

The Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

Read Ephesians 4:28 and Luke 21:1-4.

This commandment is not just about restraining ourselves from taking what's not ours. It is about living in a respectful and loving manner toward others.

Most people who have been burglarized feel violated and disrespected. This is because people don't steal stuff; they violate your home and disrespect the honor and dignity in having property. Our property often is an expression of who we are and what we value. This is why people often grieve a little when we get rid of a car that they drove thousands of miles in or a favorite shirt or cap that they felt especially comfortable in. Our stuff is an expression of who we are.

When people just take things without asking, or borrow things without returning it in a timely fashion and when people don't take care of something that belongs to someone else with as much care as that person does, it can be an insult.

Habitat for Humanity is a faith-based organization that helps low-income families buy a new home to have a fresh start in their lives. When people follow the guidelines to have a full-time job, not have a drug or alcohol addiction or a criminal record, and pay a minimum fee for the building materials for the house, and help work in the building of the house, then they become proud owners of a new home. A ceremony is given when the house becomes theirs. And with home-ownership, they strive to make their neighborhood safer and live more fulfilling lives. Their house isn't just a thing to them, but an important part of their family's identity.

So this commandment is about honoring people's property as an act of love toward them and to help them when they are in need so their lives may be more whole and fulfilled.

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Read James 1:19-20 and James 3:1-12.

This commandment uses legal terminology that was used in courtrooms. In biblical times, people who are accused of crimes were considered to be guilty until proven innocent. Having character witnesses who would attest publicly that the accused is an honorable person was essential. But injustices were done when prosecutors stacked the courtroom with witnesses who made false accusations simply because they didn't like the person somehow. That would be like a modern person suing someone in court not out of principle, but just to be mean to someone.

Even today the 'court of public opinion' can be very cold-hearted and cruel toward someone by being quick to blame guilt and slow to bear witness to one's honor. It is easy for many of us to simply react with anger and frustration on social media to insult people and participate in 'cyberbullying'.

In this commandment, we are to have a loving attitude in how we speak about others. Being angry at someone does not give us license to be mean to them with our words. And just because you are angry at someone, that doesn't mean that everyone else has to be angry at them too. But we are to let our anger be a private issue between ourselves and that person. Even when we are angry, we can still be civil and respectful toward someone.

So many times people are hurt by gossip about them. It is hurtful to realize that people are telling about your failings with someone else when the whole issue could have been resolved faster if they had just come and work it out with you privately.

Psychologists say that verbal abuse is often far more destructive than physical abuse. The scars of verbal abuse make a person less trustful of others and can harm meaningful relationships for years to come.

So when you are "just being honest" about someone, strive to be honest in a more loving way.

Conclude with this prayer:

Lord God, help us to love and trust you all the more so that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get them in any dishonest way. But lead us to help our neighbors to improve and protect their property and means of making a living. And we also ask that you help us to love and trust you all the more so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor. But help us to defend one another, speak well of them, and explain people's actions in the kindest way. Amen.