



Date: _____

Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

God's Top Ten Series, Lesson 40

Lesson Title: Never Steal

Take Home Point: Never steal.

Warm-Up:

What excuses do we hear from those who have taken something that doesn't belong to them? "It's not fair they have more than me." "It's a big company; they'll never miss it." "I deserve it." "I liked it but I couldn't afford it." "It's not really stealing if they don't miss it." "They don't need everything they have." All pretty flimsy. But the one that really sticks with me is not even an excuse: "I don't care whose it is. I just wanted it, so I took it." How selfish! That attitude indicates not just a desire for things, but also a complete disregard and lack of respect for another person. It demonstrates a depth of self-absorption and self-interest that blocks out a loving and compassionate view of other people. That's a long way from where Jesus wants us to be.

Read: Exodus 20:15; Matthew 9:9-13; Ephesians 4:28

Observation (What happened?):

Read Luke 19:1-10. How does Luke imply that tax collectors got wealthy?

What key thought does Paul give as a reason to work and not steal?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What is stealing? Why are we commanded not to do it?

What distinguished the attitude of Jesus toward Matthew the tax collector from that of Jewish religious leaders?

Insight:

Why is stealing such an important issue with God? He did put it in his top ten. Why is it up there on the list with murder, adultery, and idolatry? It's just stuff, right? Yes and no. It's more than stuff, as someone can steal time, credit, or other intangibles. Whether it's stuff or not, our view of what others have reflects our view of the value of other people. God is not really concerned with ownership; after all, we are simply stewards of what he has given us. What he is concerned with is our heart as described in Philippians 2:3,4: *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* (NIV) So we don't deserve what someone else has. Fairness from our perspective has nothing to do with real life. It doesn't matter if they'll miss it. Stealing diminishes the attitude God wants us to have toward others.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How are you guarding your heart against taking what is not yours? How do you resist the temptation?

Pray for the children in your small group to resist the peer pressure to believe they deserve whatever they want.