

Employers too should take note of the Bible. Deut. 24:14-15 is a good example:

- 14 Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether an Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns.
- 15 Pay the wages each day before sunset, because a poor person is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

In other words, if you've got a worker over a barrel because he's poor and must work, you must not work him to get the last drop out of him and exploit the labourer. You steal from others when you have economic control over them.

Q.7 How do you regard the matter of money owed to others?

- What do you make of Jesus' saying, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt. 22:21)
- How serious is the matter of downloading internet pictures or music on the internet that robs an artist of their rightful royalties?

Our consciences can easily be dulled by the low standards our community sets around us.

## The Final Word

Ephesians 4:28 has the final word for Christians on this matter of the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment. It says: "He who has been stealing must steal no longer." Could this be any clearer? Yes, it could! So let's read the rest of the verse:

"...do something useful with your own hands, that you may have something to share with those in need."

The converted heart and mind is fixated not on having stuff, but giving it to others! The heart of the matter is our unconverted hearts! Christians are urged to work for their own provision, but not for personal gain, but for community well-being. As Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Q.8 Describe the subtle ways we can steal from others?

Q.9 What are some dangers and damages related to stealing?

Q.10 When is hard work actually a blessing?

Q.11 Who in your "community" may be in need of protection?

Q.12 How might we better "deal with" those who steal in our society, rather than putting them in gaol?

## 10 Commandments

### #8 Handle Property Properly

*Exodus 20:15* "Do not steal"

#### Protection

The 8th Commandment from Exodus 20 sets out a simple and clear message, but puts a challenge to our 21st Century practices. More than just a prohibition, like the other commands, it has a flip side; a positive position to preach.

10 Ways  
2 Live

Q.1 What do you define as "property"?

Q.2 Think of a time when you were robbed of something. How did you feel?

READ 1 Tim. 6:7, 8

Q.3 What are the essentials a person needs to have. What protection do they need for these things?



#### Protection of Property

The communities formed under the Laws of Moses in the records of the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy alike provided guidelines for people to have private possessions and offered protection for them from theft and fraud.

Exodus 21-23 and Deuteronomy 24 have good examples of laws relating to this principle that people should have a right to basic daily needs.

## Exercise:

Have a look through Exodus 21-23 and Deuteronomy 24 and list some of the various references to theft and the response required of the people involved.

Consider these elements of protection in the Law:

- Essentials for daily living: Deut 24:6-7 says: Do not take a pair of millstones-- not even the upper one-- as security for a debt, because that would be taking a man's livelihood as security.
- Deut 24:13 suggests that where a man pledges his cloak or coat as part of a loan, you shall return it to him by days end so that he will not freeze in the cold of night.
- Restitution not incarceration-- Heavy financial penalties were levied upon the thief. If he could not pay, he was required to serve as an indentured servant to pay the restitution price in labor <Ex. 22:1-3>.
- Blackmail and loan fraud was also addressed in the Law. God's law counted these crimes as a kind of theft, mandating heavy penalties and possible indentured service as penalties <Ex. 22:1-3; Lev. 6:1-7>.
- Weights and measures- Ancient Israel did not use money; transactions were in measured, or weighed, precious metal. God prohibited anyone from juggling weights so the goods or metals would be measured out to favor the thief. Such a thief had to repay his victims <Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16>.
- Lost animals-- "Finders, keepers" did not hold in ancient Israel. Straying animals were to be returned to the owner or cared for until claimed <Ex. 23:4-5; Deut. 22:1-4>.
- Boundaries-- The land was marked into sections by ancient landmarks, according to the allotments made shortly after it was conquered. To move these landmarks resulted in God's curse. This act was considered stealing from one's neighbor as well as rebellion against God the great landowner <Deut. 19:14; 27:17>.

## Ownership and God

Of course, the Bible understands ownership of property in a different manner to communists and capitalists alike. There is another context set by the Bible. For example,

READ Psalm 24:1; Leviticus 25:23; 1 Chron. 29:11-20

Q.4 What implications do these verses above have for our understanding of stealing?

## Protection of Liberty

Kidnapping is considered under the umbrella of the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment. It is the deprivation of a person's liberty; it is stealing. It comes with a heavy price. Biblical law, unlike other ancient near Eastern codes, placed a higher value on human life than on possessions.

READ Deut. 24:7; Ex 22:21-24; Lev. 19:14; and Deut. 27:19.

Q.5 How do you understand the place of Jesus Christ in our worship of the one true God?

## Protection of Dignity

Isaiah the prophet considers the provision of justice as something that can be stolen in chapter 10 when he cries:

- 1 Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees,
- 2 to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.
- 3 What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?(NIV)

Surely here is a lasting judgment for governments and all people to take seriously today. You steal from others when you see that they are poor and needy and you do nothing about it. This subject deserves a study of its own and would cover matters such as the principle of Jubilee, but time does not permit here.

## Protection of Opportunity

In Paul's letter to Titus he says "slaves should not steal from their masters." (2:10) Now you may some days feel like a slave to your employer, but you cannot be justified by taking away his or her opportunity to make a profit by stealing from the company.

Q.6 How serious do you consider the following activities in the workplace:

- Pocketing pens?
- Using company time for personal errands?
- Calling in sick when you're not?