**Eighth Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In their sermons, Pastor Aaron and Pastor Blake will emphasize that the eight commandment calls us to be grateful, trustworthy, and generous neighbors in response to the generous grace and mercy that Christ has shown to us. Both of them will address the following things: progression of stealing/theft, generosity of God, and stewardship of man.

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to cover all that is found within these questions in your community group. These questions will give you a grasp of what the text says and means so that we can think through how to apply the text to our lives.

**1. What is the context and meaning of the 8th Commandment?**

*The Ten Commandments are about worship of the one true and living God. In response to his great redeeming act in the Exodus, God instructed the Israelites with these ten words of how they could worship, honor, and glorify him through obedience to his commands, enjoying relationship with their redeeming God. In the New Testament, Jesus summed up all the law by teaching us that it is about love—love for God and love for neighbor (see Mark 12:30-31). As we look at the eight commandment, we are called to demonstrate a love for God and a love for neighbor. We display a love for God by acknowledging him as provider and by worshiping him through wise stewardship of all that he has given us. We demonstrate a love for neighbor by respecting their property, meeting their needs, and by encouraging their wise stewardship of resources God has given them. Left in sin, our prideful, greedy, ungrateful hearts lead us to covet, to hoard and to steal. By God’s grace, he creates in us a humble, generous, grateful heart that labors diligently and gives freely in response to God’s generous grace and mercy shown to us in Christ. In short, the eight commandment calls us to worship God with all of our being.*

*As you think about this commandment, ponder the following questions: What motivates one to steal? Why is stealing wrong? What is the progression of sin in one who steals? What does God commend in the eighth commandment?*

*For passages related to the eighth commandment, see Genesis 27:1-46; 29:15-30; 31:25-32; 40:15; 44:1-13; Exodus 21:16; 22:1-15; Leviticus 6:1-7; 19:11, 13; 25:35-38; Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10; 22:1-4; 24:7; 25:13-16; Joshua 7:1-26; 2 Samuel 12:1-6; 1 Chronicles 29:10-19; Proverbs 6:10-11, 30; 28:24; 30:8-9; Malachi 3:6-12; Matthew 6:19-21; 19:16-30; 25:14-30; Luke 19:1-27; Acts 4:32-5:11; Romans 2:21-22; 13:7-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 19-20; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Ephesians 4:28; 6:5-9; Philippians 4:19; Colossians 3:22-4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:3-10, 17-19; Titus 2:10; James 5:1-6; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 3:17.*

*Philip Ryken writes, “To steal is to take something that doesn’t belong to you….To give a more technical definition, to steal is to appropriate someone else’s property unlawfully.”*

*Rob Schenck notes that the Hebrew word for stealing “covers all conventional types of theft: burglary (breaking into a home or building to commit theft); robbery (taking property directly from another using violence or intimidation); larceny (taking something without permission and not returning it); hijacking (using force to take goods in transit or seizing control of a bus, truck, plane, etc.); shoplifting (taking items from a store during business hours without paying for them); and pickpocketing and purse-snatching. The term “ganaf” (Hebrew word for stealing) also covers a wide range of exotic and complex thefts…(such as) embezzlement (the fraudulent taking of money or other goods entrusted to one’s care). There is extortion (getting money from someone by means of threats or misuses of authority), and racketeering (obtaining money by any illegal means.”*

*Philp Ryken writes, “Every violation of the Ten Commandments involves some form of theft. Bowing down to idols steals God’s worship. Desecrating the Sabbath steals his holy day. Murder steals life; adultery steals purity; lying steals the truth. But the real theft is that every sin we commit dishonors God and thus steals the glory that our lives ought to give him.”*

*Mark Rooker writes, “The act of stealing is the secret taking of another’s property without the owner’s knowledge or permission. When stealing takes place, it is often accompanied by other duplicities, including deception, trickery, and oppression (see Psalms 35:10; 50:18; 62:10; Jeremiah 7:9; Ezekiel 18:7, 12, 16, 18; Hosea 4:2; Micah 2:1-2). Examples of this deception include the secret moving of boundary markers (Deuteronomy 19:14; 27:17; Job 24:2; see Proverbs 22:28; 23:10; Hosea 5:10), the use of false measures and balances (Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Proverbs 11:1), the selling of goods of inferior quality (Amos 8:4-6), and the charging of interest (Exodus 22:25).”*

*Mark Rooker writes, “The Old Testament contains a threefold differentiation for the punishment of theft: (1) the death penalty is for kidnapping (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7) and stealing of God’s property (Joshua 7); (2) the punishment for the theft of livestock and valued goods is usually double the value (Exodus 22:1-15); (3) fourfold or fivefold replacement is demanded if cattle or sheep were slaughtered or sold (Exodus 21:37; 22:1).”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “The Bible dignifies personal property, and roots this dignity in the…image of God. To steal from another is not merely to steal his possession. It is to assault another’s dignity as a human being who has the right to the toil of his hands, to the produce of her talents, to the property that is rightfully ours.”*

**2. What does the 8th Commandment teach us about the character of God?**

*In this commandment, we are reminded about the following attributes/actions of God:*

*1- God is owner (see Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalms 24:1; 50:9-12; 115:16)—The Bible teaches us that God is creator and owner of all things. As such, He is worthy of praise and obedience and thanksgiving. We glorify God by stewarding well the life that He has given us with the provisions he has given us. We glorify God by praising him as creator of all things.*

*2- God is provider (see James 1:17)—The Bible teaches us that God is provider. In his goodness, generosity and grace, He has given us bodies, skills, and gifts. We glorify him by laboring diligently with the body/skills/gifts he has given us so that we, like him, may be generous to others. We glorify God by praising him for his ultimate provision of salvation for us and by telling others of the salvation that he provides in Christ for all who will repent and believe.*

*As you think about this commandment, what does it teach us about God? Since God is owner and provider, how ought this shape our relationship to God and to possessions?*

*Albert Mohler writes, “God rebukes the taking of possessions. Strong language is used—God hates stealing, robbery, and oppression.”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “Whenever we take something that doesn’t belong to us—however we do it—we sin against God as well as our neighbor.”*

*Philip Ryken notes that sin is a stealing against God in two ways: (1) Every theft is a failure to trust in his provision; (2) Every theft is an assault on God’s providence for others; put another way, it robs what God has provided for someone else.*

*Alistair Begg notes two principles behind the eighth commandment: (1) God establishes the individual’s right to private property and (2) The individual’s right to private property is not absolute.*

*Alistair Begg writes, “It is God who grants us the ability to get wealth and accumulate worldly goods. Consequently when we invade another’s property and steal from them, we sin against God.” He continues, “We are not to steal because it offends a holy God, it disregards His Law, and it devalues our neighbor, whose possessions belong to him not by chance but by God’s provision.”*

*Albert Mohler notes that “the Scriptures tell us that stealing from God is the ultimate theft.”*

**3. How does the 8th Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

*As we watch children play, it does not take long to notice a selfish, greedy, covetous, ungrateful heart as one kid decides to steal the toy from his friend. Like this illustration, apart from Christ, all of us display a prideful, selfish, greedy, covetous, ungrateful heart. In doing so, we disobey God and we disrespect neighbor. Yet, in Christ, we have received the generous, gracious, and merciful salvation of the one and true living God. A recognition of who God is and what God has done for us transforms how we live. By God’s grace, we ought now to walk with a humble, generous, grateful heart that thanks God for provisions he has given us, that honors God by laboring diligently with the body/skills/gifts he has given us, and that cares for neighbor by respecting their body/skills/gifts/property and meeting their needs if they have any needs. The gospel ought to transform our view on our bodies, our possessions, our needs, and our responsibilities to one another.*

*As you think about this commandment, can you think of a time where you were guilty of theft/stealing? How do we often think of stealing? What are the various categories of theft and ways that we steal? How does the gospel transform your view of your body, possessions, needs, and responsibilities to others?*

*Mark Rooker writes, “Theft then is an attack on the dignity of human beings and their work.”*

**4. How might the 8th Commandment apply to our lives today?**

*As you think about applying this commandment, do so by thinking of the following categories:*

*1- Praise God for His Generosity (Philippians 4:19)—When was the last time we offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all the good gifts He has given us? Take time to reflect on God’s generosity to you and to thank him for his generosity.*

*2- Glorify God by Your Labor (Matthew 25:14-30; Ephesians 4:28; 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:4-10, 17-19; Titus 2:10)—How can we glorify God in our work? Have we considered that God gifted us with our body and skills so that we could honor him with our work and provide for the needs of others through our work? How might we leverage our work as an opportunity for disciple making?*

*3- Honor God (and Love Neighbor) by Giving Generously and Meeting Needs (Matthew 6:19-21; Romans 13:7-10; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Ephesians 4:28; 1 John 3:17)—In Scripture, we see that God asks us to give generously to Him and to meet the needs of our neighbors. When you hear a pastor talk about money, what do you think? Why is it that we struggle to give generously to the church? When it comes to meeting the needs of others, how are we doing this? What are some ways that we can meet the needs of others (remember, love—meeting of needs—is a commitment of our community groups)? How does a generous church family act as salt and light and a witness to the power of the gospel for unbelievers?*

*4- Confess to God of Your Theft (Luke 19:1-10)—In our own lives, how have we been guilty of theft? What are the ways that we are prone to theft in our lives? Have we confessed that sin, asking God to forgive us and transform us by his grace?*

*ESV Gospel Transformation Bible: “Because we belong to the Lord our God, we recognize that all things belong to him and that he has assigned stewardships to each of us. As a result, we do not steal what is not ours, but rather we labor so that we might benefit our earthly and heavenly masters and so that we might have something to share with others (*[*Eph. 4:28; 6:5–9*](https://www.esv.org/Ephesians+4%3A28%2C+6%3A5%E2%80%939/)*;*[*Col. 3:22–4:1*](https://www.esv.org/Colossians+3%3A22%E2%80%934%3A1/)*).”*

*Philip Ryken writes, “This brings us to the positive side of the eight commandment. What the Bible means by ownership is not possessing things to use for our own purposes, but receiving things from God to use for his glory. So at the same time that we are forbidden to take things that don’t belong to us, we are required to use what we have in ways that are pleasing to our God. To put it very simply, the eighth commandment isn’t just about stealing; it’s also about stewardship.”*

*Tony Merida writes, “We must remember that what we have is not our own, but it is the Lord’s; as He has given freely, so we too should give freely.”*

*Mark Rooker writes, “Like the subject of the tenth commandment (on coveting), theft betrays an essential dissatisfaction with one’s lot in life and the desire to obtain more than the Lord has granted.”*

*Jerry Bridges observes that there are three basic attitudes we can take toward possessions. (1) “What’s yours is mine; I’ll take it”—This is the attitude of the thief; (2) “What’s mine is mine; I’ll keep it”—This is the attitude of a selfish person; (3) “What’s mine is God’s; I’ll share it”—This is the attitude of a godly person.*

*Kent Hughes writes, “Every time I give, I declare that money does not control me. Perpetual generosity is a perpetual de-deification of money.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “The Christian needs to be unwavering and unashamed in saying no to theft and yes to honest endeavor.”*

*Alistair Begg writes, “In a similar fashion, when we fail to recognize the fact that God is Lord of our finances and that all our resources are essentially on loan from Him, we will fail to honor Him in these money matters and thus be guilty of stealing from Him. When we use our breath to magnify ourselves rather than giving Him the glory that He alone deserves, we steal from Him. When we fail to offer our bodies as living sacrifices and spend our time in personal self-indulgence, we steal from Him.”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “As God’s new covenant people in Christ, we must view our wealth not so much as a sign of divine favor, but as a sign of incredible responsibility.”*

*J. I. Packer writes, “Love to our neighbor requires us to hold sacred not only his person (sixth commandment) and his marriage (seventh commandment), but also his property and his due.” Packer notes that theft can happen in the following ways: theft of time, theft of fair value, theft of unpaid debts; theft of ruining a reputation.*

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**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions in your community group. Also, please feel freedom to adapt the question or to create a question that will best help your community group “be doers of the Word” (James 1:22), for you know the stage and situation of your group members.

1. What is the meaning of this commandment—what is commended and what is forbidden? How do we see/understand theft in our context? Do we see ourselves as guilty of theft in some way?

2. At every level of society and in every arena of society, how does violation of the eighth commandment take place?

3. What does this commandment teach us about God? How ought this revelation of who God is shape/instruct our lives?

4. How are we guilty of theft? What are different ways that theft/stealing shows up in our lives? How do we rob God?

5. What drives our lack of generosity? Is our lack of generosity fueled by fear of poverty and a lack of trust that God will provide? Do we think generosity is only for those who have “made” it in life?

6. Do we think of giving tithes and offerings as an act of worship? If so, why? If not, why not? What often comes to mind when we hear a pastor talk about giving? Take time to read Matthew 6:19-21; 2 Corinthians 8-9, and other passages related to giving as worship.

4. What forms of stealing are considered okay, even by Christians? (Borrowed from Ryken)

7. What attitudes and actions does good stewardship require? (Question comes from Philip Ryken)

8. What are some specific ways you can be a better steward of what God has given you? (Think of various categories: possessions, time, talents, opportunities, etc.)

9. If you are struggling to facilitate conversation in your group or if you are looking to start conversation in your group, here are some questions to prompt conversation:

A. Question of Impression—What stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Why did it stand out to you?

B. Question of Application—How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

C. Question of Clarity—If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

D. Question of Reflection—How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week?

E. Question of Mission—How will you pass on what you have heard, learned, and applied this week to another believer this week so that they may know and follow Jesus? How will what you heard, learned, and applied this week equip you to share Jesus with an unbeliever this week where you live, work, and play?

10. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions,* Matthew Harmon gives the following questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like)

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing)

c. Look for God’s concerns (what thing/events/people he is concerned about)

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image

b. Look for the fallen condition

c. Look for how God’s people should live

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for

b. Look for sin to confess and repent

c. Look for promises and truths to believe

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others

B. Applying the Bible

a. What does God want me to think/understand?

b. What does God want me to believe?

c. What does God want me to desire?

d. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Love God and love neighbor through your stewarding of what God has given you.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—Matthew 18; Jeremiah 4

2. Tuesday—Matthew 19; Jeremiah 5

3. Wednesday—Matthew 20; Jeremiah 6

4. Thursday—Matthew 21; Jeremiah 7

5. Friday—Matthew 22; Jeremiah 8

6. Saturday—Matthew 23; Jeremiah 9

7. Sunday—Matthew 24; Jeremiah 10

* **Ten Commandments Series**

1. August 5th—9th Commandment

2. August 12th—10th Commandment

* **Vision Series/Journey of Discipleship Series**

1. August 19th—Worship

2. August 26th—Community (Acts 2:42-47)

3. September 2nd—Discipleship (Matthew 4:19-20)

4. September 9th—Multiply (Matthew 28:16-20)

* **Gospel of Mark Series**

1. September 16th—Mark 1

2. September 23rd—Mark 2

3. September 30th—Mark 3

4. October 7th—Mark 4

5. October 14th—Mark 5

6. October 21st—Mark 6

7. October 28th—Mark 7

8. November 4th—Mark 8

9. November 11th—Mark 9

10. November 18th—Mark 10

11. November 25th—Mark 11

12. December 2nd—Mark 12

13. December 9th—Mark 13

14. December 16th—Mark 14

15. December 30th—Mark 15

16. January 6th—Mark 16

* **Stand Alone Sermons**

1. December 23rd—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

2. December 24th—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*; John Currid, *Exodus*;J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; John Currid, *Deuteronomy*; Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*; Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*; Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom*; Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*; J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments*; Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*; Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)