

Ten to the Power of Two.



LIFE Group Notes w/b Sunday 31st January 2010

Word 8: Do not steal. Exodus 20: 15

Stealing involves taking something that does not belong to you. A person is guilty of theft if they dishonestly appropriate property belonging to another, with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it, whether material goods or that which is rightfully due. This could be another's property, marriage partner, or reputation etc. This law emphasizes the importance of getting all you own through lawful channels, it is an intrusion and violation to rob through fraud, trickery, deceit, or force. Breaking this commandment usually means breaking number 10 & 9, possibly number 2 and even number 1.

Read Exodus 20:1-17

- 1) Describe an incident when you were the victim of theft. How did it affect you, and what did you do as a result?
- 2) What possession(s) do you guard most carefully and why?

When it is personal, theft is intolerable, but when impersonal such as government, employer, or 'system' it suddenly becomes acceptable. The theft of time, is perhaps the most tolerated (late for work, minimal effort, false sick days etc). The second might be that of copyright or identity theft. A new phenomenon is 'Bluesnarfing', the theft of information from a wireless device through a Bluetooth connection.

- 3) How many varieties of stealing can you name, what are they?

This commandment shows Gods values of productivity, Integrity and Generosity, see Eph. 4:28.

God has made us stewards of every material gift He has given. If we accept that everything comes from God, and belongs to Him (1 Chron. 29:1-14), if we steal, we steal from God, and don't trust his provision.

- 4) Read Malachi 3:8-12, share any experiences where God has blessed your generosity – don't be modest, this encourages others!
- 5) Does stewardship negate the concept of personal ownership for

Christians? Why / why not? Consider Acts 4:32-37.

We should be brutally honest about where we are on this commandment. Very few are prepared to look in a mirror and say I am a thief, yet this is perhaps the greatest deception. We 'borrow' things, 'acquire' them, they are 'surplus to requirements' *bought* – 'cheap in the pub', etc. etc.

- 6) What do we do or acquire, that doesn't give its rightful owner full due or recompense (including tithe to God, see 2Cor.9:7)?
Review your answers to Q.3 in light of this.
Are you an 'Arthur Daley' of this world? (*explain to any under 35's!*)

Spend a moment to be honest – *at least quietly to yourself!*

It is true that there is more temptation around such as open shopping, advertising and peer pressure, but this commandment is more about seeking openness, honesty and justice (Integrity). Jesus said; 'whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them' (Matt.7:12. ESV).

- 7) What if any difference does being hungry, destitute etc make?
How can we (*help the poor? to*) eliminate a need to steal?
Discuss the wider issues of 'Fair Trade', third world debt etc.
- 8) Read Exodus 22:25-27. Who is this addressed too, and to whom does it refer?
- 9) You may have heard the phrase 'neither a borrower nor lender be'. What do Deut. 24:10-13 / Rom.13: 7,8 / Prov.22: 26,27 / Matt. 5:42 / 2Thes.3:6-12, say about the actions and attitude of a) the lender, b) the borrower? Where is love in this?

This command directs us to what we should consider important (Matt. 6; 25,26). A thief only stops being a thief when he starts giving, otherwise he is simply unemployed! It requires a change of heart, and Godly love.

Read Prov. 30:8,9 and 1 Corinthians; 6:9-11. Then pray for forgiveness, a right attitude towards possessions, and thank God for what you have. Ask for a spirit of integrity, and generosity to share with others in need.

Where is your treasure?