

CCC PROSPERING WITH INTEGRITY Part 8

Ten Values That Build Strong Families -

I read about a London man who had been the victim of 15 car thefts in the past 8 years. Now, that just down right bad luck. The first four cars he ever owned were stolen. One car stolen from him was returned only to be stolen again a few months later. Just this year the man was called to the police station to pick up his car that had been stolen and while he was in the police station somebody stole his car. So what does this have to do with today's message, absolutely nothing... Only that we are in the series on the Ten Commandments and we're in the 8th Commandment that says, "*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 just a few. For example:

1. Deceiving customers. This has been going on for ever...

Three thousand years ago this was a problem as it is today.,

Listen to what God word the Bible says, "*They overcharge, they use false measures, and fix the scales to cheat the*

customers." Amos 8:5. That sounds pretty current, like

when a repairman makes unnecessary repairs, a doctor makes unnecessary tests, a salesman skips over the fine print. Another example in how do we steal is:

2. By defrauding employers. I'm not just talking about employee theft here where you pad you expense account or

take home supplies or equipment or merchandise that

doesn't belong to you. 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're doing everything but that, God says that's stealing. Don't do it.

Another example in how do we steal is:

3. Don't defraud 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 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.

He created me and gave me all the gifts and talents to accomplish and earn and He says, give me the first fruits,

the first 10%. The first 10% of all I make is to go back to

God. God 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, God's word, the Bible says, that's robbing God

and if I am not doing that I am 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. The next thing I want to look at in this eight commandment is:

II. WHY SHOULD I BE HONEST?

1. I am being watched by God. People steal 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 anyway. 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. *"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."* Job 34:21-22 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.

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(REPEAT). What is my life style communicating to my kids? Is there anything in my life I'd be ashamed of if they knew about it. "It is a wonderful heritage to have an honest father, to have a father of integrity." One of the

greatest gifts you can give your children is integrity. Having a parent of integrity is a great, great blessing.

If you're a Christian you're 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 faith but I know they respect your integrity. Every time you live with integrity, you say and act out, ("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 as to who you are living for.

Why should you be honest and live honestly, because:

2. I will reap whatever I sow. Listen to what God's word, the Bible says: *"Don't be misled, remember ... a man will always reap just the kind of crop he sows!"* Gal. 6:7 Circle the word "always". It doesn't say most of the time, it

doesn't say, some of the time, but it says, always. Count on it. It is an inviolable law of the universe. What I mean by that is: 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. Listen to what God's word says here: "*Try to make a profit dishonestly and you'll get your family in trouble.*" Prov. 15:27 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 – either here on earth or in heaven.

Why do we steal? What motivates us to be dishonest?

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 stealing is. That attitude is almost irresistible. That's why people gamble. That's why it becomes a compulsion, an addiction for many people. I want to get something for nothing. God doesn't want you to trust "luck" or fate or chance to your life. He wants you to depend on Him not the lottery or the casino or the games you bet on. You don't get something for nothing. There is

no free lunches. If it is it's an illegitimate lunch and God says you get what you pay for, you reap what you sow.

Why do we steel? What motivates us to be dishonest?

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 cuts in life. 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." Why, because he won't fall for a short cut. He says, No, I'll go about it the right way.

Why do we steel? What motivates us to be dishonest?

3. Pride. Somehow in our warped sense of values we get a thrill out of conning other people. There are some people

that 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.

Why should you be honest and live honestly, because:

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 off. Customers

want to return to where they trust the company. 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.

Why should you be honest and live honestly, because:

4. God will reward my honesty.

In this life and eternity, God will reward my honesty.

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.

There are three steps that will get you started on the road to integrity, the lifestyle of integrity:

1. Make restitution when possible.

2. Give God my full tithe.

3. Make a living honestly

Closing:

I want to close with this scripture from God's word, the Bible... The Bible says in the book of Revelation, "*No dishonest person will be allowed into heaven.*" I want you to think about that scripture for just a moment, "*No dishonest person will be allowed into heaven.*" Just that one scripture tells me you and I don't have a chance... Nobody stands a chance because we all have been dishonest in our life... You and I don't have a chance unless there is a Savior. We have all been dishonest in different ways. But the Good News is there is a savior... That's why Jesus Christ took my wrath on the cross. He paid the penalty for me, for my dishonesty. I can't make it on my own; you can't make it on your own. But we can

through Jesus Christ. See when you recognize you can't make it life become hopeless but you can right now today come to Him and say, "Jesus Christ, there is no way I can earn my way to heaven, because God has just told me that no dishonest people are going to make it and I've been dishonest in my life. So I come to you and ask You to forgive me." And when you do that you know Jesus says... Jesus says, Bill, that's what I came to do. Jesus says, so put your trust in Me. Just right now say these simple words, something like, "Jesus, forgive me, I want to follow You as best I know how and I'm telling you, Jesus, that from this day forward I want to begin living a life of integrity. If you do that not only will you have a fuller, happier lifestyle but the rewards you will experience in heaven will go on and on and on... for eternity.