



The Ten Commandments – Part 12
Exodus 20:15
GCSP – 01/09/2010

One of the names of God given to us in Scripture is Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord will provide. Yet how many of us truly believe that? If I were to ask all of you who believe this to raise your hand in the air, I would guess that most, if not all, of you would raise your hand and agree that the Lord will provide. I would also guess that if this question were posed to every genuine believer in this world, we would receive a similar response.

All of us have seen God provide for us through the years in many ways. Maybe His provision was through a timely financial gift from an unexpected source; maybe His provision came through a debt being cancelled; maybe His provision appeared as a promotion and hefty raise in pay on the job; or maybe His provision came by way of holding your vehicles together and thus avoiding the expense of repair, or keep you healthy and avoiding the expense of medical treatment and medicine, or any number of other protections that saved you from an expense.

The point is that God is indeed Jehovah-Jireh; God does provide, God does bring monetary gifts your way, God does cancel debts, God does give you raises in your pay at work, God does keep your vehicles running, God does give health to your bones, and God does infinitely more in your life that fall under this category of provision.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not acknowledge their provision as coming from God. Instead we at times view gifts that come our way as something we deserved, we view debts that have been cancelled as a lucky break, we view raises as something we earned, and we expect our vehicles to continue to run and our health to be good. We take the vast majority of provision for granted and we look to ourselves, our own ingenuity, and our own smarts when times get tough.

And when you choose to rely on your own means, Jehovah-Jireh quietly takes the blessings and provision He had prepared for you and stores them away...again.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Exodus**.

Exodus 20:15

Let's pray.

When you boil it all down, stealing is an outward manifestation of an inward lack of trust in God. God desires for each one of us to know Him as Jehovah-Jireh, yet more often than not we deny God as our provider and we choose to find a way to provide for ourselves. We in essence take the name Jireh and attach it to the end of our names. Al-Jireh; Al will provide, or John-Jireh; John will provide, etc. Fill in your name and see how it sounds – not very comfortable is it?

This is the primary reason we have the command, "**You shall not steal.**" Every one of these Ten Commandments are in place for God to express His love for us, and the keeping of every one of these Ten Commandments is an opportunity for us to express

our lives to Him. When we steal, regardless of the value, our actions shout that we do not trust, and thus do not love God as we should.

Any time you help yourself to something that does not belong to you, or has not been offered to you by the owner, you are stealing. So let's look at several ways in which most of us have a tendency to steal; and this will by no means be a comprehensive list, but just a few of the more common areas.

Time

Let's begin with time. I know many in this congregation are retired, and several others own your own business, so this may not seem to apply to you but I'm sure the Holy Spirit will have no problem revealing how this affects you as well if you are open to His prompting.

If you hold a job that pays you for a specific amount of time put in, then every time you arrive late, extend your lunch and break times, or leave early, you are stealing. If your reaction to this is, "A few minutes here and there isn't hurting anyone, the company is getting more than their money's worth out of me" then you are falling for the subtle trap of Satan by creating your own rules and/or altering God's commands to suit you.

If you are being paid for forty hours and you in essence only work 39½ hours due to five minutes here and five minutes there of being late or extending your breaks, then you have stolen a ½ hour of the company's time, and thus the company's money. If you spend ten minutes here and ten minutes there shopping on the Internet or checking your Facebook while on the clock, you have just stolen those ten minutes and the related amount of money from the company.

I will even go so far as to say that even if you are volunteering your time and your service but fall short of fulfilling your commitment, that is a form of theft as well.

I am guilty of this much more often than I like to admit, so as Scripture commands us to confess our sins to one another (**James 5:16**), I will confess my sins in this area to you publicly.

We have an 8:00 a.m. prayer and meeting time every Monday morning with the leadership group of Grace Church. What time do I usually show up guys? 8:10–8:15 is when I typically pull up for the meeting. Am I not to a certain extent stealing those 10-15 minutes from each of the other guys who show up on time?

The Monday night Bible study at Chuck & Judy's home is the same way; instead of the appointed 6:30 p.m. start time I get there about 6:40-6:45. Now I know all of you have no problem with fellowship but some of you who attend the evening Bible studies have to get up and go to work the next morning, and the extra 10-15 minutes we extend into the night is stolen from your sleep or relax or preparation time that night.

I know some of you are thinking this is really not a big deal, but beloved, that's a dangerous attitude to have. It's the same attitude that allows us to justify other sins in our lives; in essence altering God's commands to suit ourselves.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Corinthians**.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Beloved, mismanaging my time to the extent that I am habitually late to meetings and Bible studies is definitely not doing all to the glory of God. God's Word calls us to excellence in every area of our lives, so I confess my tardiness to all of you, ask your forgiveness, and pray that God will cleanse me of this sin once and for all.

How do these examples of mismanaging our time reveal a lack of trust in God? It is simply a breach of obedience to His Word; and every breach of obedience to God's Word is choosing and trusting in your own ways and not God's ways.

So the misuse of our time when it affects others, whether in the workplace or in failure to live up to your commitments even in volunteer activities, is an area where most of us are quite often guilty of stealing.

Debt

Another common area of stealing pertains to how we handle debt or the paying of our monthly bills. I know the credit card companies and banks and even many utility companies, etc. charge fees and penalties that more than compensate them for you being late with a payment, but it is once again a failure to live up to a commitment you made when you contracted that debt or contracted the service you receive.

Scripture is more than clear about how we are to handle our finances and material possessions, yet the vast majority of Christians have ignored God's Word in this area of their lives perhaps more than any other area; and I am no exception. It has only been in the last 4-5 years of my life that I have given heed to God's Word concerning the proper use of money; and it has been a progression of learning and applying over those years.

The two most common prayer requests and requests for counsel that I receive from those who look to me inside and outside of Grace Church has to do with finances and marital issues; not coincidentally, the two most common topics in Scripture if you lump sexual sin in with marital issues. Those who come to me with financial struggles have spent years or even decades disregarding God's Word in this area, and now that they are in over their heads with debt they are looking for some miraculous divine bailout so they can get back to their old, comfortable, discontented spending habits.

There are also times when some of these folks have assets they could sell to satisfy their debts but they don't want to take care of things that way. Sometimes it's houses or land or other valuables and investments that have been purchased years ago for their security and retirement.

And what does that bring us back to? We are right back to trusting in ourselves and not trusting in God; trusting in the provision we have made and not in the provision God has promised. We are back to Al-Jireh and not Jehovah-Jireh.

Allow to go back a little and briefly talk about the issue of discontentment, and how this relates to debt, and eventually to disobeying the command, "**You shall not steal.**"

Discontent always leads to overspending if not held in check. Unrestrained discontent will lead to unnecessary purchases. Discontent leads to unwarranted spending. Discontent buys bigger and better and newer when what you currently have will suffice. Discontent says that new vehicle will solve all the headaches of repairs on the older vehicle, even though the annual repair bills are a fraction of the monthly payments on the new one.

But discontent has become a way of life. We don't even view it as discontent anymore. We have been so brainwashed by the bombardment of commercials and advertisements that we now believe that we deserve it and we should have it our way. We now expect to be able to satisfy our wants and desires at every turn. After all, Red Lobster is much better than a ham sandwich and chips from home. That new computer will perform so much better and make your life easier.

I just chose a few things that steps on my own toes; you choose what steps on yours, okay?

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Philippians**.

Philippians 4:10-14

Paul shares the secret, or key, to true joy in the Lord: Being content whether he is in want or he is living in prosperity.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 Timothy**.

1 Timothy 6:6-11

Paul tells us here if we have food, clothing, and shelter, we should be content. Somehow we have fallen in line with the Pharisees and Rabbis of Bible times who added untold rules and regulations and laws to God's Law, by adding so many other material things to food, clothing and shelter, wherewith we can be content.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Hebrews**.

Hebrews 13:5-6

Beloved, when we constantly go into debt, which almost invariably leads to instances of falling behind in your obligations and thus violating God's command to not steal, you will be afraid because you will not have that confidence that the Lord is your helper, and you will be focused on what man can do to you.

How foolish are we when we live in discontent and not in contentment.

But what is it we are truly discontented with when we make purchases like these, knowing that they will lead to more debt or hinder our ability to satisfy our current debts? Our discontent is with God's provision; we are dissatisfied with the level or quality of provision we receive from God, and that leads to more debt than we can handle and eventually leads to violating God's command to not steal.

So time and debt are two common areas in which we can be guilty of stealing if we are not very careful in the use of both.

Offerings

A third common area where many Christians are guilty of stealing is in how they deal with their offerings to God.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Malachi**.

Malachi 3:8-11

Beloved, I am not going to take the time to go into all of the differences between the Old Testament tithe (which was actually 23.3%, not 10% because there were two annual tithes and one tri-annual tithe, as well as several other smaller required offerings) and what most call grace giving in the New Testament; I preached on that a few years ago when we spent many months on the topic of worship. But I do want you to glean from this passage the general principle concerning tithes and offerings to God.

So whether you believe 10% is the mandated amount of your income that is to be offered to God, whether you believe 10% is just the starting point of your offerings to God, or whether you believe something else, the principle is that when you choose to not give anything you are stealing from God. And you had best be careful as to how you determine what amount your offering is and when and where it is to be given; God's Word has much to say about it so don't go just suiting your own fancy in this area of your worship.

I can tell you beyond any doubt that even though the New Testament does not specify a percentage or amount of your income that is to be given, it does command every one of us to give.

The Apostle Paul teaches us that our giving is to be proportional (leading many to believe that 10% is still the standard even though Paul never mentions a specific percentage), consistent (meaning a portion from each pay period), and sacrificial (meaning your offering should personally cost you something).

But let's look at this passage in **Malachi** again; there are some principles here that I think most Christians miss when it comes to giving.

When you choose to not give, **verse 9** says **you are cursed with a curse**. Wow! I wonder how many believers look at their lack of giving in this way. And for that matter, I wonder how many believers even understand that they are living under this curse because they have chosen to withhold their offerings from God.

Now beloved, let me make sure you understand something: God does not need your money! You may then ask the question, "Then why does He command us to give?" This brings us back to the very first principle I made in this sermon: Stealing is a manifestation of not trusting God. The primary purpose for giving is the same primary purpose for not stealing; placing your whole trust in God.

In **verse 10**, God gives us another reason we are to give and a promise for us when we do give.

The reason to give is so that His house is not in want. It was God's desire in the Old Testament economy that His temple had an abundance to be distributed to the needy, and it is His desire in the New Testament economy that His church does the same. And in both the Old and the New, the primary provision was for His children and the secondary provision was for those outside the nation of Israel, or now, outside the membership of His church.

The blessing that is promised to us when we give is quite remarkable if you take the time to contemplate it and, most importantly, if you truly believe it. God says when you obey His commands to give He will pour out a blessings that you cannot contain.

(Insert Dick Coleman's testimony)

I don't want you to miss **verse 11** – as most sermons I have ever heard on this topic tend to leave out. God gives some detail to the curse that is on those who disobey His command to give.

The curse is that your means and your possessions will be devoured and destroyed. Why do financial struggles seemingly have no end? I'll answer that by asking another question: What is the very first thing that gets cut when times are tight? The answer is your giving is either drastically cut back or cut out altogether. So not only do you cut off the blessings of God, or shut the windows of heaven as **verse 10** speaks of, but you are also activating the curse of the devourer and the destroyer!

Are you getting this?

Beloved, you simply cannot out give God! Whether you give God of your money and possessions, or you give of your time, or you give of anything else you have, you cannot out give God: he will always give back to you in like measure, and according to this passage, He will give back even more.

And just in case you are under the false assumption that the Old Testament is not relevant for the church, turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Luke**.

Luke 6:38

Here we have the very same principle we saw in **Malachi**. And by the way, the Old Testament is indeed relevant to the church. Every word of the Bible is relevant to us today. There are obviously some commands that were specific to the Children of Israel but even then the principles are relevant to us.

So beloved, when God tells us, "You shall not steal" I trust I have given you a glimpse of just a few of the ways in which we are guilty of this command. I also trust that you will open your heart and mind to the Holy Spirit so that He can show you any other ways that you disobey God's command. And finally, I also trust that you will take the necessary steps to confess and repent of your disobedience in all areas this command applies to and walk in obedience to the Lord; and thus experience the blessings of the Lord in full measure.

Let's pray.