

Word # 8

9.5.2021

Exodus Series

Message

Exodus 20:16 (CSB)

¹⁶Do not steal.

Introduction: Most of us can't stand people who are liars and thieves.

A. When someone lies or steals from us, we lose something that was ours.

1. We lose confidence, security, possessions, and trust.
2. Thievery violates the values of hard-work and ownership.
3. America has a problem with stealing, in its various forms.

B. Here are some statistics:

1. In 2019 "The average value of property taken during larceny-thefts was \$1,162 per offense. When the average value is applied to the estimated number of larceny-thefts, the loss to victims nationally was an estimated \$5.9 billion."¹
2. In 2017, employees stole or cost businesses \$50 billion through workplace theft.²
3. "...losses from identity theft cases cost \$502.5 billion in 2019 and increased 42 percent to \$712.4 billion in 2020."³

¹ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/larceny-theft>

² <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/09/12/workplace-crime-costs-us-businesses-50-billion-a-year.html>

³ <https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-identity-theft-and-cybercrime>

C. "to steal is to appropriate someone else's property unlawfully."⁴

1. And we have a problem with stealing.
2. As a country, even as a community, we have people who regularly engage in stealing and theft.
3. Why is theft a sin?

1. Theft is a sin because it violates God's principles.

A. First, "every theft is a failure to trust in his provision."⁵

1. When we steal, we declare that God has not, will not, or cannot provide for our needs.
2. Acts of stealing and theft deny God's providence, God's provision, and God's goodness.
3. I cannot be fully trusting God if I am actively stealing my way into prosperity.
4. It is helpful for us to ask ourselves, "Do we truly trust God?"
 - a. If we do, we recognize we do not need to be dishonest, lie, cheat, or steal in order to receive what God knows we need.
 - b. If we trust God, we will go to God in prayer instead of finding provision elsewhere.

B. Second, "Every theft is also an assault on God's providence for others."⁶

1. When I take from someone else, I am robbing someone of what God has provided them.

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 642.

⁵ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 645.

⁶ Ibid.

2. Theft selfishly declares that God was wrong in giving someone something and not you.

a. Theft takes us outside of God's will, God's plan, and God's blessings by appropriating for ourselves what God has given to someone else.

b. When we steal from others, we tell that person that they are not worthy of what God has given them.

1. We tell them that God made a mistake by giving that to you.

2. Theft violates the command of God upon humanity to steward and cultivate what God has given us.

C. Third, stealing dishonors the principles of stewardship.

1. Humanity was created to be a good steward.

a. God placed Adam in the Garden to steward and cultivate it.

1. I think it is a shame that Christians have allowed the world to champion the cause of environmental stewardship.

2. Because they do not have a biblical framework, they cannot approach conservation and stewardship from God's perspective.

3. The first job God gave humanity was to tend to the Garden.

4. We do have a responsibility to steward well our resources; instead we have relegated our responsibility to the world and they are messing it up.

b. The Apostle Paul encourages us that, whatever we do, do it (steward) for the glory of God.

2. Poor stewardship is theft.

- a. It wastes resources God intended for other things.
- b. We can be poor stewards of money.
- c. We can be poor stewards of vehicles, buildings, and property.
- d. We definitely can be poor stewards of time.
- e. We can be poor stewards of talent and opportunity.

3. When I poorly steward God's resources, I'm robbing God.

- a. The Prophet Malachi said we rob God when we don't pay tithes.
- b. One of the functions of Satan is to steal...
 - 1. When Satan steals from us, one of our reactions is to blame God for not giving that to us.
 - 2. The theft of Satan doesn't only rob us of what God wants for us, it creates frustration and resentment in our lives towards God.
 - 3. When Satan steals from us, he purposes for us to be upset at God.
 - a. For us to blame God for not being good.
 - b. For us to question God's provision.
 - c. For us to question God's faithfulness.

4. Some of us are angry at God when we should be angry at sin and at Satan.

- a. James 1:17 reminds us that every good and perfect gift comes from above.
- b. Satan cannot give you what is ultimately good, so he tries stealing it from you or preventing it from reaching you.

2. KEY THOUGHT: The 8th Commandment validates ownership.

A. If it was wrong to own and possess, then it would not be wrong to take that away.

1. But that isn't what God said here.

2. The commandment "DO NOT STEAL" validates the personal ownership of material things.

a. Throughout the Old Testament Law, restitution had to be made for what was stolen.

b. Throughout every ancient culture, theft resulted in punishment.

3. *We must be thankful that we live in a country that allows and permits the opportunity for material prosperity.*

a. When our founding fathers established the country on the rights of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Land (happiness) they helped create a system that allowed for the accumulation of wealth.

b. Much of the world, and most of our fellow brothers and sisters, live in lands where that is not possible.

c. Dreams of land ownership, vehicle ownership, how we spend our time, and how many children we can have are decisions that many across the world cannot answer for themselves.

1. Communist China has recently declared that couples can now have 3-children, up from the 2 over the past several years and the 1-child limit placed decades ago.

2. This week, China announced that minors are not allowed to play video games on weekdays.⁷

⁷ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/tech/china-ban-video-games-minor-intl-hnk/index.html>

3. Americans would do well to examine history and current events so that we can appreciate where we live and the freedoms we presently have.

4. Even though wealth brings all sorts of problems, and even though the rich keep getting richer, I am thankful to live in a country that permits the opportunity to be blessed.

a. At the very least, we can turn on the water and have fresh running water.

b. We all have phones that connect us to the world.

c. **We must be thankful for what we have, lest we take it for granted and lose it.**

1. Even within the Church, we must guard against those who espouse communism and socialism as biblical ideals and preach against private ownership.

2. The 8th Commandment argues against the belief that Communism and Socialism are the biblical ideal.

Let's balance this teaching with the rest of Scripture for just a moment.

3. **We must never view wealth as an indicator of spiritual success.**

A. When we read all of the Bible, we see that Scripture supports both having and not having.

1. Abraham was very rich, and God had no problems using Him as the father of Judaism and Christianity.

2. Jesus said He, the Son of Man, did not even have a place to lay His head.

Matthew 8:18–20 (CSB)

¹⁸When Jesus saw a large crowd¹ around him, he gave the order to go to the other side of the sea. ¹⁹A scribe approached him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."

²⁰ Jesus told him, "Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

3. In Acts, Barnabas had enough to be able to sell property to give to other believers. Lydia was a very wealthy business woman, a dealer in purple cloth and used her wealth to support the Apostle Paul's ministry.

4. Zacchaeus and the Rich Young Rulers were required to lay down their material possessions in order to take their next steps with Jesus.

B. Wealth, or its absence, cannot be used as an indicator of our spiritual value, progression, or identity.

1. Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates are the wealthiest men in the world, and they certainly are not followers of Jesus.

2. I have personally stood with Roma (Gypsy) believers in Slovakia who owned nearly nothing, yet they worshipped Jesus with a passion that puts us to shame.

3. The reports of our brothers and sisters throughout the world remind us that the Church is still persecuted and under attack.

4. I remind us that we should be thankful for being born in America.

a. We need to stop being ashamed of being born in America, and give thanks instead.

b. No we are not perfect. No we may not like our present direction. Yes, there is much to concern us. But we should still be thankful.

c. I can't help but think of some of my friends who recently became American citizens. It was one of the proudest moments of their lives, and I celebrated with them.

5. Yet, we cannot allow physical wealth and prosperity to be our primary indicator of spiritual success.

C. I know for a fact that all of us tend to be attracted to one extreme or the other:

1. Some here are attracted to those people who espouse poverty as the greatest virtue.
2. Others of you are attracted to ministers who espouse wealth as the greatest virtue.
3. Both extremes miss the point.

D. If you base your spiritual vitality or success on anything other than your walk with Jesus, then you are worshipping false Gods.

1. My value is not determined by my stuff.
2. When I allow my stuff to own me, I no longer have things, I have idols.

4. Outside of Jesus, the Apostle Paul is probably the most important person of faith in the New Testament.

A. It seems that Paul was raised in a wealthier, middle-class.

1. His parents were tradespeople.
2. They were Roman Citizens (big bonus).
3. They could afford to allow Paul the best religious education possible.
 - a. Before Paul was saved, he could boast of the best things, the right lineage, the right family, and the right education.
 - b. Unlike Peter, James, and John, who were considered unlearned and unimportant men, Paul had it all working for Him.
4. But when the Apostle Paul met Jesus, what he valued changed.

B. Because of Jesus, the Apostle Paul was able to find contentment through every situation and circumstance.

2 Cor. 11:24-30

²⁴ Five times I received the forty lashes minus one from the Jews. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. ²⁶ On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, and dangers among false brothers; ²⁷ toil and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and without clothing. ²⁸ Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? ³⁰ If boasting is necessary, I will boast about my weaknesses.

Philippians 4:11–13 (CSB)

¹¹ I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. ¹² I know how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. ¹³ I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.

1 Timothy 6:6–11 (CSB)

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out. ⁸ If we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹ But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹ But you, man of God, flee from these things, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

C. The Apostle experienced it all. Highs and lows.

1. Yet he found genuine, Spirit-filled contentment regardless of his present condition.
2. If you refuse to serve God when times are hard, when money is tight, or when life isn't going your way, then you are not a true follower of Jesus.
3. Jesus said "Pick up your Cross and follow me." Whatever your Cross may entail.

D. The flip-side: Don't justify your poverty with spirituality.

1. Just as riches are not the absolute signs of God's favor, neither is poverty.
2. My life does not have a dollar sign attached; it has a Cross attached.
3. I, too, know what it means to have nothing.
4. I also am thankful that I now have something.
5. But if I don't have Jesus, nothing else matters.

Close: How can we pray today?

A. First, if you do not know Jesus, love Jesus, and live for Jesus, nothing else will matter.

1. If you would like to change that, Scripture says that confessing our sin and believing in Jesus is what we must do.
2. Is there anyone here today who is willing to admit that you are not right with God, and you want that to change today?

B. Second, maybe your life is out of balance.

1. You have placed too much hope and trust in things are not God.
2. Perhaps you have allowed good things to become bad things by worshipping them instead of the provider.

3. May our prayers echo that of the Apostle Paul: May we give thanks regardless of the season we are living in.

C. Third, I want all of us to thank God for allowing us the opportunity to live in America and then pray for our country.