

## 8th Commandment Honor Ownership

Let's turn to our Bibles to Proverbs chapter 10. Proverbs chapter 10, verses 4 through 5. As I am finishing up the Ten Commandments and taking a, I guess, a detour of sorts. And the prophets of the Old Testament to stop, because he covers a lot, Hosea covers a lot of the first table.

And I wanted to cover the entirety of the law of God for us. So, Proverbs 10, verses 4 and 5, let's listen attentively to the word of God. He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

He who gathers in summer is a wise son. He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame. Let us pray.

So, Lord, we read here in this proverb a short saying, a pithy saying, that gets to the point of the importance of diligence and work, which is there in the Eighth Commandment. Our God and Savior, help us therein to learn these truths, to know certainly, God, that we can be diligent and still not become rich, for we live in a fallen world. That does not stop the fact, God, that stop the moral fact that we're still called to work and work hard nevertheless.

And may this lesson be learned in our lives, Lord, but more importantly to learn that in honoring all ownership, the more positive side of this commandment, thou shalt not steal. Gracious God, may we know that you own us as you own all of the universe, and we are called, therefore, to submit to you and always trust in you. Gracious God, may this lesson be learned anew, we pray.

Amen. So we live in a country with an overabundance of food, goods, and pleasures. I don't think I can stress that enough.

It's astounding what we have in comparison to prior generations for thousands of years. It is a culture, therefore, ripe with the landmines of laziness, vanity, and wastefulness. It has never been easier, in other words, to be lazy than in America today.

So I think it's important for us to examine our lives to see if we are wasting away with vanity or filling it with the works and the fruits of the Spirit. For it is a temptation for all of us, I believe, to one degree or another. So, first of all, what is the eighth commandment? Thou shalt not steal.

### What is the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment?

Faster. I mean, there it is. I picked, obviously, Proverbs 10, 4 to show us it's not just there in Exodus, and it's not just that language, but encompasses a lot more than the negative part.

And encompasses the positive. That's why I have the title Honor or Honoring Ownership. Now, obviously, thou shalt not steal is don't take what's not yours.

Which assumes what? You own something, and I own something. Ownership is presupposed. It's the assumption of this commandment.

That someone owns something that you cannot take without asking, or buying, or whatever the case may be. Nature teaches this. No one likes it when their stuff is stolen.

We all know the joke about, you know, the moral relativist. Oh, we can do whatever we want. So you knock him on the head and you take his money.

He gets all upset at you, because he doesn't really believe that. It's his way of making excuses for his sins. We must not forget that.

They live in God's universe. Or as I like to say, you know, growing up, they may talk like a communist, but they live like the rest of us. I mean, it's usually the power-hungry people who talk that way.

And so the title there, Honoring Ownership, shows the more positive side of this commandment. And of course, behind all of this, as in all the commandments, God's ownership of all things. He owns us, and he owns a thousand cattle and a thousand hills.

He owns the entirety of the universe, and therefore, we are but what? One logical implication, then, is we are stewards. This Bible, this cup of water, my tie, I could say it's mine, but it's a mine with a little asterisk, right? It's really God who gave it to me, and I should take care of these things. And we praise him for that.

So there are, of course, positive and negatives in these commandments. As all commandments, you should not steal, but also, on the flip side, you should work. And we'll get into that.

Less obvious, of course, is all the means, causes, occasions, and provocations thereunto in fulfillment of this commandment or in violation of this commandment. And we talked about that a little bit in the prior sermon, so I won't go down the details of this other than this sermon will have more examples of positive and negative fulfillment of this commandment. We shouldn't even be thinking about stealing.

And it's the same law. The means, causes, occasions, and the like, the same principles of ownership is both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. I recently heard a podcast that was talking about the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And the way they were talking, it was somewhat confusing because they were saying, look, we see here in the New Testament that to really understand how to engage in the culture today as Christians, we must be humble and peacemakers.

This is what it means to be in God's kingdom. My first thought was they weren't God's kingdom in the Old Testament, they weren't called to be peacemakers in the Old Testament, and they weren't called to be humble in the Old Testament. I don't understand.

Because they're positing implicitly some kind of dichotomy in the ethics of the Old and New Testament, and there isn't one. The only dichotomy is the outward form. Some of it has changed.

We don't have to go to Jerusalem. You know all this stuff. But the moral law of God is the same in its application, and therefore it's binding upon us, not only individually, but socially as nations, as communities.

That's what I want to highlight, and that's why I'm going over many Old Testament passages in this series of the Ten Commandments. You've got a lot in Proverbs. Just over and over again in Proverbs.

The law of God, law of God with practical application and little nuggets here and there showing us, look, this is important stuff, and it makes a difference in everyday life, doesn't it? He who has a slack hand becomes poor. We know this. The hand of the diligent makes rich.

He who gathers in the summer. If we were farmers, we'd understand this. But even without that, we know.

That's the time to do it. You don't wait when it's too late. But in all this, in the Eighth Commandment, I want to highlight again what I said in the beginning.

1 Corinthians 6:20, here's the verse, where Christ is tied into the Eighth Commandment, not only as Lord, of course all the commandments, Christ speaks as it were, because he's God. This is his word. These are his words, all ten.

But he speaks of the Eighth Commandment, this kind of language here in 1 Corinthians 6:20. For you were what? Bought at a price. And therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

He owns you. He bought you. He owns you first and foremost as the creator God of all, so he owns everything already.

But on top of that, he bought you from Satan because you fell and you rebelled in Adam. So it's a double blessing, as our creator God and as our savior God. And so this should humble us and put things in perspective.

When it comes to possession of things, that they not possess us. That's the danger we're going to talk about. We don't want the things in this world, the blessings, especially in America, to possess us.

## **What is Forbidden in the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment?**

What is forbidden in the Eighth Commandment? I like to start with the negative and end with the positive. What is forbidden in the Eighth Commandment? Question 75 of the Shorter Catechism. The Eighth Commandment forbids whatsoever does or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward estate.

You see the positive way it describes this? Don't just steal. But whatever does or may unjustly hinder our wealth and outward estate, our possessions, the things that we own, the

things that God has given us, and one another. Because you don't steal from yourself as such, you steal from other people, typically.

Obvious violations of this, of course, are stealing from your neighbor, stealing from your boss or community. Of course, stealing there doesn't have to be crass, taking away the book from the company store or money from the cash. It could be just being lazy on the job.

You're stealing time and the effort that you promised them in your work and ability. Lazing around at work, in other words, instead of working at work. Extortion and bribery fit under this category as well.

And, of course, the heart of the matter, why one is lazy or indifferent to our jobs, wherever that may be, at home or elsewhere. Perhaps it's for covetousness' sake, perhaps it's envying. That's why we would steal and take what other people have that we do not have.

We pine after them. We think of some way to get them because it begins with our heart, doesn't it? It may be sudden and immediate, of course. It's not like always the case that you're meditating upon it and just running through your head all the time.

I want this. I think I'm going to get this. And it takes up your time.

That way, you start realizing, there's something wrong here I've got to prioritize. Maybe I'm lusting too much here. This is a problem.

But sometimes it's immediate. It's just the first time you see it, this thing that's really interesting, this car, whatever the case is, you're like, I would really like to have that. That's one step closer to stealing perhaps.

That's the danger. Les talked about violations. Engrossing commodities to enhance price.

That's the language of the larger catechism. Engrossing commodities to enhance price. What we call price gouging.

Right? Selling water for outrageous prices during emergencies, like the earthquakes they have in California once in a while. There's actually laws against that. We live in a fallen world, of course, and unforeseen things happen.

So we should be able to help out when possible, not what, exploit the difficulty so we can make a fast buck. Making money is fine. We're not against that.

And so what we have here is Proverbs 11.26. In Proverbs 11.26 you have this. The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it. If obviously you're withholding it, you're really going to get a lot of money for your grain.

You're controlling the market in one sense. So holding back to create more demand on failure artificially is certainly unfair, depending on the circumstances, obviously. That's why I point out the emergency clause, for example.

Violating land. In the Old Testament you had the landmarks, as you recall, that set and divided the 12 tribes. They were given by God's divine command, direct revelation in the way we don't have for America, for your land that you own, for the division we have between the 50 states.

We have markers as well. We've got satellites that do all this stuff now. But it's not divine the way it was in the Old Testament.

Immediate, direct revelation from God Almighty. And back then it was intergenerational as well, and they were not to take and move the landmarks, and so they'd get extra land that way. God gave them and set up the boundaries on purpose, specifically for generation to generation.

Judah was always supposed to be that size and those parameters. Period. So that isn't following anymore today.

That's true. But moving the landmarks was a form of stealing. Taking the land that's not yours.

Back then, and it's true today, obviously. One variation, of course, of this today is national borders. And violation thereof is a violation of the Eighth Commandment.

That's what it would fall under. And the misuse, therefore, of the land and all the things that are here when we're not supposed to be here or there, and using all the resources, is but another layer of violating the Eighth Commandment by taking all the social and economic blessings that are not given to one nation, but given to another. But they are given to you if you go across the border when you shouldn't.

Falls under the Eighth Commandment. Period. Unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's outward estate.

Estate here doesn't just mean like you think of typical things I did. You know, some land that you own, you pass on for generations. It just means all the good things that God has blessed you with.

Outward forms. The things that we have. So clothing, cars, money, land, investments even.

All this. The good things God has blessed us with. Unjustly hindering our own or our neighbors.

And again, neighbor isn't just the guy next to you. It's anybody you're interacting with in life. Like your boss or your company.

That follows under the category of neighbor. I was in the military, as you recall. In the Air Force.

And there were three known military classifications for secrecy. You either got the classified level, secret level, or top secret. And then you have some variations thereof.

Right? I had secret clearance about in the middle. So that means I could not bring anything home from my job from school even. When I went to school, it was great.

I had no homework. Because everything had to be done at school. I couldn't bring it to my living area and my apartments.

I had to be there. And of course, if I took it, that would be stealing. But if I was lazy with it and left it outside or left it on the ground, that was also not fulfillment of this commandment.

I wasn't intentionally trying to steal it. I'm just like, whatever. It's not mine.

They'll take care of it. No. We had a duty, some of you know, to put it all away in the right file drawer when you're done with the day.

You got to put all the secret stuff away. You can't leave it out. You have to take care of someone else's property.

That's what you're called to do. If you don't do that, it's a variation of the Eighth Commandment. It's not stealing per se, but it still falls under, is my point, the Eighth Commandment.

So we have a duty to not hinder the Air Force in the use of their equipment or your employee or your neighbor or whatever else that they may have. You would help them, of course, if need be. We have some text here I want to go over in particular in Proverbs.

Proverbs 21 17 where we have a more broader language here of a wasteful life. Proverbs 21 17 we read, He who loves pleasure will be a poor man. He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

Proverbs 28 19 in Proverbs 28 19 so, He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough. So in the first one, 21 17 is pretty straightforward. He who loves pleasure will be a poor man.

You're just drawn into these things. You just spend all your money on having entertainment and fun and you're like, oh no, I've got to pay my bills. Whoops.

I guess I can't. I have to go further in debt. Go to the bank and whatever else.

This happens, unfortunately. He who loves wine and oil, of course, will not be rich. This one, Proverbs 28 19 is interesting.

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread. You work hard, you're going to get something out of it typically. We know this is the case.

All things are considered equal. But he who follows frivolity, having fun and enjoyment all the time will have poverty enough. You hear the humor in that? You want to have a lot of stuff? You're going to have a lot of bread by working hard.

You're going to have a lot of poverty by not working hard and having fun all the time. He who tills a land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues worthless things will have plenty of poverty. There's another way of saying that.

It's kind of humorous in one sense. So, what all that means is to avoid wasteful pursuits. In general, undo affection or focus upon the things of this world.

Material blessings is why I pointed that out at the beginning of the sermon series here. That we have a superabundance, an overabundance of many wonderful blessings for our body and our mind and our ears and our taste buds. And you can gourd yourself.

So, we think of gluttony as only a food. I'm extending the metaphor to just having so much of everything in life because we're not satisfied. We end up with the danger of wasteful pursuits.

Frivolity there in that text means empty, vain, worthless things and activities. Not as though food is worthless, of course, or sleep or having a nice car, per se. But it becomes that when you have undue affections and you're just absorbed with these things.

And you see this typically because you don't take the church seriously, you don't read the Bible seriously, you don't pray much because you're just thinking about it and always working and working and trying to have fun or whatever it is that you're being sucked into. Now, there's two types of poverty here in the Proverbs. The Proverbs, quite interestingly enough, don't specify a lot of things because they are just pithy sayings, right? They're not there to unpack a lot of things, but rather make it very dense so it's easy to remember.

An apple a day keeps the doctor away is one of the famous ones we have today. The same with here. So when it talks about poverty, we shouldn't exclude the fact that it also means spiritual poverty, not just material poverty.

That's part of it, to be sure. So materially, of course, too many poor people are poor because they take their money, time, and energy, seek pleasure, fun, and entertainment. And gambling is one of those big dangers there, especially when you're poor.

Spiritually, the soul is captured by entertainment. You may have the money and not be poor, but you become poor in spirit. That is, in the wrong sense.

You have poverty of spirit because you are obsessed in being consumed by the goods of this age. The blessings that God has given us have become our gods, as it were. Happiness and excitement become the drugs that numb us.

This is a big problem and a danger in America. We visited Las Vegas a number of years ago, not intentionally as such. We just have to go that way to get to California to visit my family.

And I'm like, I've never been there. I don't know what's going on here. I've heard about it and sure enough, it's all about pleasure, as you know.

The pretty boulevard, the bright lights, the colorful costumes in the grand hotels. But one block away, it's dark, seedy, dirty, bum-ridden. Why? Because it's the fruit of living for pleasure.

These people have lost all their money. They're either drunk or drugged out because of all this gambling. Because they made that the center of their existence.

That's frivolity. That's vain pleasures of this world. Las Vegas, what happens here, happens everywhere.

That's what we are seeing in Denver, unfortunately. In other words, a life sucked dry by the siren call of pleasure. America has much of that.

Entertainment galore. And we feed ourselves until our bellies burst open. And they end up dying on the streets.

It's very, very sad. Some other signs of wasting life on frivolity and fun of course is just having lots and lots of stuff on purpose. There are slight balance here.

It depends on your context. We can have a lot of things because things break down. In my experience, my take on the matter, we have a lot more cheap stuff than I remember growing up.

And so they end up kind of halfway working and you kind of keep it and get a better model like phones. They're just almost like shoes now, the way they're designed on purpose. They're like that.

I'm not trying to do that. That's my opinion, just the way they're designed from what I know as an engineer. So what am I going to do? I've got some extra phones.

What do I do? I'm trying to be useful for them, with them, or whatever else. But that's where we find ourselves. But you know where you are.

You know what you are doing, what you are seeking or not seeking, as the case may be in here. Going after things in this world is one of the dangers we have to be aware of. Free time, of course, is part of this.

We have much of that, relatively speaking, because we don't live close to the edge of the earth, to the earth itself anymore as they used to, the farmers and the like. We have much prosperity. The way to fight waste and stealing, stealing with respect to time in that sense, is of course examining ourselves, examining our hearts, examining what we have, why we have it, what we're going to do with it, or not do with it as the case may be.

1 Timothy 6.5 reminds us of those who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. So there, it looks like they're church officers, as you recall in the last chapter of 1 Timothy, when I

preached on that, who thought, hey, I can make more money being a pastor or a ruling elder or something and the like. In that case, yeah, you'll laugh.

Examine your motivations. Why are you doing this? Why do you want to be a pastor? To make more money? That godliness is a means of gain, a means of making money? No, it should not be. Colossians 3.2, on the flip side, set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth.

And that's why church is important. That is Sunday worship. You can get morning and evening, that's great.

Midweek at times, certainly family devotions throughout the week to stop, to prevent and protect yourself, to inculcate yourself from this world that says what? Bye, bye, bye, bye, bye. I still remember this to this day, when Bush Jr. said, hey, we can fix the economy in the early 2000s. You know how we do it? Keep buying.

What? We've become a consumeristic society. We used to be a productive society. That is, we produced things, we were known there in the rust belt for a reason.

We made all kinds of metal and cars and everything else, and now we've outsourced it all to save money and do bye, bye, bye, bye, bye, bye. That's a danger we have to be aware of, our hearts. Examine it.

Outwardly, of course, there's different dangers and things that can be done. What do we do with our possessions, for example? Do we use them for the glory of God, for the good of one another, to help one another? As we heard this morning, there were extra foods at perhaps a Thanksgiving thing, and you think, what can I do with the extra food? I think of other people. I can give them the extra food.

Or, you can be gluttonous and hang on to yourself, perhaps, and whatever else. Or you may have to hang on to yourself, because you can't give to anybody. So, again, it's your intention behind these matters.

But one thing I want to highlight here is who you hang out with. The larger catechism mentions this in its own way. Proverbs 23.21 Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.

You can see why this is tied to the 8th commandment. They're running around, wasting their time, wasting their resources, getting drunk, being gluttonous, and it's coming to poverty, because it's more important to them. And if they become your friends and buddies, they're going to drag you down as well.

Be wary who your friends are, what we do with our time, and with what are possessions.

## What is Commanded in the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment?

Now, the positive side, the third point, what is commanded in the 8th commandment? Question 74. The 8th commandment requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and estate, outward estate, excuse me, of ourselves and others.

It's a group effort here. If we want to fight materialism, we want to set our minds on the things above, not on the things of the earth, then what we must do is embrace a diligent life, so that our hands and our minds are used for good things, instead of pining after things that are not ours, perhaps even to the point of stealing. Ephesians 4.28. Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands at the things which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.

And you see that pattern, I talked about that in Sunday school class, right? Put off, put on, put off stealing, right here, right out of Ephesians he has that pattern, put on diligent work, so that you can buy the thing instead of stealing it. Or maybe not buy it at all, because it becomes, in that case, an inordinate desire that you should probably avoid, or a temptation. In other words, stay busy, productive, that keeps us out of trouble, or it should be, it's one mean or tool to be used in our lives.

And so, with respect to time and keeping busy and working hard, one of the best ways with respect to time is work, or do something useful or productive. So when I say work, I'm not saying this so you have to have a 24-hour job. There's retirees, there's stay-at-home moms, they all work in their own way.

Be productive is the point. Be productive. Unlike, what, the typical Antifa or other rioters in 2020 and elsewhere, who are under the age of 30, it's like they have too much time, a number of them have money and resources, what are you guys doing with your time? We know this problem back in the 60s and 70s, they had the movies about the gangs and young people in the streets, wasting their time, a form of violating the Eighth Commandment, not being productive in society, hanging out with one another, and causing trouble.

Get into work! There's a lot of truth to that. Keep those hands busy, keep that mind busy with usefulness in God's kingdom. Work is a means, of course, to an end.

We shouldn't turn our life into work as such, that is, we are consumed with it, we still have to take care of our family, of course, but still, it's an important way to fulfill the Eighth Commandment. And another reminder, it is better to be poor and satisfied with God than rich and full of this world. Remember that.

So, we have to work, we have to be diligent with these blessings that God has given us, so that we can avoid temptation. Worship the Lord, praise His name, set our mind on things above and not on things of the earth. I mentioned that in the prior section.

Here, more positively, of course, prayer, meditation, reading, and fellowship with the saints to help us fight against any temptation we may have to violate the Eighth Commandment in our lives. This is important. But, not only that, that we do as we can throughout the week,

and especially in the Lord's Day, but here, more specifically, in Ephesians 4.28, gives us another way in which we can fulfill the Eighth Commandment in a positive way, not only watching our souls and praying and meditating and asking for help, but to do something with our hands.

What does he tell the man who used to be a thief? He says, stop stealing. That's part of it. Stop that.

That's bad stuff. Work. Let him labor, working with his hands, in order that he may give to him that needs charity, to be helpful and good to others who are in need.

Of course, the rightful poor. Work for others, in other words, and not for yourself only. You work for our families.

Men know this. Fathers know this. Husbands know this.

And for their children and for their grandchildren. For the church, tithing and outreach. For the nation, as good patriots.

Or for our community and the like. Money is for deserving poor, through the church, through local communities, and whatever else that we, perhaps, can use or use ourselves. This is one way to fight against violating the 8th commandment and fulfill it, in fact.

To do something positive with what God has blessed us with. And to help the poor and needy. Other Old Testament passages on the 8th commandment here, more in a positive sense.

Proverbs 10.4 The passage that we have before us. He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. So you have this contrast often there in the Proverbs.

On the one hand, don't do this. This is what happens when you don't do this. Over here, on the other hand, you do this, and good things, and God will bless you.

Again, typically, all things considered equal in God's timing, to be sure. He who gathers in the summer is wise. He who sleeps in the harvest will cause shame.

That's dangerous, that's bad, that's lazy. On the flip side is diligent, hard work. All throughout our life, whatever that may be.

Taking care of the house, taking care of the car, taking care of your family, taking care of your parents in their old age. That too is work, brothers. It's a diligent labor of fulfillment of the Eighth Commandment.

Proverbs 14.23 In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty. So you can talk about it, or you can do it. There's that old saying, are you just going to talk about it, or are you going to do it? What are we going to do here? In a spiritual life, we can fall into the trap of talking about our problems, which has its place.

I'm not denying that. Feeling good about talking about our problems, again, not necessarily wrong, but what are we going to do about it? We've got to still go one step further with this so that we can be more like Jesus, that we can be useful, as in the case of charity, Ephesians 4, or help us with our problems here, whatever the case may be. Proverbs 13.4 The soul of a lazy man desires and has nothing, but the soul of the diligent should be made rich.

Want, want, want, want. How are we going to work for it? We have to work and strive. This is what we are called to do.

Proverbs 14.23 tells us we have to work to change in our lives. So these are ways, different Proverbs, that emphasize different perspectives, talking and working and the like, in which we can fulfill the Eighth Commandment. Proverbs 21.5, you heard this one in Sunday School class, the plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty surely to poverty.

So again, this, I think, falls into the Eighth Commandment, probably other commandments as well. Making plans so that we can be useful with the things God has given us, instead of what? Wasteful. And just letting it all slip away.

It's the diligent's use of the means of grace and diligent use of the means of providence that God has given us, so that we can be useful and use the excess things that we have for one another, for our families, and for the future, and for the glory of God, of course, and all things. And so there are various and sundry things. There are many more Proverbs, I'm sure, in other passages of the Bible.

I just wanted to highlight again that there's much richness in the Old Testament which we can learn of the law of God, and we can apply it in our lives. It may be a little different in application for you and me and the like, that's for sure, because again the Proverbs are not commands in the sense of exactly what they say is what's going to happen, but rather, again, reminders and helpful ways of remembering the good things that we are called to and the bad things we should avoid. When we talk about eating apples, we know it means more than apples.

You kind of get sick after a while just eating apples. It means a healthy lifestyle. And same with these Proverbs.

They mean a lot more than the simple words there, because they are quite dense. But in all these details, remember one thing, brothers and sisters, you are not your own. And what you have is ultimately God's, and He has granted it to you, and you are His stewards.

He owns you, and He wants you to work for Him. And all that you do to avoid laziness on the one hand, and stealing on the other, to fulfill the Eighth Commandment by diligent labor and work, using what God has granted us, both in body and soul, for the good of each other, and ultimately for the glory of His name. Let us pray.

Indeed, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we glorify Your name, we pray we glorify it, not with our lips, but also with our actions and the possessions that we have, that they would be

used wisely and diligently, Lord, for the good of our family, for the good of our neighbor, for the good of the kingdom of God, and for Your glorious namesake above all things. By the blood of our Lord and Savior and the everlasting covenant, we pray these things. Amen.