

Biblical Topics

Ten Commandments - Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

What does God forbid in the Seventh Commandment?

God forbids every kind of robbery, theft, and fraud, as well as sinful longing for anything that belongs to our neighbor. Robbery is taking other people's goods by force. Theft is taking our neighbor's money secretly as pickpockets, counterfeiters, embezzlers and forgers. Fraud is any dishonest business deal. This includes identity theft. This is often referred to white collar crime which is one of the most prevalent crime in our country. It also includes: overcharging, not paying honest wages, slipshod work, loafing on the job, gambling, evading taxes, not paying our debts, and damaging some's property without restitution.

- Ephesians 4:28: He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.
- Leviticus 19:35: Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity.
- Jeremiah 22:13: Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for not
- 2 Thessalonians 3:10: If a man will not work, he shall not eat.
- Psalm 37:21: The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.
- Proverbs 29:24: The accomplice of a thief is his own enemy.

What does God require of us in the Seventh Commandment?

There are two things to know before going into this part of each commandment:

First, one of the best ways to move away from wrong behavior or habits is to do the very opposite actions. Each of the commandments asks the question: What does this mean? Following that question and near the end of the explanation, Luther offers positive behaviors that would aid in doing a better task of following God's direction in this commandment. Work at practicing these.

Second, right after the question comes the statement, "we should fear and love God." In the commandments to "fear God" means to "stand in awe of Him," to revere, respect, esteem, and honor Him. We are NOT to shake in our boots from fright.

God requires us to help our neighbor to improve and protect his property and business. We take care of his things as well as we do our own and warn him against danger, such as fire, theft, etc. We should help our neighbor to find profitable employment, to improve his work, and to be successful in his business.

- Exodus 23:4: If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him.
- Matthew 7:12: So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
- Genesis 13:9: Abraham gave Lot (his nephew) the choice of the land.

God requires us to help our neighbor in every need.

- Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.
- Proverbs 19:17: He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.
- Hebrews 13:16: And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

God requires that we should rejoice when we see our neighbor prosper. In helping our neighbor we should not seek our own honor and profit, but only his good. We should rejoice as much in his prosperity as we do in our own.

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

The above information is taken from: "Luther's Small Catechism" annotated by Edward W. A. Koehler.