

PROSPERING WITH INTEGRITY  
Ten Values That Build Strong Families - Part 8  
Exodus 20:15  
Rick Warren

I read this week that a London man had been the victim of 15 car thefts in the past 8 years. That is bad luck. The first four cars he owned were all stolen. One was returned only to be stolen again. Just this year the man was called to the police station to pick up the cassette player that had been stolen from his car and then recovered. While he was in the station somebody stole his car. The guy should get the bumper sticker "This car protected by a pit bull with AIDS."

We're in the series on the Ten Commandments and we're in the 8th Commandment today -- "You shall not steal".

I. HOW DO WE STEAL?

It's amazing the number of ways that we steal. I looked up in the dictionary the word for stealing and I found 138 synonyms. It is amazing the number of ways a human being can think up to steal or rip off somebody else. I've listed six but there are many I could have put down.

1. Deceiving customers.

Three thousand years ago this was a problem. Amos 8:5, "They overcharge, use false measures, and fix the scales to cheat the customers." That sounds pretty current. When a repairman makes unnecessary repairs, a doctor makes unnecessary tests, a salesman skips over the fine print, when you sell a car and don't tell the problems with it that's called steeling.

We're in the process of trying to buy a home and rent our current home. I was trying to figure out how to describe our house. I was looking through some real estate brochures. You talk about creative license! I think they are the most creative people I know. "Starter home" that means one bedroom, no bath. "A real challenge" that means it was hit by an A bomb. "A fixer-upper" that means a heap of junk. We are not to deceive customers.

2. By defrauding employers.

I'm not just talking about employee theft here where you pad your expense account or take home supplies or equipment or

merchandise. But I'm talking about when you waste time on the job. The Bible calls that steeling. If somebody's paying you for your time and you come in late, leave early, take three coffee breaks and a long lunch there isn't a whole lot of time left. God says that's steeling. Don't do it.

3. By delaying payments

"Don't take advantage of anyone. Don't hold back the wages of someone you've hired, not even for one night." If you've got some employees or suppliers or friend and you owe them some money don't say, the check's in the mail, do it now. Strategy says I will bill all my customers immediate billing then I will pay my billings in 160 days and that way I'll have their capital to use for my account. That's called steeling. It's their money and they have a right to make their profit on it and their own interest. Don't do it.

4. By defaulting on loans.

"The wicked man borrows and never pays back." A lot of people have no intention of paying back. The worst loans are made to friends and relatives. This applies to anything, not just bankruptcy. Anything borrowed. Tools, skies, punch bowls, records, video -- any of that kind of stuff. What is it in your garage you need to go home and return to somebody? Many of you have a lot of other people's stuff in your garage. God says that's not long term borrowing, that's steeling. It's wrong.

5. By defrauding or deceiving the government.

"The authorities are working for God. Pay what you owe them, pay your personal and property taxes." Tax avoidance is good stewardship. There's no reason you should overpay on taxes or not plan and try to maximize your money. There's nothing wrong with that. Tax evasion is illegal. God says it's steeling, don't do it.

6. Don't defraud the Lord.

Mal 3:8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me! But you ask, "How do we rob you, God?" By withholding tithes and offerings!" The Bible teaches tithing is a tenth or ten percent. The first 10% of all I make goes back to Him in gratitude because I owe Him

everything. I wouldn't have anything if it weren't for God. The first 10% of all I make is to go back to God. He could have said 20%, 50% but He just said 10%. I don't know why but He did. God says if I am paying my bills before I pay the Lord back out of gratitude for what He's done, that's robbing God.

A pastor friend was preaching through the Ten Commandments. A guy in his church came up after the service and said "You're really preaching the word in this series. It is great." Each commandment, each week, until "Don't steel" and the guy came up and said "Now you've quit preaching and started meddling". This gets personal. We love to hear when we talk about other people's sins. But we don't like it when we realize "I'm breaking the eighth commandment because I'm not tithing." God says you're robbing Me if you're not tithing and it is just as important as the other ones.

## II. WHY SHOULD I BE HONEST?

1. I am being watched.
2. I will reap whatever I sow.
3. Dishonesty damages my character.
4. God will reward my honesty.

### 1. I am being watched by God.

People steel because they think they can get away with it and think nobody is going to know about it. If you knew when you stole something (like towels in the motel) that everybody was going to know about it, would you steel? Not likely. So Satan comes along and he says, "Nobody's going to know. Besides you owe it to yourself. That employer is ripping you off. You should be paid more. It's OK to take those supplies home. It's OK to take that equipment. Nobody's ever going to know. Nobody will ever find out." Wrong! The most important person knows. That's God. He's the one you're going to have to give an account to, not anybody else.

Job 34:21-22 "God carefully watches the goings on of all mankind, he sees them all. No darkness is thick enough to hide evil men from his eyes." Nothing escapes God's view. I may fool other people. I may fool the government. I may fool the insurance company when I turn in a dishonest claim. But I'm not fooling God, He's the guy I've got to report to. One day I will stand before Him and give an account. I will explain to God why I stole something that wasn't mine and why I did steel when He said

clearly don't do it. That's when it's going to count. I'm being watched by God.

If you're a parent, you're not only being watched by God you're being watched by your kids. Values are caught not taught. What is my life style communicating to my kids? Is there anything in my life I'd be ashamed of if they knew. "It is a wonderful heritage to have an honest father." One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is integrity. Having a parent of integrity is a great, great blessing.

I'm being watched by unbelievers. The Bible says, "Let your light shine so people can see your good works and praise your father." There are people you work with who may not like your personality and they may disagree with your faith but they better respect your integrity. Every time you live with integrity ("I'm going to be honest, I'm not going to cheat, I'm not going to be dishonest.") you're giving a witness to the world.

## 2. I will reap whatever I sow.

Gal. 6:7 "Don't be misled, remember ... a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows!" Circle the word "always". It doesn't say most of the time, some of the time, but always. Count on it. It is an inviolable law of the universe. If I plant corn seed, I'm going to harvest corn, not potatoes. If I plant apple seeds, I'll grow an apple tree, not a peach tree. No matter how much I wish it were a peach tree it will be an apple tree. Whatever you give out in life is what you're going to get back. If I cheat other people, I'm going to get cheated. God says it will happen, count on it. If I take advantage of other people, I will be taken advantage of. I will reap what I sow.

On the other hand this will work for you if you use it the right way. If you are honest and you maintain integrity in all your decisions, God says I will make sure you're blessed. Whatever you sow you're going to reap.

Prov. 15:27 "Try to make a profit dishonestly and you'll get your family in trouble." The newspapers are full of that. Men and women who got their families in trouble because they were making a dishonest profit. Don't do it. You will reap what you sow.

Prov. 21:6 "Dishonest gain will never last, so why take the risk." God says it's not worth it. You're eventually going to be found out -- here on earth or in heaven, why take the risk.

Why do we steel? What motivates dishonesty?

1. Greed. The Bible says "The love of money is the root of evil." It is the idea, the myth, that we can get something for nothing -- that's what steeling is. That attitude is almost irresistible. That's why people gamble. That's why it becomes compulsion, an addiction for many people. I want to get something for nothing. That's why God doesn't want you to gamble. He doesn't want you to trust "luck" or fate or chance. He wants you to depend on Him not the lottery or the casino or the game. You don't get something for nothing. There is no free lunch. If it is it's an illegitimate lunch. God says you get what you pay for, you reap what you sow.

2. Laziness. If I can steel something, get something dishonestly, I don't have to work for it. I can take a short cut and we're always looking for short cuts. When con men look for people to scam they always look for people who are looking for a short cut. They are the easiest people in the world to con -- people looking for the quick fix, the fast deal, the short cut. They can be conned very easily. The old saying is true, "You can't cheat an honest man." He won't fall for a short cut. He says I'll go about it the right way.

3. Pride. Somehow in our warped sense of values we get a thrill out of conning other people. There are some people there is an excitement about it. It's not that they need the money. Have you ever heard anybody say, "I made a steel today!" He's proud of it. When he cons somebody else out of some money or a deal and he gets something that is far more valuable than that person knew and it was not a fair deal then that person thinks it proves superior intellect -- he's smarter than them. In reality it doesn't prove superior intellect, it proves inferior character. It proves that you'll step lower than they will to rip somebody off.

### 3. Dishonesty damages my character.

It shrinks my soul down to the size of a pea. Jesus said "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his soul." I can give you a dozen ways to make a lot of money real quick. They're all dishonest. What does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?

Prov. 10:2 "Wealth you get by dishonesty will do you no good, but honesty can save your life." The Bible says that satan is a thief. "The thief comes to kill and destroy, but I have come

that you might have life." On the other hand, God is always truthful, always honest, never dishonest. Every time I make a decision to steel, it doesn't matter how small or insignificant, I am choosing to side with the devil rather than with God. The devil wants you to steel because every time you do it you become more like him. He is the thief, the father of thieves. Every time I'm making the decision: am I going to go the devil's way or God's way? Am I going to become more like satan or more like God? Satan is a thief and God is the truth and there is no deception in Him.

The excuse: I just can't make it in the market place if I don't cheat. You're dead wrong! The fact is if you know anything about business, integrity pays. Customers want to return to where they trust the company. There was a study done of the 50 most profitable corporations in America. One thing they all had in common was they all had a moral code of ethics, every one of them. It was the one thing they had in common. When you have a reputation of "We don't rip people off. We give value for value, dollar for dollar. An honest day's work for an honest day's pay." People respect that and you have repeat customers.

For your own sake maintain integrity. Don't let anybody buy your soul for a few bucks.

#### 4. God will reward my honesty.

In this life and eternity. Proverbs 28:20 "Honest people will lead a full, happy life but if you're in a hurry to get rich you're going to be punished." Honesty leads to a full, happy life. Why? Because you don't have any skeletons in the closet. But if you're trying to get rich quickly, you're going to fall into problems and you'll eventually be punished for it.

Get rich quick deals seem to thrive in this area. As pastor of this church for 12 years, I've seen every one of them. Everybody wants to help their pastor, "Pastor Rick, have I got a deal for you!" God has one word to say about get rich-quick schemes. Don't! Don't be stupid! Don't be foolish! You get wealthy by adding little to little to proper investments, wise savings, honest work, good stewardship and investing in things that count and in people. Don't worry about schemes and dreams. The quicker you make it, the quicker you can lose it.

Your greatest rewards are going to be not here but in eternity. Remember when we did the series through Ecclesiastes and we talked about how life is a test, you're being tested right now for

60, 70, 80 years by God. How you perform in that test will determine your rewards and your responsibilities in Heaven. You will spend 60, 70, 80, maybe 90 years here on earth. You will spend millions of years in eternity -- one of two places. If you've received Christ as your Savior, put your trust in Him you'll spend eternity in Heaven.

When I get there how do I know what rewards or responsibilities I'm going to get? God is testing you right now. He's testing you three ways: through trials and problems; through temptation; through money. The Bible says God uses these three things to test your life, to see what's important to you, what's valuable to you. If I respond to those tests well, then in eternity I will get greater rewards and I will have greater responsibility.

If I flunk those tests here on earth and I respond poorly to trials, temptations, and money then I will have fewer rewards and responsibilities.

Jesus said in Luke 16 "If you're dishonest in a little, you're going to be dishonest in a lot." If you are unfaithful and cheat with worldly wealth, God will not trust you with true riches in eternity. It's a test.

If I respond correctly and I'm honest with my money and with reputations of other people -- I don't steal ideas, money, property, time, etc -- God says there will be great rewards for you in heaven. "Well done, you've shown you can be faithful in small things. I will trust you with greater ones, come and join in your Master's happiness." There will be rewards in heaven.

How can I prepare so that when I get to the final exam that's what God says to me? There are three steps that will get you started on the road to integrity, the lifestyle of integrity:

1. Make restitution when possible.

A good example of this is Zacchaeus in the Bible. Remember Zacchaeus was the little short fellow. Jesus came to town one day and Zacchaeus couldn't see above the crowd so the Bible says he climbed up in a tree and as Jesus was walking by He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house today." That was quite a scandal. Zacchaeus was a dishonest tax collector. In the Roman system, tax collectors were not paid, but they just got to skim off the top whatever they could collect. They were the wealthiest people in town and the most hated. They were the most dishonest. Jesus says that's the guy's home I'm going to go to.

Jesus goes and has dinner with Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus realizes "I've been doing the wrong thing. I'm going to get my life right. I'm going to do what God wants." He says "I want to follow you Lord. If I cheated anyone I will pay him back four times as much." There's a guy who is putting his money where his mouth is. That's called real Christianity, restitution.

In Luke 19:9 Jesus says, "Salvation has come to this man's home." This guy is a real believer. It's not a matter of just belief it's a matter of behavior.

A number of years ago I decided that more than anything else in my life I wanted God's blessing, I wanted God to bless and use my life. I set down and said, "If I'm going to do this, I've got to clear up my past and make restitution with some people. Will you help me remember the people I need to make things right with?" I started making a list and the list was about three pages. It was amazing when I asked God to help me remember. He did! I remembered things that I had forgotten for years. Things that went clear back to childhood. Like the time I used to rip off my sister Shandell's piggy bank. Every week she was putting the money in and every week I was taking the money out. God said you need to get that right. It's pretty embarrassing for a grown man to go to his sister and say "I was ripping off your piggy bank." but I did it.

And there were other things, like when I was a teenager with some other teenagers in a car and accidently backed into a car in a parking lot and smashed in their fender. We didn't stay around or nothing. We just split. We were scared. I said I'm going to go back to the police station in that town and see if I can find that traffic report, find that person and repay them.

Maybe you need to make a list. Maybe you need to say, "God I want to have a clear conscience before you and before man." Maybe you need to wrap up some stuff and mail it back and put it in UPS, maybe some items you need to return. Office supplies, your neighbor's ladder, motel towels, whatever. Maybe you need to write a check -- or so it will be anonymous, a money order -- to an employer and say, "I took some supplies". I would suggest

you use it as a witnessing opportunity, send a letter, a note, with it. You don't have to sign it. [Like the guy who gyped the IRS. He got under conviction about it and sent a letter with \$500 and said "I've cheated the IRS, here's \$500. P.S. If I still feel guilty I'll send the rest later.] So you send a money order to your employer and say, "I am making restitution for \_\_\_\_\_ because I am a follower of Jesus Christ and I want to do what's right." Sign it underneath, "A cleared conscience." You can't buy that kind of feeling. The freedom and joy that comes from a clear conscience. You can't buy it, I can't explain it to you, the joy of knowing that I can go into any city in America and say "This is Rick Warren and I have no skeletons in my closet. I have nothing that I have not dealt with, nothing to hide." That is confidence when you know that nobody is looking over your shoulder and you're wondering if it's going to hit the front pages tomorrow. You know that everything in your life has been dealt with. There is no greater feeling. To know that nobody can accuse you. Make restitution.

## 2. Give God my full tithe.

"Is it right for a person to cheat God? Of course not. Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple and I will pour out on you in abundance." God has more promises about giving than any other thing in the Bible. He says, bring the full amount the 10% to the temple. Where is the temple? Wherever you worship.

The fact is God says if I'm not tithing then I'm paying my bills with stolen money that belongs to God. If I'm not tithing, the money in my wallet is what I'm ripping off from God. One day I will give an account to Him for it. "Why didn't you do that?" It's very clear here. God says you're cheating Me.

If you're going to start tithing, don't delay it any more. Do it now. What if I got up and said, "God has really put me under conviction, I'm going to stop steeling in January." If you're going to stop steeling, do it today. Stop steeling from the government, from others, and stop steeling from God. It's real clear.

People say, tithing is Old Testament. So what. So are the Ten Commandments. Are you going to not keep them? Whoever said that because we're under grace, we do less than we do under law? Under grace you do more, not less.

## 3. Make a living honestly

Eph :28 "The man who used to be a thief must give up stealing, and do an honest day's work with his own hands." I would suggest that you begin to act as if God were your boss. Work as if you're working for the Lord, not whomever your employer happens to be. Make money honestly so you can live with a clear conscience at night.

The Bible says in the book of Revelation, "No dishonest person will be allowed into heaven." That means you and I don't stand a chance. Nobody stands a chance unless we have a Savior. We have all been dishonest in different ways. That's why Jesus Christ took my wrath on the cross. He paid the penalty for me. When I come to Him and say, "Jesus Christ, there is no way I can earn my way to heaven, because no dishonest people are going to make it and I've been dishonest. So I ask You to forgive me and I want to get in on your ticket." Jesus says, that's what I came to do. So you put your trust in Him. Say "Christ, I want to follow You as best I know how. From this day forward I want to begin living a life of integrity. I will make restitution where needed. I will begin to pay the whole tithe to God and I'll begin to make my living honestly instead of dishonestly." If you do that not only will you have a full, happier lifestyle but the rewards you will experience in heaven will go on and on and on...

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Exodus 20:15  
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Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal."

I. HOW DO WE STEAL?

- By deceiving customers

"(They) overcharge, use false measures, and fix the scales to cheat the customers."

Amos 6:5 (GN)

- By defrauding employers

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord."

col 3:23

- By delaying payments

"Don't take advantage of anyone... Don't hold back the wages of someone you've hired, not even for one night."

Lev. 19:13 (GN)

- By defrauding on loans

"The wicked man borrows and never pays back..."

Ps. 37:21 (GN)

- By deceiving the government

"...the authorities are working for God ... Pay what you owe them; pay your personal and property taxes..."

Rom. 13:6-7 (GN)

- By defrauding the Lord

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me! but you ask, `How do we rob You, God? By withholding tithes and offerings!"

Mal. 3:8



## II. WHY BE HONEST?

1. I am being \_\_\_\_\_

"God careful watches the goings on of all mankind; he sees them all. No darkness is thick enough to hide evil men from his eyes."

Job 34:21-22 (LB)

"It is a wonderful heritage to have an honest father."

Pr. 20:7 (LB)

2. I will \_\_\_\_\_ whatever I \_\_\_\_\_

"Don't be misled, remember a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows!"

Gal 6:7 (LB)

"Try to make a profit dishonestly and you'll get your family in trouble."

Pr. 15:27 (GN)

"Dishonest gain will never last, so why take the risk?"

Pr. 21:6 (LB)

3. Dishonesty damages my \_\_\_\_\_

"Wealth you get by dishonesty will do you no good, but honesty can save your life."

Pr. 10:2 (GN)

"It is better to be poor but honest, than to be a lying fool!"

Pr. 19:1 (GN)

4. God will \_\_\_\_\_ my honesty.

"Honest people will lead a full, happy life but if you are in a hurry to get rich you are going to be punished."

Pr. 28:20 (GN)

"Well done...you've shown you can be faithful in small things. I will trust you with greater ones; come and join in your Master's happiness!"

Matt. 25:21 (JN)



## First Steps to Integrity

1. Make \_\_\_\_\_ when possible.

(Zacchaeus) "If I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much."

Luke 19:8 (GN)

2. Give God my full \_\_\_\_\_

"Is it right for a person to cheat God? Of course not...Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple ... and I will pour out on you in abundance..."

Mal 3:8,9-10

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"The man who used to be a thief must give up stealing, and do an honest day's work with his own hands..."

Eph. 4:28 (Ph)