

## Week Seven

### The Seventh Commandment

Commandments are statements which direct us to do or, not to do something. Martin Luther tries to help us look at The Ten Commandments using positive language, as this is how we are to come to know the loving nature of God.

#### THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Do not steal.

*What does this mean?*

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither take our neighbors' money or property, nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead, help them to improve and protect their property and income.

#### What Scripture has to say

**Proverbs 3:29** – “Do not plan harm against your neighbor who lives trustingly beside you.”

**Deuteronomy 15:7** – “If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor.”

**Deuteronomy 22:1-3** - “You shall not watch your neighbor’s ox or sheep straying away and ignore them; you shall take them back to their owner. <sup>2</sup>If the owner does not reside near you or you do not know who the owner is, you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until the owner claims it; then you shall return it. <sup>3</sup>You shall do the same with a neighbor’s donkey; you shall do the same with a neighbor’s garment; and you shall do the same with anything else that your neighbor loses and you find. You may not withhold your help.”

**Ephesians 4:28** - “Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.”

**1 Thessalonians 5:14-22** – “And we urge you, beloved,<sup>[d]</sup> to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. <sup>15</sup>See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. <sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets,<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.”

**1 Timothy 6:7-10** - for we brought nothing into the world, so that<sup>[d]</sup> we can take nothing out of it; <sup>8</sup>but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. <sup>9</sup>But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

#### Pastor’s Commentary

1- As I have said in past sessions, it seems to me that in all the Commandments/instructions God gives concerning how we are to live together as human beings... the key phrase, to me, is “*live together as human beings.*” To live together, to live in community is to live as though other’s cares, needs, and welfare are just as important as your own. To live in community carries the obligation of love and respect of, not only the individual, but of the community... all who are gathered under that umbrella. Thus, the needs of the community supersede, but are not separate from, the needs of the individual. The two are intrinsically, organically linked. For as one is lacking, the whole community lacks. And for a community to exist, and to

thrive, trust has to exist between members of the community, and members need to be able to trust in the community.

2- This “Second Table of the Law” takes up how communities are to live peacefully... in harmony with each other, trusting in God’s provisions for them, and thus for all. The Second Table began with Commandment 4 – Honoring your parents, and the rest of the Ten are regarding living together... do not kill, commit adultery, or steal, etc. All Ten are commandments that are designed to build trust between all people, and between all people with God.

3- Stealing destroys trust. Stealing erodes community. Stealing way too easily moves an individual into “isolation” because of the sense of personal violation. Stealing robs innocence. When someone steals something from someone else, they take not only the “item” stolen, but that person’s sense of security and alters their reality.

### **Ponder This...**

1. Have you ever had anything stolen from you? If so, how did it make you feel? Why do you think that was?
2. Have you ever felt like someone “stole” an opportunity that was meant for you? What was it? Was that stealing? How did it affect you... how did it make you feel? How did it affect the way you interacted with that person, and others in your community?
3. Reread paragraph #3 above. Describe in your own words how taking something that does not belong to you change a community.
4. In paragraph #1 above, Pastor Chris makes the statement: *“To live in community carries the obligation of love and respect of, not only the individual, but of the community... all who are gathered under that umbrella. Thus, the needs of the community supersede, but are not separate from, the needs of the individual.”* What do you think that means? Do you agree or disagree? Why so?

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### **Closing Questions**

- 1- Does Luther’s explanation of this commandment help or confuse you? How/why?
- 2- How does forgiveness work with someone who has stolen from you?
- 3- How do the Scriptures above come into play with this commandment?
- 4- Using Luther’s 4 Strands of Prayer below, close out today’s exercise.

### **Luther’s 4 Strands of Prayer**

- 1- *What is God trying to teach me here?*
- 2- *What does this passage make me thankful for?*
- 3- *Where have I fallen short and need God to help and guide me?*
- 4- *Pray.*

