

# The Seventh Commandment— What's Mine? What's Yours?

## IT'S A MATTER OF HONESTY

Rank the following from 1 to 5, with 1 being the worst. Answers may vary.

- \_\_\_ Shoplifting a small item when no one is looking
- \_\_\_ Trading or selling something you know is broken
- \_\_\_ Robbing a convenience store at gunpoint
- \_\_\_ Getting paid for work you didn't do
- \_\_\_ "Padding" deductions to reduce income taxes

Do you see a problem with this list? In noting that some wrongs are worse, we may imply or suggest the reverse—that some things:

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The truth of the matter is—sin is:

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## The Seventh Commandment

**You shall not steal.**

*What does this mean?*

**We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.**

## HOW GOD SEES IT

"You shall not steal" is not as simple as it sounds. Identify the following as either something God requires (+) or forbids (-) according to the Seventh Commandment.

- \_\_\_ 1. actively help others take care of their interests and concerns (Philippians 2:4)
- \_\_\_ 2. dishonesty, specifically in regard to amounts (Leviticus 19:35)
- \_\_\_ 3. not repaying or returning what you've borrowed (Psalm 37:21)
- \_\_\_ 4. be generous and willing to share (1 Timothy 6:18)
- \_\_\_ 5. getting something you haven't earned or don't deserve (2 Thessalonians 3:10)
- \_\_\_ 6. using tricks and lies to get something (Leviticus 6:2-3a)

\_\_\_ 7. help people who are in need (1 John 3:17-18)

\_\_\_ 8. helping or encouraging someone else to do wrong (Proverbs 29:24)

## HOW GOD SEES US

When God looks at sin, what must He do? (Isaiah 13:11)

But when God looks at us—repentant believers—He doesn't see our sin. Instead, He sees Jesus, who was punished *for us*. Jesus is our gracious Substitute (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). He forgives us, and does so much more.

What happens in our lives through the power of Christ in us?  
a. 2 Corinthians 5:17

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b. Psalm 5:8

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c. Ephesians 2:10

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**IT'S A MATTER OF RESPECT**

The forgiving and transforming power of Jesus in our hearts leads us to respect what belongs to other people, and to also help them protect and improve their possessions. Keep this in mind as you read the following comments. Then write a response to reflect the power of Jesus in your life as you react to each statement.

*This is my lucky day! I found \$10 lying on the floor next to the teacher's desk. Someone was sure careless.*

*I don't want to use my new roller blades in this drippy, muddy weather. So I'll wear my brother's blades instead.*

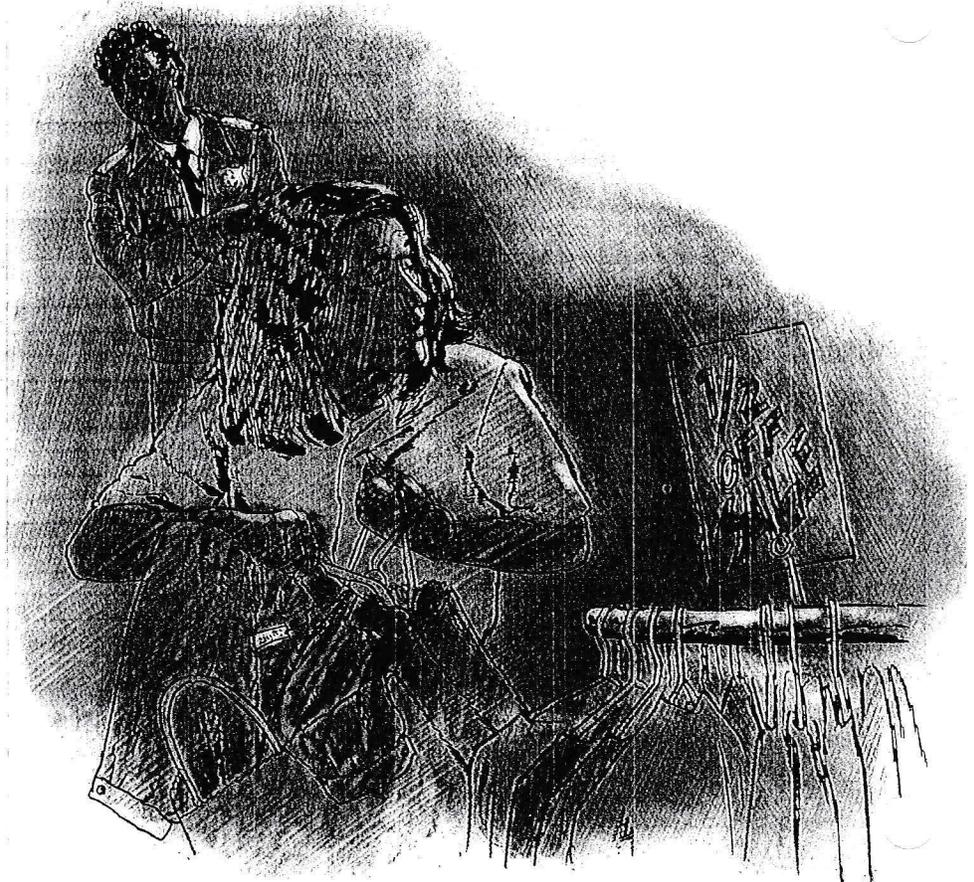
*I'm sure popular with my customers today. My boss hasn't noticed that his sign says \$17 instead of \$71 for this camera.*

*What a bargain! I only paid \$20 for this CD player. I'll bet the guy who sold it to me lifted it from somewhere. But that's not my problem.*

*My neighbor is so smart. He pretended that he hurt his back when he fell at the restaurant. Now they're giving him a big insurance settlement.*

*I get such a lousy salary. So I take things from work to kind of even things out. I just take little stuff they won't miss anyway.*

*Quick! Let me copy your math answers. You know, this isn't my fault. The teacher should have written the page numbers on the board.*





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When God puts property into our care, God wants us to do more than just keep it for our own use. Property is an *investment* that God wants us to use to benefit others: **“Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”** (Hebrews 13:16).

The Holy Spirit helps us to be good stewards of all He has given us. He enables and empowers us as He works in us through the means of grace—God’s Word and the sacraments. Because we love the Giver of all good gifts, and because we serve Him by serving others, we can show our love for God by helping people care for what belongs to them and by sharing what we have with others. List ways you can help people in your home, school, church, and community.

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**IT’S A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE**

How we view other people’s possessions is related to how we view what belongs to us. Possessions may appear to come to us through our work, as gifts from loved ones, as an inheritance, or by shrewd management. The fact is, that **“every good and perfect gift is from above”** (James 1:17).

God makes us *managers* of the possessions He entrusts to us. What do the following verses tell us about managing the physical gifts we receive from God?

1. Psalm 24:1

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2. Psalm 145:15-16

3. 2 Corinthians 9:6-9

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4. Matthew 25:37-40

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**TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER**

Philippians 2:4: Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

The Seventh Commandment and its explanation.