

WORD

"You shall not steal." **EXODUS 20:15**

Stealing is taking another person's property without permission. Among other things, this includes being late for work (stealing time employers pay for), plagiarism (stealing another person's idea), and not exercising our gifts and talents for God's glory (withholding from God things that are rightly His). In the Bible, animals were usual objects of theft because they provided people's work, food, and clothing. From this, we see that God gave the eighth commandment to protect us, not just our personal property. In this lesson, we will discuss what the Bible says about stealing.

1 God owns everything; we are His stewards.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein . . . **PSALM 24:1**

God is the Creator of the entire universe, and consequently, He is also its owner. Everything that we have and the blessings we enjoy were only entrusted to us by God. Therefore, we have no right to take something He has given someone else and not to us. According to Psalm 24:1, who is the owner of the world and all who dwell therein?

2 Stealing is sin and has no excuse.

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house.

PROVERBS 6:30,31

Stealing is a sin, showing a lack of trust in God to provide. God not only provides for our physical needs (Luke 12:27); through Jesus, He also answered our spiritual need for salvation and the forgiveness of our sins. Knowing that Jesus gave His life for us assures us that God is willing and able to provide for our every need. According to Proverbs 6:31, is it acceptable to steal when we are in need?

3 Work hard and be generous.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **EPHESIANS 4:28**

God gave each of us the ability to work. Through the Holy Spirit, He also enables us to practice generosity, the way the early church did (Acts 4:32-37). Instead of stealing, the Bible tells us to labor and share the fruit of our work with others. According to Ephesians 4:28, what should the thief do with his own hands?