

The Ten 21st Century Thieves- Session #7 Small Group Notes

Introduction:

When you were a kid, did you ever steal something? What are ways that we often treat stealing as something for kids instead of seeing how much we practice it in our daily lives as adults?

What are some examples of situations where people would be tempted to lie and justify it at the same time?

What effects does stealing or lying have on relationships, no matter the reason behind it?

Discuss: 21st century thieves believe:

1. God is blind.

- Read Exodus 20:15; Proverbs 15:3. God is unseen, but He is not unseeing.

Explain: Stealing refers to taking something that belongs to another person without that person's permission. Stealing hurts others, violates them, and demonstrates the thief's complete disregard for the rights and property of others. What happens in our lives is that we believe that God is not aware or seeing when we take actions that steal from others. Ultimately, we see that stealing is an act where we do not trust in the sovereignty and provision of God.

Ask:

Considering what we know about the story of the children of Israel, why do you think God included this command in His instructions for the people?

What can be other areas of our life that we try to "sneak" around God that we believe the lie that He doesn't see or is concerned with?

From the discussion so far, how has your understanding of stealing changed or been affirmed? Has it changed your actions in any way?

2. What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine!

- Read Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 6:16-19. We steal relationally when we take from someone what is not ours to take!
- Read James 4:17; Proverbs 18:9; Colossians 3:23. We steal professionally when we fail to give our best at work
- Read 1 Peter 4:10; Malachi 3:8-12. We steal spiritually when we use our gifts solely for our gain instead of God's glory.

Explain: The ninth word builds on the eighth, presenting us with an additional angle on thievery, for certainly bearing false witness is identity theft. (Jenn Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*) Just like committing adultery, God taught the Israelites that stealing was choosing the easy way to satisfy your felt needs. God wanted them to trust Him to satisfy their desires and provide for their needs. Even in our tithing, we are making a statement of trusting in God's provision instead of holding on to something that is not ours.

Ask:

What are the dangers of thinking that stealing only means physical items?

In what ways are you tempted to cut corners, and, in effect, steal? At work? At home? In your personal life? In tithing?

How can stealing in even the small areas of our life impact our witness for Christ? How could stealing impact our effectiveness in the kingdom of God?

3. There is a way to gain at others expense.

- Read Exodus 22:1, 3b; Luke 16:10. Stealing is a lack of trust in the provision of God.
- Read Ephesians 4:28. The tragedy of theft is that it doesn't get us ahead, only further behind.
- Read Proverbs 11:24. The opposite of stealing is generosity.

Explain: In Ephesians 4, Paul gave Christians several commands regarding our external actions and internal attitudes that help us live up to his charge in 4:1—“Walk worthy of the calling you have received.” These actions and attitudes all lead to mutual support and encouragement within the body of Christ. Among the instructions given is to not steal. If you’re looking, you can find a loophole that will make you feel justified about stealing, whether its physical or intellectual property. But life in Christ demands renewal of mind and spirit. God expects us to do honest work with our own hands and minds so that stealing isn’t necessary.

Ask:

What action does Paul give as the opposite of stealing? What, then, is the main point, or intended outcome, of the command not to steal?

Why do people struggle to adopt a mindset and behaviors of giving instead of getting?

In light of the topic of stealing, especially in today’s society, respond to the following statement: “You can do nothing wrong, and still do nothing right.”

Would you say you work so that you have something to share with anyone in need, or so that you have what you want and need? How does Paul’s view here challenge your thinking?