

Light for My Path Youth Bible Studies

#23: Is it Always Wrong to Steal?

What happiness would you gain if you could own everything in the world if it meant you would lose eternal life?

Over in the country of Italy, there is a mountain called Mt. Vesuvius. This mountain is a volcano that over the years has erupted from time to time. At the foot of this mountain there used to be a Roman city called Pompeii. Pompeii was a rich and beautiful city. Many wealthy people lived there in beautiful homes. Then one day, about 1800 years ago, Mt. Vesuvius erupted, violently spewing out hot ash and completely covered the city, killing many people.



For centuries the city remained buried, and then in the 1700s they began digging and uncovering the ruins of the city. Among the ruins they found the form of a man. He had turned back after his box of gold and jewels. Clinging to it, he was suffocated by the hot ashes from the burning mountain. He had managed to hold on to some of his precious belongings, but he had lost his life.

1. What does the last of the Ten Commandments warn us against doing? **Exodus 20:17.**

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

Note: To covet is to want something that does not belong to us. This commandment is a very important one, and yet many people break it every day. Even though they break this commandment, no one may know anything about it because it is the one commandment of the last six that we can break without doing anything that can be seen by anyone else. It is a sin we do in our thoughts.

At its very beginning, sin started by Satan coveting a higher and more important position than he had. Remember what Satan said in his heart? "For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God ... I will be like the most High." Isaiah 14:13, 14. Did you notice that these were really thoughts in Satan's mind, words he said in his heart?

Someone might say, "But what is so important about what we think; I thought it was the things we do that really mattered." What we do is very important, but did you ever stop to think that it

is the thoughts you allow your mind to think about that affect the things you do? God knew this, and for this reason, He wants even our thoughts to be pure.

2. How does the power of the gospel help us in our thinking? **2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.**

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Note: There is no way of keeping our thoughts right except by the power of Jesus in the gospel. And, it is only as our thoughts are right that our actions will be right.

3. How does the Bible say our thoughts affect what we do? **Luke 6:45.**

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

Note: Whether we realize it or not, we are what we think. The wise man said: "For as he (a person) thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7

Different ways of Robbing

4. What does the eighth commandment say? **Exodus 20:15.**

"Thou shalt not steal."

Note: James tells us that there are ways of stealing that we don't usually think of as robbery.

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. ... Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." **James 5:1, 4.**



From this we see that it is possible to steal from someone by not paying them what their work is worth. We hear a great deal about labour problems. While we can see the wrong in men not being paid what their work is worth, we need to remember that it is just as wrong for the working man to steal from his employer by not giving him good work for the pay we get, as for the employer to pay him unfairly.

5. When we are not treated fairly, what does God tell us to wait for? **James 5:7.**

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."

Note: Often labour disagreements involve violence. God tell us not to take things into our own hands but to wait patiently for Him to take care of it. This may seem like a hard thing to do, but in the end it is the best way.

If no one coveted anything that wasn't theirs, there certainly wouldn't be any stealing, would there? Neither would people treat each other unfairly. And, while it is certainly a bad thing to steal from others, did you know that many people are stealing from God?

6. How can we be stealing from God? **Malachi 3:8.**

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

Note: It seems that the people God was talking to hadn't thought about what they were doing as robbing God, but that's exactly what God called it. We would be shocked to learn that someone had reached into the offering plate at church and had taken some of the money that had been given to God. God says, however, that there is a part of our money that belongs to Him, and when we keep that money, it is stealing.

7. What portion of our money does God claim? **Leviticus 27:30.**

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD."

8. What is meant by tithe? **Leviticus 27:32.**

"And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD."

Note: The tithe is one tenth of the money we make, whether it is in wages, profits on investments, or gifts.

God's Ownership of All Things

9. From where do we get the ability to make money? **Deuteronomy 8:18.**

"But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day."

10. Who owns the world and everything in it? **Psalms 50:7, 10-12.**

"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof."

11. Specifically, to whom does the money belong? **Haggai 2:8.**

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts."

Note: God gives the strength, the intelligence, and the ability to earn money. In return, He reserves a portion of all He gives us, to be returned to Him in grateful acknowledgment, on our part, that all we have belongs to Him.

12. In ancient Israel, who received the tithe? **Hebrews 7:5.**

"And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham."

Note: The Levites were the tribe especially set apart by God for the ministry.

Tithing in the New Testament

13. How does God plan for the support of the preaching of the gospel today? **1 Corinthians 9:13, 14.**

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Note: In the temple service the priests were paid from the tithe. Paul says that the ministers of the gospel should be paid the same way.

14. Did Jesus recognize the tithing principle? **Luke 11:42.**

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

15. In what spirit are we to return our tithes and offerings? **2 Corinthians 9:7.**

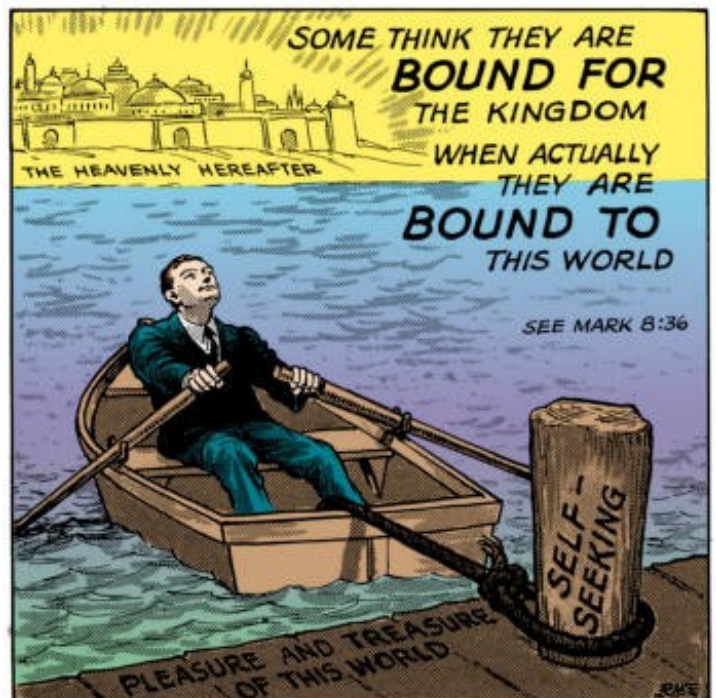
"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

16. Where is the only truly safe place that we can put our money? **Matthew 6:19, 20.**

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

17. How do our giving habits affect us? **Matthew 6:21.**

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."



Note: The selfish love of money is a character defect, which, if not cured, will keep us out of heaven. It was this that caused Judas to sell Jesus to His enemies for money. It is to help us not to have this in us that God gives us the privilege and responsibility of giving. Sin began as the result of covetousness and only those who have gotten the victory over this sin will be able to go to heaven.

18. How do we show that we have the love of God in us? **1 John 2:5.**

"But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him."

Note: We could only be saved by a great sacrifice on God's part, in giving Jesus to die for us. Loving and giving always go together. It is only when we willingly give back to God that we show that we have a loving appreciation for His great gift to us. The whole purpose in God's asking us to return to Him a portion of that with which He has blessed us, is to keep selfishness from gaining a foothold in our hearts.

19. When we share our means to help those less fortunate than ourselves, to whom does Jesus consider the gift to have been given? **Matthew 25:34-40.**

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It Pays to Tithe

20. What has God promised to do for those who remember to return their tithe? **Malachi 3:10.**

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Note: Selfishness can be very costly. There was a time soon after Israel returned from their long captivity to Babylon when there just never seemed to be enough money to go around. They couldn't understand why they just couldn't seem to get ahead. Then one



day, through the prophet Haggai, God told them why they had that problem.

"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house." Haggai 1:5, 6, 9

The temple that had been destroyed many years before was still in ruins. The people were so busy trying to get ahead that no one had any money to give to fix up God's house that was in ruins. As a result, God didn't bless them.

Some will say, "If I ever could get ahead, then I'd pay tithe." We have to remember, that we never can get ahead by coveting that which belongs to God. God loves a cheerful giver, and when we cheerfully give our tithes and offerings to Him, He has promised to bless us. He never breaks a promise!

21. Between what two great attractions must we all eventually decide? **Matthew 6:24.**

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Note: The word "mammon," means money, or riches. This was the test that Jesus gave to the rich young ruler when He came to Jesus and wanted to know if anything stood between himself and eternal life. See Matthew 19:16-22. To each one of us the same test will come: Which do we love more; Jesus or the things of this world? Our decision with regard to returning to God that portion of our money that He claims as His own, shows in a very practical way which we love more.

22. What will eventually happen to the things of this world? **2 Peter 3:10.**

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Note: The day will come when the treasures men have saved up will be of no value.

"In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." Isaiah 2:20, 21. This doesn't just mean graven images made of gold and silver, for whatever is more important to us than our love for God, and interferes with our service to Him, becomes a god to us.

At the time of which Isaiah is speaking, how significant will be the words of our memory verse: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" When Jesus returns, will we be ready to meet Him with gladness, or will we, like the poor man buried

in the ashes of Vesuvius, perish while we cling to our earthly treasure?
