

## **Exodus 20:15 – The eighth commandment: stealing**

Imagine a world with no stealing. There would be no locks, guards or watch-dogs, police or prisons. No prices increasing due to corruption or hoarding. All work getting a fair wage, on time, as agreed. Life would be very different! It is not a new constitution that Kenya ultimately needs, but new people who have repented and believed in Jesus Christ and been changed by him. That begins with you and me. This command is much bigger than we first realise.

### **1. All things are from God and must be used lawfully**

Some people think that the world belongs to the devil. It does not; God never gave it away! God is the creator of all and owns everything (Psalm 50:10-11). We only have the loan for a short time; we enter the world with nothing and will leave with nothing. All is borrowed from God, and all our possessions must be used according to his law. We will have to give an account one day (Romans 14:12). Stealing is much more than deliberately putting your hand in someone's pocket. God's law teaches us to love our neighbour as ourselves. This command is given to protect us so that we can prosper. Let us see just what God requires.

### **2. Ways in which this command is broken**

There are very many ways! We break the command every time we make an unfair gain of something that belong to someone else. A worker who is lazy or late cheats his employer of his wages. Corruption is stealing; when somebody uses their position to get an unfair advantage. Dishonesty is often involved in stealing – e.g. someone adds water to the milk, or sells a short measure. The rich steal from the poor by paying them less than they can live from, or forcing them into unfair agreements. Fathers steal from their families by wasting their wages instead of passing them on. Mothers steal from their hungry children by spending money on beauty instead of food. God requires us to care for the poor, and we steal from them when we ignore them. We steal when we do not keep our promises – not paying back loans, not returning borrowed items, wasting peoples' time by missing the agreed time or making them chase after us.

### **3. What the command requires from us**

We must not break this command in the above ways. But what are the duties we must do? What does love teach us? Firstly, we must work hard in honest work. We must be content to gain in this way only. We must look for honest opportunities and use them with care. Work is not part of the curse; sinless Adam and sinless Jesus worked with their hands. We must then care for those who lack, but not for the lazy (Ephesians 4:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:10). We must be honest in speech and behaviour: our promises must be completely reliable. We have all broken this command many ways; ultimately, we have stolen God's glory and honour from him. Jesus is the one who restores this honour. He died on the cross for peoples' sins in stealing. Repent and trust in him for salvation. He promises to completely forgive everyone who comes to him.