

The Eighth Commandment

You Shall Not Steal

1- Objectives

- ❖ This Commandment goes far beyond stealing money
- ❖ Motives and treatments for stealing

2- References

- ❖ Contemplation on the 10 Commandments (Volume 4) for HH Pope Shenouda III
<http://www.copticpope.org/books/Tencomv4.PDF>

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:10)

4- Lesson Guidelines

Theft and Thieves

- ❖ Theft is a form of disrespect for other people's rights and property. It denotes that the thief is vile and dishonest; it destroys his character in the people's eyes and makes him look shameful in his own eyes. It may sometimes also be regarded as a form of psychological sickness that requires treatment.
- ❖ Theft is a sin that is so ashamed of itself that it works in the dark, and a sinner becomes disgusted with it, repudiates it, and tries to cast it away from him.
- ❖ To all forms of theft another sin is added that is the sin of lying to cover up the wrongdoing and sometimes to accomplish it from the beginning.
- ❖ A thief is not just the person who digs a hole in the wall, breaks into a house or picks people's pockets, for the meaning of the word theft may expand so much as to include a lot of those whose names are honored, and a lot of acts that go by false names other than theft.
- ❖ Other forms of theft: Armed robbery, Shoplifting, Keeping something you find instead of turning it in to lost and found, Plagiarism or cheating on an exam, Selling or returning something that is damaged as though it were not, Copying software or movies, Selling something with a false brand name, Using company supplies for personal use without permission, Wasting time at work or taking time off under false pretenses, injustice and unpaid labor, Bribery and dishonesty at work, searching and reading others personal information, emails, etc.

Justification

We try to find justification to cover up the theft, neglecting that the gate is narrow and few are those who find it “Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14).

- ❖ Everyone does it – stealing cable or software piracy
- ❖ No one will know
- ❖ We aren’t really hurting anyone
- ❖ They are rich (could refer to a corporation)
- ❖ Revenge
- ❖ It can’t be wrong because I am taking something good – Taking an Agpeya from church
- ❖ It’s not wrong because if I asked, they would have given it to me

Reasons to steal

- ❖ Need (poverty or imagined poverty)
- ❖ We think we have a right to the thing stolen (Foreclosed home)
- ❖ We think that no one will be hurt when we steal (Software)
- ❖ To hurt someone else (revenge – combined sin)

What does stealing say about us?

- ❖ Filled with lust and greed and focus on the material things “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6: 21).
- ❖ Lack of love: How can we love someone and steal from him and put him under stress and oppression?
- ❖ Lack of accountability and fear of God’s presence: “but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4: 13).
- ❖ Lack of contentment: Our eyes are looking at what others have “Do not covet your neighbors belongings” (Exodus 20: 17); thinking it will give us contentment and satisfaction “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again” (John 4: 13).
- ❖ We don’t have faith that God will provide in due time according to His wisdom.

Stealing from God

- ❖ Tithes and offerings "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, “In what way have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:8).
- ❖ Times: The day of the Lord, worshipping time (1st time of the day is devoted to God as the primes; also He has 2.4 hours as the tenth”, Seasonal and feasts days (Passion week & midnight Kiahk praise...)
- ❖ Thanksgiving due to God: Do we thank God for all that He does for us? Or do we think that we get through our day by our own strength? How much of our prayers are focused

on ourselves or asking God for things? Midnight Praises is a time to remember and glorify the greatness of God.

- ❖ Stealing from God is a serious matter that we have to avoid: “Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? says the Lord” (Jeremiah 7:9).

Treatment of Stealing

- ❖ Planting into one's soul love for honesty and elevating it above the immoral stealing; people must also accustom themselves to loving others and respecting their rights.
- ❖ We should know that illicit money is a fire that eats up the licit as well.
- ❖ We should get used to a life of contentment, and become accustomed to the pleasure of making an honest profit and to the beauty of earning a living by working hard.
- ❖ The rich should be generous and lavish and not let others be in dire need.
- ❖ Youth should stay away from the life of luxury and false entertainment which requires a lot of spending; they may not afford the expense and may slide into the pit of stealing either by forcing their parents into unbearable situations, or by seeking to getting unlawful money.
- ❖ Repentance for Stealing: It is not enough to confess to the priest and get an absolution, but to do our best to return or make up for what was stolen. In his repentance, Zacchaeus declares, "If I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8) referring to the law of God in (Exodus 22:1).

5- Conclusion

- ❖ A thief has to be a liar; and the illicit money he acquires by stealing is capable of dissipating the good money that he already has.
- ❖ A person steals from God when he refrains from paying tithes, first fruits, and offerings, also we can rob from God the day of the Lord and worshipping times.
- ❖ It is not enough that a person confesses to the priest about a theft, for he has to do his best to return or make up for what he has stolen.

6- Activities / Discussion Points

- ❖ Discuss the story of Judas who was a thief although he was a disciple of the Lord; as the Bible described him “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because **he was a thief**, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it” (John 12:6). Explain how his heart was not full of true love and honesty leading to his destruction.