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Stealing

by Randy Blackaby

Stealing is an age-old problem, thoroughly condemned in the Bible as sin (Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Peter 4:15). And most people know, fundamentally, that stealing is wrong. But, still, the problem persists and sometimes among Christians.

The most obvious forms of stealing are burglary (breaking into someone's home or business to steal), shoplifting, piracy and bootlegging. And it is these two latter forms of stealing that sometimes cause Christians to stumble.

Perhaps that's because modern technology has facilitated this new kind of stealing. Piracy no longer is limited to robbing ships at sea but today references copying software, music, movies and other things, distributing them to others or taking a copy of such things digitally without paying for them.

Bootlegging involves such piracy and then turning around and selling illegal copies for a profit.

Many Christians don't seem to see a problem with taking things digitally for which their owners expect to be compensated. But the "golden rule" would seem to resolve such questions. Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Other Ways of Stealing

Employees who take office supplies home for personal use, without permission, are stealing. Using work time to do personal business when you are supposed to be doing company business - is stealing from the employer. Turning in "padded" or otherwise false expense reports to reap larger reimbursements - is stealing.

At school, copying the work of others, plagiarism and the like is stealing.

Being overpaid in change during a purchase at a store and not trying to make it right is taking what doesn't belong to you. That is, in essence, stealing.

Why is it Such a Big Deal?

If you take a pencil at work or don't show a clerk she's given you too much change or you've downloaded a song without paying for it, what's the big deal? Well, the pencil costs something and it isn't yours and it (and other stolen goods) lowers the profitability of the company that is paying your salary. Wrong change equally effects store profitability and the songs people expend their time writing and recording to make a living are used without those persons being remunerated. Would you want to work for nothing?

Stealing deprives others of what is rightfully theirs. Anytime stealing occurs, someone loses. Most businesses have to charge from five to 15 percent more to cover the cost of stealing in its many forms. So, actually, you lose a great deal because stealing is so prevalent. If company profits are hit hard enough by employee theft, employee lay-offs often are the result. Your job or someone else's is lost.

God Says It's Wrong

If there is no logic that makes stealing wrong to you, know that God declares it wrong, sin, and a cause for being kept out of the kingdom of heaven. Stealing hurts other people, and thus is antithetical to the guiding positive principle of Divine law - which is love.

All the attempts we make to justify stealing are hypocritical because we don't want people stealing from us.

How Do We Right the Wrong?

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:28 to quit stealing and start working to provide what we need, and to be able to assist others. This is the essence of what the Bible calls repentance. You quit the sinful behavior and then replace it with God-approved behavior.

This will entail changing how we think about the property of others and then require us to do differently.

Ideally and if possible we should make restitution for what we've taken unlawfully. That is a part of repentance also - setting matters as correct as we are able.

Helping others also is part of the corrective process. Repentance involves a complete change in direction. So, instead of defrauding people, we now begin help and do good for others in need.

Working for what we have is the God-approved way to have what we need, improve our physical circumstances and help others.

What a different world this would be if we could but eradicate or largely control this one sin.

Body Versus Soul

by Terry Benton

The body is temporal and designed for a temporal world. It is a vehicle or instrument through which we act and communicate. It is designed to carry us through a world of learning curves. It goes uphill with difficulties at times and sometimes it coasts along a temporal flat plain. It carries a life-force inside the vehicle. That life-force is the spirit, character, or soul carried inside the vehicle. It is designed to prepare for eternity with God. When the vehicle stops working, the soul will leave the body, the vehicle, and await the judgment. The vehicle may crash, it may fail to operate, but the spirit does not cease to exist. It enters an unseen realm. We do not know how long our vehicle will work, but we know it will eventually stop carrying us through this temporal world. Therefore, our mission is to fill the spirit with those things that make us like God, our Creator and Judge. The gospel prepares our souls and feeds our souls with power to meet God at the end of our journey. Thus, even when our vehicle is suffering difficulty it becomes an opportunity for the soul. While the outward man perishes, the inward man can be "renewed" day by day (**2 Cor.4:16f**). It is important to "renew" your spirit and soul by refreshing it with connections to the eternal things available in Christ. We face challenges in this world, but, we are overcomers through Jesus and His refreshments.

Psalm 119:71-72

It is good for me that I have been afflicted , That I may learn Your statutes. 72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver. **NKJV**

Sometimes we cannot help what is happening to our vehicle, but we can always control how we respond in our soul and spirit. That is the difference between body and soul. Be wise regarding your soul!

The Greatest of These is Love

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" 1 Cor. 13:13

We all need to love and be loved. Without love there is nothing but rudeness, impatience, unkindness, envy, arrogance and everything else that is the by-product of selfishness.

"...let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:18

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