

Abstain From Every Form Of Evil

July 6, 2016 through September 28, 2016

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 *Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; **abstain from every form of evil.*** (NASB)

When Paul addressed the brethren in Thessalonica, he instructed them to neither quench the Spirit nor to despise prophetic utterances. As the first century progressed, the Spirit and prophetic utterances would become the New Testament. Thus, the command today is that we are to avoid extinguishing the work of Scriptures in our life, nor are we to look down upon the admonitions of the New Testament. The purpose of the command is that we might examine all things. Once examined, we should cling to what is good, and abstain what is evil in every from it takes.

The purpose of this study is to observe and fulfill this commandment. The underlying theme is that evil takes on new forms from time to time, and it is necessary for us to constantly examine all things in the light of scriptures and discern what is good and what is evil. Devices such as the internet, Facebook, texting or Instagram offer new opportunities as well as new dangers. As seen on the next page, a recent (May 2014) Gallup poll over a variety of subjects (some secular / amoral) indicates that people are far more accepting of many forms of immorality that in times past were seen as immoral. Our laws are changing constantly, and many might be deceived to believe that what is legal is moral.

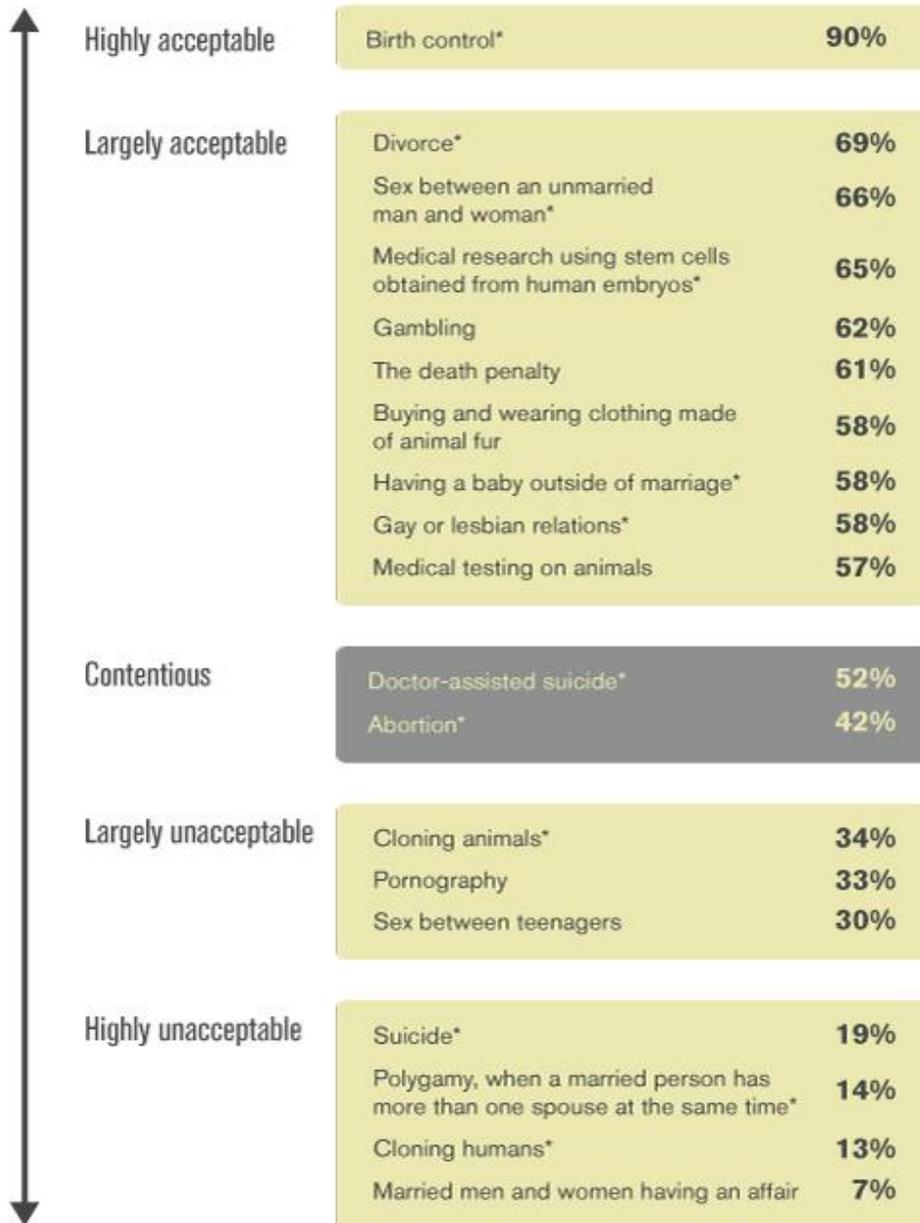
Almost everything we will be examining in this study is considered moral by some or most in our society. Our ability to distinguish good from evil is not one from ourselves, but from the Word of Life.

Abstain from Every Form of Evil		
Subject	Date	Teacher
Sexual Immorality	July 6	Tony Richline
Pornography	July 13	Brian Haines
Immodesty	July 20	Ryan Sollars
Dancing	July 27	Anthony Ward
Alcohol	August 3	Anthony Ward
Drugs	August 10	Rob Wade
Abortion	August 17	Craig Foster
Dishonesty	August 24	Ryan Sollars
Theft	August 31	Michael Hetzer
Gambling	September 7	Anthony Ward
Profanity	September 14	Curt Davis
Suicide / Assisted Suicide	September 21	Curt Davis
Entertainment (movies, TV, music sports)	September 28	Tony Richline

Gallup Poll on Moral Acceptability in the United States

MORAL ACCEPTABILITY:

Do you believe that, in general, the following are morally acceptable?



% Yes, morally acceptable

*Denotes moral acceptability at or near record high

May 8-11, 2014

GALLUP®

Class One: Sexual Immorality

July 6, 2016

I Corinthians 6:13-20, Romans 1:20-32, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, Matthew 5:27-32, 19:1-12

Introduction

Sexual immorality is perhaps the most discussed sin of both the New Testament and the Old Testament. Sexual immorality is a broad term in the Scriptures which umbrellas a number of other sins. In the New Testament it includes:

- Fornication (Col. 3:5)
 - Prostitution (1 Cor. 6:16)
- Adultery (Gal. 5:19)
 - Adulterous Remarriage (Mat. 19:9)
 - Polygamy (Mat. 19:6-9)
- Homosexuality (Rom. 1:27)
 - Effeminacy (1 Cor. 6:9)
- Lust / Sensuality (Mat. 5:27)
 - Filthy language/jesting
 - Indecent exposure / modesty

Examples of Disobedience

A number of righteous men and women stumbled over sexual temptation:

- *Ham, Abraham, Judah, Dinah (?), Samson, Eli's sons, David*

A number of cities and nations stumbled over sexual immorality:

- *Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel at Baal Peor, Gibeah of Benjamin*

What is New

- Widespread acceptance of homosexuality. Particularly in the last few years the majority of Americans have ceased to view homosexuality as morally reprehensible.
- Sexualization of youth (i.e. encouragement of sexual identities among adolescents). Many sexual issues are now being targeted at grade school level, such as school dances, clothing, bathroom reassignment, sex education¹.
- Living together before marriage has become much more common². Many people are unaware of the meaning of the word "fornication".

What Scriptures Reveal

Sexuality was created as a good thing to exist in marriage (Heb. 13:4, Gen. 2:24-25, 1 Cor. 7:2-4). When it is removed from marriage, it becomes an evil action. Scriptures state that sexual immorality is a particularly damaging sin (1 Cor. 6:18), with particularly harmful consequences (Prov. 6:25-29). Our body is a temple which is destroyed by sexual immorality. Yet this issue is still one of the great common struggles of Christians (2 Cor. 12:21).

¹ <https://realtruth.org/articles/071129-003-iltsoy.html>

² <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/04/04/more-people-than-ever-living-together-before-marriage>

Class Two: Sexual Immorality – Pornography

July 13, 2016

Matthew 5:27-32, Romans 13:12-14, James 1:13-16, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, 1 Peter 4:3

Introduction

Sexual immorality is perhaps the most discussed sin of both the New Testament and the Old Testament. As mentioned in our previous class, this includes the issue of lust. Among the issues of lust we must consider are the issue of indecency and pornography.

- Lust (Mat. 5:27)
 - Immodesty / indecency
 - Pornography
 - Visual indecency
 - Literary indecency

Pornographic materials have a devastating impact on the brain, as many tests have shown, revealing that the damage caused to frontal cortex was similar to that caused by narcotics³. In the state of Utah, pornography was declared a public health crisis⁴, pointing to the correlation between pornography and violence.

Examples of Disobedience

- *David*

What is New

- In previous generations pornographic material was difficult to obtain without some accountability. Today, we can access this material within seconds without consequence.
- Recently pornographic books marketed to women have become more widespread (e.g. *50 Shades of Gray*)
- Pseudo/light pornography has become acceptable to many in the form of television programs

What Scriptures Reveal

Sexual desire is a natural part of people, created as a good thing to exist in marriage (Heb. 13:4, Gen. 2:24-25, 1 Cor. 7:2-4). It is not a desire that cannot be overcome (Tit. 2:12, Gal. 5:24). Indeed, Jesus tells us that some will be “eunuchs” for the sake of the Kingdom (Mat. 19:12). Pornography is also a doorway to many other sins, as seen with David (2 Sam. 11:2-3). As James points out (Jam. 1:15) lust leads to spiritual death.

Some believe that women are not susceptible to pornography. However, “romantic” literature containing graphic sexual material (pornography) is primarily marketed to women. Scriptures are clear women have sexual desires too (1 Tim. 5:11, Gen. 39:6-19). Understand pornography as ANY material that deals with sex in an effort to incite sensual feelings⁵.

³ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3050060/#!po=5.55556>

⁴ <http://www.ajc.com/news/news/national/utah-declares-pornography-public-health-crisis/nq7q9/>

⁵ <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVarticles/ALookatPornography.htm>

Class Three: Immodesty

July 20, 2016

Genesis 3:6-9,21, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, 1 Peter 3:3-4, James 2:1-4, Proverbs 7:6-11

Introduction

Immodesty is actually two issues: indecency and vanity. In circumstances of decency we address modesty as a subset of the issue of sexual immorality of lust. This is a lust of the flesh.

- Indecent exposure / modesty (Prov. 6:25)
- Dressing to incite lust

However, Scripture also points to an immodesty of our circumstances when we surround ourselves or dress ourselves to receive praise of beauty. This is vanity, is a lust of the eyes. SCRIPTURES DO NOT CONDEMN jewelry or the like, but warn us that they can lead to worldliness.

- Modesty (1 Tim. 2:9)
- Jewelry / piercings / tattoos
- Clothing / possessions

Examples of Disobedience

- *Adam & Eve, Ham & Noah*

What is New

- Our society allows less and less clothing in public (indecency).
- Our society promotes drawing as much attention to ourselves as possible (vanity)

What Scriptures Reveal

Indecent Immodesty: Modesty originated in Genesis 3. Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were naked without shamed, since this was how God created them (Gen. 2:25). When they sinned, they became aware of their nakedness and tried to cover themselves with a *garment* of fig leaves (Genesis 3:7). This Hebrew word is *chargorah*, which means a garment that covers the mid-section of the body, tied about the waist (sometimes translated as a girdle or a belt). However, when God visited them in the Garden, they hid themselves because they still considered themselves naked, indicating that one can have a garment and still be naked. Afterwards God took animal skins and made *tunics* for the man and woman (Gen. 3:21). This Hebrew word is *kethoneth*, which describes a longer garment or robe. The Garden definition of nakedness is one without a cultural reference; this means that universally God requires the covering of the sexual organs. Clothing that allows a view of these parts is sinful nakedness⁶.

Vain Immodesty:

It is not a sin to care for our appearance (Eccl. 9:8, Mat. 6:17) nor to have nice things (Eph. 5:20). However, it is a sin when we define ourselves by our appearances (Luke 12:15, 1 Tim. 6:6-9). Things like tattoos or piercings permanently draw attention to ourselves in a manner that *may be* boastful pride need to be considered carefully, particularly due to their permanent nature. Again, it is not a sin per se, but more than most possessions it can reflect a boastful heart.

⁶ <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVarticles/ModestApparel.htm>

Class Four: Dancing

July 27, 2016

Romans 12:1-2, Exodus 32:19, Matthew 14:6,

Introduction

Dancing of itself is a morally neutral activity. However, the issue of modern couples dancing falls into a category of sexual immorality called *lasciviousness*, another term for sensuality:

- Lasciviousness / sensuality (1 Pet. 4:3)

Examples of Disobedience

- *The Israelites at Sinai, Herodias*

What is New

- Social media makes it appear that more Christians are accepting of mixed dancing events like proms or school events or weddings⁷.

- Sexualization of dancing is more open than in the past⁸ with teenage dances more sexual now.

What Scriptures Reveal

Lasciviousness is an aspect of worldliness that is a great stumbling block. This word is sometimes translated as sensuality, and is tied to sexual immorality in its usage in the New Testament (Mark 7:22, 2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:19, Ephesians 4:19, 1 Peter 4:3, 2 Peter 2:2, Jude 4). It is also tied to similar words such as carousing/reveling. These passages tell us clearly that it is a sin; it is a work of darkness and a work of the flesh that removes the Grace of God, and causes us to be disinherited from the kingdom.

Many will (correctly) point out that there was dancing in the Bible that was not condemned (Exodus 15:20, Psalm 149:3, Luke 15:25). At the same time, we see dancing in the Bible that was sinful (Exodus 32:19, Matthew 14:6). The sin of lasciviousness is any behavior or conduct that offers a sexual enticement without the sexual action itself. With this understanding, we should call most modern couples dancing lascivious. If dancing is lascivious, then it is a sin. ALL lasciviousness is sin, but not all dancing is lascivious. Dancing that is lascivious (sinful) would be dancing in which a sexual tension or sexual desire is enticed or suggested.

Perhaps many may see their own engagement in dances as harmless or non-sexual, and quite possibly it is. Others state that dancing partners who have God's blessing in their sexual interest towards each other (a husband and wife) have complete permission to dance. However, could attending or participating in a dance be construed by others as permissiveness towards this sexual encounter? What if the harmless dance causes others to sin? Jesus said "*Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!*" (Matthew 18:7). We need to acknowledge that it can be a rather significant stumbling block to those for whom dancing is a sexual desire to dance before them. Paul wrote that "*if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble*" (1 Corinthians 8:13). Even if it is not a sin for one person, if it causes others to sin, then it is a sin.

⁷ <http://www.shelbyvilleroad.org/informer/2015/5/8/what-the-bible-says-about-the-prom>

⁸ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/growing-friendships/201302/they-call-dancing>

Class Five: Alcohol

August 3, 2016

Proverbs 23:29-35, 31:4-7, 1 Peter 4:1-4, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Introduction

Paul tells us that nothing of itself is unclean (Romans 14:14). Alcohol may have been used for medicinal purposes in ancient times (Prov. 31:6, 1 Tim. 5:21), as it still is today⁹. There are a number of sins in the Bible that are associated with alcohol.

- Alcohol consumption
 - Drunkenness (1 Cor. 6:10)
 - Dissipation (Luke 21:34)
 - Carousing/revelries (Gal. 5:21)
 - Drinking Parties (1 Pet. 4:3)

Examples of Disobedience

- Noah, Lot, Nabal, David, Elah,

What is New

- Drinking alcohol is so commonly accepted that it is not even listed within our Gallup poll.
- Drinking in our country is slowly increasing¹⁰ particularly in the fashionable areas of crafted beers

What Scriptures Reveals

What does the Bible say about Drunkenness? First, in Romans 13:12-14 we are told that it is a work of darkness. This means it is *Satanic*. Second, we are told in I Corinthians 5:11 that it is a matter of church discipline. Finally, in I Corinthians 6:9-10 we find that it kills the soul and takes away our hope.

What about social drinking or drinking to relax? The Bible speaks a lot about that as well. In the same breath as drunkenness, revelry (social drinking) is called a work of Darkness (Rom. 13:12). Revelry is the Greek word "*komo*", which means letting loose, i.e. "relaxing". Some say they do not drink to get drunk, just to unwind. This is revelry, and it is Satanic as well as drunkenness. Peter warns about this in I Peter 4:3-4, where he speaks about the "flood of dissipation".

Titus 2:11-12 tells us that we are to abandon worldly lusts for spiritual living. When we ask ourselves what is "worldly", we find it defined for us in I John 2:15-16 tells us that the world is "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". Alcohol fits this description well: the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), the lust of the eyes (Prov. 23:31) and the pride of life (Prov. 31:5). Alcohol is the *very embodiment* of worldliness.

Alcohol in scripture begins with Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9:24) and ends with the Harlot of Babylon (Rev. 18:3). It's effects caused kings to be destroyed (1 Kin. 16:9, 20:16), hence the warning of King Lemuel (Prov. 31:4). Priests were told not to drink alcohol (Lev. 10:9, Ezek. 44:21), nor could the Nazarite (Num. 6:3), and by implication the prophet (Amos 2:11-12). Today we in Christ are prophets, priests and kings before God (Rev. 1:6), and we are told that alcohol is contrary to the Spirit dwelling in us (Eph. 5:18).

⁹ www.rbhhealthpro.com/Content/Oregon/Resources/Medications%20Containing%20Alcohol%20and%20Options%20Without%20Alcohol.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.foxnews.com/leisure/2016/05/23/everyone-in-world-is-drinking-less-alcohol-besides-americans/>

Class Six: Drugs

August 10, 2016

Galatians 5:19-21, Proverbs 23:29-35, 31:4-7, 1 Peter 4:1-4, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Introduction

The issue of the sin of drunkenness is the same for the issue of (recreational) drug use. Both are intoxicants which dull the senses and result in an inebriated state. However, drug use also has a component mentioned in Scripture related to witchcraft and sorcery, as well as the issue of addiction being more significant.

- Drug Use
 - Drunkenness (1 Cor. 6:10)
 - Addiction (1 Cor. 6:12)

What is New

- Recreational marijuana use has recently been legalized in Oregon and other countries.
- More people are being prescribed narcotics for issues than ever before¹¹; there is a large rise in prescription drug use and overuse in the last two decades¹²
- Many people are prescribed mood altering medications for mental illness

What Scriptures Reveal

There are multiple issues that a Christian needs to understand regarding drugs. First, they need to know that recreational drug use is the same as drunkenness, for anything that renders one senseless (unable *"to make a distinction between the holy and the profane"*, Lev. 10:9-10). The legality of marijuana is immaterial, although we would be obligated to keep the law even if it were not intoxicating (Rom. 13:1-8).

Second, the use of drugs may have particularly sinister implications. The word in our New Testament translated *"witchcraft"* or *"sorcery"* is the Greek word *"pharmakeia"* (we get the word pharmacy from it), referring to drugs¹³. Drugs were used to induce spiritual states to commune with demons, and we note that demonic possessions in the New Testament are characteristically *similar* to drug induced frenzies today.

Third, the issue of addiction must be considered. It may not be a sin *per se*, but addiction can lead us to loss control of ourselves. We should not be brought under the power of anything (1 Cor. 6:12), whether legal or not. Many must decide to live with pain rather than be overcome by opiates. Our society teaches that we should not be in pain, but

Finally, Christians who struggle with mental illnesses may not have spiritual solutions, and medication may be as appropriate for them as for physical pain (Ps. 104:15, Prov. 31:6). Medicinal treatment may be necessary to avoid sinful conduct (Gen. 4:7). Our treatment of physical or mental anguish still requires discernment.

¹¹ http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-08-20-pain-pills_n.htm

¹² <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/who-is-responsible-for-the-pain-pill-epidemic>

¹³ <http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume15/TM015091.html>

Class Seven: Abortion

August 17, 2016

Genesis 9:1-6, Psalm 139:16, Exodus 21:23, Deuteronomy 30:19

Introduction

Abortion is one of the most controversial subjects in America today. Truly, at the very base of the debate lies one simple question: is a child unborn a child human? In scientific terms, from conception the unborn child is human, possessing human genetic traits that immediately identify it, by scientific examination, as a part of the human race. Still the question persists: is the creation of the womb entitled to the identity of a human being? If so, then Abortion is murder:

- Murder (Rom. 1:29)
- Abortion
 - Cloning
 - Stem cell research

What is New

- Abortion has stabilized as a divisive issue in the United States. Debate on the subject runs more to peripheral issues such as cloning, stem cell research, and abortion methods.

What Scriptures Reveal

In the Bible the human being's value is identified immediately, in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible: man is made in God's image (Gen. 1:27). This "image" is not one that we mature into, nor is it something that we manifest at birth; it is indiscernible by any method except the Bible's description (Heb. 4:12). Because the "Spirit" is identified with life (Gen. 7:22, John 6:63), we know that the moment human flesh is "alive", it possesses a soul and a spirit. Therefore, we know that the creation of the womb is a human "life" from the moment of conception.

One of the earliest commandments found in the Bible pertains to the sanctity of the human life (Gen. 9:6). Again, the power of this command is identified within the idea that human life is unique on earth; mankind is "made in the image of God". When does this "making" occur? God told the prophet Jeremiah "in the womb I (made) you" (Jer. 1:5). When Moses defined the various degrees of murder in the Law of Moses, he made it clear that an unborn child was to receive equal treatment in the eyes of the law as an adult in Exodus 21:23: "But if any harm follows (i.e. inflicted on an unborn child) then you shall give life for life". The Bible makes clear that all life is sacred, or holy, to God; however, there are suggestions that the value of the life of a child is held with higher esteem by God for its innocence (Mat. 18:6, 19:14):

Many are unaware that issues like cloning or stem cell research are substantively abortion for the sake of science. In these situations, humans are formed in a lab and then destroyed. We cannot know that these are not in the image of God, and should view them in similar situation.

Finally, some believe that birth control is also a form of abortion. This is not universally true. However, some forms of birth control do cause a natural abortion to occur.

Class Eight: Dishonesty

August 24, 2016

John 8:41-45, Acts 5:1-11, Revelation 21:8, Exodus 20:16, Colossians 3:9, 2 Kings 13:11-30

Introduction

The Bible tells us that Satan is the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning. Thus it ties the first recorded sin of lying (Gen. 3:4) with murder.

- Lying
 - Bearing False Witness
 - Hypocritical conduct (1 John 1:10, 1 John 2:4)
 - False prophets

“Every Violation of Truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but a stab at the health of human society” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Examples of Disobedience

- *Satan, Cain, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Hebrew midwives, David, the (unnamed) man of God, Gehazi, Peter, Ananias & Saphira, Cretans*
- With too many people to mention, lying is one of the most common sin of the Bible

What is New

- Lying has become acceptable and expected¹⁴
- Society expects a level of lying¹⁵
- Sermon: Seven Steps of Lying¹⁶

What Scriptures Reveal

Problems with our speech is addressed in James 3. In fact, we could make the case that the entire letter of James is about controlling our mouth, as that is a central idea from beginning (James 1:13, 26) to end (James 5:9,12) of the book. How do we sin with our mouth? We can consider: Lying; Cursing; Vulgarity; Boasting; Evil Speaking (gossip, spiteful speech). The original sin seems to be identified in Scripture (John 8:44) as lying, with Satan being the Father of Lies.

In regards to lying, the Bible makes multiple commandments to us about not doing so (Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 4:25). We also see numerous passages that speak of the consequences of lying, including Ananias & Saphira (Acts 5:1-11) and the Cretans (Titus 1:12). Scripture is thorough in addressing the evil of lying.

We need to consider that lying is not only something we do with our mouth, but our actions. If we claim to be in Christ but do not obey Him, we lie (1 John. 1:10, 2:4, 2:22). Someone who hates their brother is a liar (1 John 4:20). If we have bitter jealousy or selfish ambition in our heart, we lie (Jam. 3:14). Finally, we are warned not to believe a lie, as did the young man of God in 2 Kin. 13:11-26, nor to love a lie (Rev, 22:15, Rom. 1:25).

¹⁴ <http://elitedaily.com/life/culture/are-we-all-little-liars/>

¹⁵ <http://www.usnews.com/news/science/articles/2016-04-18/everyone-lies-but-politicians-do-it-more-often>

¹⁶ <http://www.sunsetchurchofchrist.net/SERMONS/2015/02-08-15%20Christians%20Lying.pdf>

Class Nine: Theft

August 31, 2016

Ephesians 4:28, Exodus 22:1-8, Deuteronomy 24:14-15, 2 Samuel 12:1-4

Introduction

The concept of theft is well known as being one of the Ten Commandments. What many do not appreciate is that stealing also has a number of sub-categories.

- Stealing / Theft
 - Keeping wages / payment / dishonest business
 - "Free loading"
 - Tax fraud
 - Work conduct

Examples of Disobedience

Jacob (?), Rachel & Leah, Achan, David,

What is New

- Dishonesty and theft in the workplace is a major problem¹⁷

What Scriptures Reveal

Thievery is attached to the Ten Commandments, but is understood to be a law common to all men, having existed before Moses (Gen. 30:33, 31:32). Most people would agree that taking something that belongs to someone else is wrong. However, many do not appreciate that theft takes more than one form. It is an often mentioned sin to deprive an employee (or one who does service for you) of their wages (Jam. 5:1-6, Lev. 19:13, Jer 22:13). We might include in this being dishonest in business as a form of theft. If we owe taxes (Rom. 13:7-8), it is theft to not pay them. Many people look at their employers and have no issue cheating them of the work they are owed. God accused Israel of theft when they did not bring God the tithe they owed (Mal. 3:8-11).

Paul alluded to theft when he gave the command that Christians are to labor for their sustenance (assuming that it is possible, Jam. 2:15, 1 John 3:17) in Ephesians 4:28. This lines up with 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12, where Paul says that the one who, rather than working, seeks to live off of the good will of brethren, is committing a sin.

Finally, consider the issue of adultery as being related to theft. Nathan accused David of the theft of another man's wife in 2 Sam. 12:1-4.

¹⁷ http://www.cornerstoneresults.com/RefLib/KnlgeBk/hr_gen_dishonest_in_workplace.htm