zacchaeus responded to Jesus

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸ 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.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

What transformation must have occurred in Zacchaeus to spur his reaction in v. 8?

What might have been the reaction of those who previously grumbled to this act of generosity? How might it have spoken to or even silenced their previous complaints?

Next week, March 9, pastor Jeff will cover “You shall not bear false witness” and there will be discussion questions available at www.sequimcommunitychurch.org/downloads