

Honor Material Possessions

Exodus 20:15
You shall not steal.

I. What Did This Mean to Them?

A. The meaning of the word.

1. **Steal** (גָּנַב) = to steal, lift, heist.
2. If you borrow something without asking & don't return it - it's stealing!

B. Punishment for stealing in the Old Testament. Ex 22:1.3 - If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.

1. The thief has to pay for the theft 4 to 5 times it's worth.
2. If the thief is caught at night & killed, it would not be considered homicide.
3. If the thief couldn't repay the theft with money, he could be sold as an indentured servant & work to pay off the debt.

C. Why is stealing such a big thing to God?

1. Everything belongs to God.
 - a. Everything is God's property.
 - b. When you steal, you are stealing from Him!
2. It interferes with God's plan for the victim.
 - a. God gives material possessions to people to manage for Him - it's called stewardship.
 - b. Faithfulness to God is determined, in part, by how you take care of His property.
 - c. When you steal possessions, you interfere with God's plans for the person you stole from.
3. It interferes with God's plan for the thief.
 - a. God wants to develop within you an attitude of love, giving, humbleness & self sacrifice.
 - b. Stealing is the result of pride, greed & disregard for others.
 - c. This is the opposite of what God wants to accomplish in you!

II. What Should This Mean to You?

A. God wants you to be content with what He provides for you at any given time.

1. Because of God's promise. Heb 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."
2. Because contentment is something you learn. Phil 4:11 - I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.
3. Because godliness needs to be your focus, not things. I Tim 6:6-8 - But 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. And, Matt 6:33 - But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

C. God wants you to focus on giving to others, not stealing from them!

1. Giving to others provides heavenly riches. Lk 12:33 - Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.
2. The gift isn't as important as the attitude behind it. II Cor 8:12 - For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.
3. God wants you to give cheerfully! II Cor 9:7 - Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Remember - when you steal:

You are interrupting God's plan for your victim.

You are interrupting God's plan for you.

You are not content with what He is providing for you

- so you are slapping Him in the face!

You are not fulfilling His plan for you to work for what you get!