



2020-2021 STUDY

The Ten Commandments

HOLY, JUST, GOOD (ROMANS 7:12)

Digging Deep 2020-2021 Men's Bible Study Guide
By Ben Giselbach and Caleb Colley

Quarter Four (June through August)

- June: “You shall not steal”
- July: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”
- August: “You shall not covet”

Instructions for using this material:

1. The Digging Deep study material is designed to facilitate in-depth group Bible study, and not to merely dispense information from “teacher” to “student.” As you go through the study, you will want to have separate paper or a computer on which to record your thoughts. (We do not leave space in this document for your answers to discussion-oriented questions.)
2. There are many tools that will help in digging, such as Bible encyclopedias, Greek and Hebrew lexical books, commentaries, etc. Many are available for free on-line. If you need help accessing such materials, ask others in your group or ask Ben or Caleb. There is a document listing some free resources at calebcolley.com/diggingdeep (see the document titled “On-line resources for Men’s Digging Deep Bible Study”).
3. The Facebook group is an interactive portion of the study. Find it at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1564776240335067/> (or search “Digging Deep Men’s Bible Study” on Facebook). If you don’t have Facebook, you can still contribute to the discussion by emailing your comments to calebcolley@gmail.com or ben@plainsimplefaith.com.
4. As we go through the study together, please provide questions and comments to the nationwide study group on Facebook. It will be great to have an ongoing discussion about the material.
5. A monthly video podcast will be posted on the Facebook page.
6. Glenn Colley will assist us by preaching a sermon each month on the topic for that month’s Digging Deep study. The sermons will be posted at calebcolley.com/diggingdeep.

Month Ten: “You shall not steal”

Introduction

- A. Begin this month’s study by re-reading Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21.
- B. Read Leviticus 19:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:28; and 1 Peter 4:14-16.

I. The command.

- A. Using Hebrew lexical tools, do a study of the word translated “steal” in Exodus 20:15. Also, look up the Greek word translated “steal” in this verse. What do these words mean?
- B. Notice the comprehensive nature of the eighth commandment. It forbids stealing from all groups at all times. Consider that, while charity should alleviate honest people’s hunger in any society, theft was wrong *even* in times of hunger.
 - 1. Proverbs 6:30-31. Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; But when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; He must give all the substance of his house.
- C. Find a New Testament corollary to this command. Does the New Testament offer any exceptions to the command to avoid stealing?
- D. What ethical principles in the New Testament—other than the straightforward command not to steal—would prevent a Christian from stealing? Write a paragraph on the biblical principles that would prevent theft. As you write, consider Matthew 7:12 and John 13:34.
- E. In what passage(s) did Jesus personally condemn theft?
- F. Jesus said that thefts come from the heart of a person (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-22). How does theft originate in the heart? In your answer, consider James 1:13-15.

II. The breaking of the command.

- A. Using your concordance or Bible encyclopedia, find at least five circumstances in the Old Testament where a person or group of people violated this command. Did God respond directly in condemnation or punishment? If so, how?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. _____

- B. Stealing may be done by those in a variety of roles, and in connection with a variety of other sins.
1. Find some creative methods by which ancient Jews might have been tempted to break the eighth commandment while appearing not to break it. Consider Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 19:14; 25:13; Proverbs 22:28; Hosea 5:10; Micah 6:11; Mark 7:9-13.
 2. What is notable about the way in which Zacchaeus stole?
 3. What is different about the way in which Barabbas stole? [NOTE: To fully answer, you may need to do some lexical study of the word translated “robber” in John 18:40.]
- C. Which of the qualifications for elders and deacons has to do with the refusal to steal? Consider 1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2.

III. The penalty for breaking the command.

- A. Using your Bible encyclopedia or other resources, write a paragraph discussing the penalty for theft according to the Law of Moses.
- B. What should one do to make restitution when he repents of stealing? In writing a paragraph or two to answer, consider Leviticus 5:14-16; Exodus 22:1-15; Deuteronomy 22:1-3.

IV. The larger context: The Bible teaches property rights.

- A. When a person is denied property rights (e.g., in a communistic or socialistic system of government), what necessarily happens to his ability to do authentic charity? As you answer, in a couple of sentences, consider Ephesians 5:28.
- B. Find at least five passages in the Old Testament that teach explicitly or implicitly that the Israelites enjoyed property rights.
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____

- C. Find at least five passages in the New Testament that teach explicitly or implicitly that God endorses property rights in the Christian dispensation.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

V. Contemporary context.

- A. What are some culturally accepted ways in which people steal in the present day? From whom do people typically steal? How is stealing glorified in popular culture? What is the solution(s) to these and related problems? Write a paragraph addressing aspects of this problem.

Conclusion: Practical application.

- A. Using the material you have developed while “digging” this month, write a class outline or sermon outline to be presented at your congregation.

Month Eleven: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”

Introduction

- A. Begin this month’s study by re-reading Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21.
- B. Read Exodus 23:1.
- C. Review the 10 commandments, and ask yourself which ethical arena each command is designed to protect. Make a list of these. For example, the command “You shall not kill” is designed to protect the sanctity of human life. There may be some overlap between the emphases of the various commandments.
 - 1. The ninth commandment is designed to protect what moral arena?

I. The command.

- A. “Bearing false witness” refers most directly to testifying in a legal matter. False testimony could lead to wrongful death, especially in the Jewish legal system, where the application of retributive justice was based upon the word of two or three witnesses. Find passages that deal with the role of witnesses in Old Testament legal cases, and write a one-paragraph summary of what you find.
- B. And yet, strictly speaking, a person “bears false witness” whenever he makes an utterance (whether spoken, in writing, signed, etc.) contrary to what he believes. This means that a number of expressions that may sometimes be thought to be lies are not actually lies.
 - 1. *Being silent is not necessarily a lie.* Find a case in Scripture where a righteous person was silent.
 - 2. *Ironic statements, hyperbolic statements, and sarcastic statements are not necessarily lies* (they are just different ways of uttering what one believes to be true). Find a case in Scripture where a righteous person innocently uttered one of these kinds of statements.
 - 3. *Unintentional falsehoods are not lies.* Find a case in Scripture where a righteous person innocently uttered a falsehood.
 - 4. Wayne Grudem argued persuasively that *there are a number of nonverbal actions that can be neither true nor false*, and have ambiguous meanings (e.g., leaving the lights on when you leave the house, which may or may not indicate that you are home).¹

¹ *Christian Ethics* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 311.

- C. Does the fact that this command forbids lying against one's *neighbor* narrow the scope of the command in such a way that he may lie to those who do not live close by (in the same *neighborhood*)? Why or why not? (Also, how might the 10th command's usage of the word "neighbor" bear on this issue?)
- D. Write a one-page paper as a textual survey, answering the question, "What does the Bible say about lying?". Discuss at least four passages in the Old Testament, and four passages in the New Testament.
- E. Rahab sinned in lying, but God used her lie to produce a good. [Rahab's faith—not her lie—is commended, alongside the faith of others who sinned (Hebrews 11:30-31; James 2:25-26).] Find another case in Scripture where God used someone's sin to produce a good result, and find a Bible verse that directly teaches that God often uses sins to produce good results.

II. The character of God and the character of the devil.

- A. The Bible teaches that we are to imitate God's character (Ephesians 5:1). Find at least six passages that teach that God does not lie.
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
 - 5. _____
 - 6. _____
- B. The Bible teaches that the devil is a liar and would have us to be dishonest. Find at least three passages that characterize the devil as being a liar and/or encouraging lying.
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

III. Contemporary context.

- A. Describe some contemporary occasions when people are tempted to lie. Typically, a person feels he has license to lie when he expects some disaster to result from his telling the truth. (We may consider extreme "murderer-at-the-door" scenarios, for example,

where innocent people are hidden inside and lives are at stake.) In response to such challenges, consider the following points, seeing whether you can add to the lists of supporting evidence:²

1. Real life is not exactly like artificially constructed ethical problems.
 - a) In real life, there are various possible outcomes, other than the simple, perceived disaster.
 - b) In real life, there are options other than affirming what one believes to be false.
 2. Lying always produces spiritual disasters. If we lie:
 - a) The perceived disaster may not be avoided.
 - b) God will be dishonored.
 - c) People will question our integrity.
 - d) Our moral character of the one who lied will be eroded.
 - e) It will be easier for us to lie in the future.
 - f) Others may imitate our actions.
 3. On the other hand, the refusal to lie always produces great spiritual goods. If we refuse to lie:
 - a) We will have trusted God to bring about good results.
 - b) God will be honored.
 - c) People will grow in their respect for our integrity.
 - d) Our moral character will be strengthened.
 - e) We will be more likely to tell the truth in the future.
 - f) Others may imitate our example.
- B. Do some research to assess the prevalence of plagiarism in our society or in academia in particular. What are some of the large-scale consequences of the epidemic of plagiarism?

² This section adapted from Grudem, *Christian Ethics*, 329-330.

C. How should Bible teachers assess the matter of using material produced by others?

Preachers and Bible class teachers may wonder about how often to cite sources in the congregational teaching context. Consider the following observations:

1. Sermons are a unique kind of presentation, consisting basically of exegesis and application. Sermons are not research papers. Yet there is research involved—in fact, is a general expectation that preachers, giving weekly (at least!) presentations, will be drawing on many sources.
2. All sermons have the same basic text: the Bible. Good sermons draw heavily from this text, no matter who is speaking or what his subject may be.
3. There is a presumption that if one preacher's material would help another, he would be happy for him to *adapt* it for his own use, to save souls (not to sell it).
 - a) Even when using other preachers' material, preachers make a sermon "their own." In producing a sermon, I make another writer's material "my own," and therefore a good deal different from the source material, if:
 - (1) All the words are understood by me.
 - (2) All the words are organized in the way in which I organize material.
 - (3) All the words are expressed as I naturally would, based upon my style and level of understanding.
 - (4) All the words are appropriate to my audience (not the audience of a Web article or a scholarly book).
4. It is important for a preacher to cite sources when:
 - a) It is necessary to cite in order to follow the Golden Rule.
 - b) The audience is expecting a citation due to a particular claim that the preacher may make (e.g., about the percentage of Americans who do or believe x).
 - c) A source is mentioned as an expert or authority on a particular point.
 - d) Citing a source will lend credibility to the message.
 - e) Citing a source will reassure the audience of the preacher's care and effort to inform and exhort.
5. Caution about citing sources:

- a) If we cite an author who is generally unreliable (especially in religious doctrine), we need to avoid leaving the impression that the listeners can trust that writer. We should make some sort of a disclaimer.
- b) We should put more citations in our personal sermon outlines than we provide orally, so that we can return to our sources when necessary or helpful.

Conclusion: Practical application.

- A. Using the material covered in this month's study, develop a Bible class or sermon on the subject of lying and honesty.

Month Twelve: “You shall not covet”

Introduction

- A. Begin this month’s study by re-reading Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21.
- B. One cannot covet and be righteous in God’s sight. Find at least two New Testament passages where Christ’s teachings reiterate this moral code for those living under the New Testament dispensation.

1. _____

2. _____

I. The content of the command.

- A. Using Hebrew and Greek tools, write down a basic definition of the Hebrew word translated “covet” in Exodus 20:17, and the Greek word used for “covet” in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament).

a) חָמַד (*hā-măḏ*): _____

b) ἐπιθυμέω (*epithymeō*): _____

- B. This commandment states the basic principle “thou shalt not covet” and then gives some potential objects of covetousness: (1) neighbor’s house, (2) neighbor’s wife, (3) neighbor’s servants, (4), neighbor’s working animals (ox or ass) and (5) anything else that belongs to the neighbor. This variety of applications encourages us to make a variety of applications in obedience to all the 10 Commandments. Pick three of the other nine commandments, and briefly state how obedience to the 10th command would assist us in keeping each of those three other commands. Then, briefly state how disobedience to the 10th command would lead us to violate each of those three other commands.

II. The character of the command.

- A. All the other commandments can, in some ways and in some measures, be enforced by mankind, but not the 10th commandment. Though man cannot see into the heart of man and know that he is coveting, God can see the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). If coveting is not stopped in the heart it will break out in employment of hands and feet. Find a New Testament passage in which we read either the direct statement or the implication that an unimpeded coveting attitude will develop naturally into coveting actions.
- B. The 10th commandment is convicting. Many individuals are like the rich young man to whom Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You

shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 19:18–19). They likewise readily reply, “All these things I have kept” (v. 20). A person may justifiably insist that he never has murdered, committed adultery, or stolen, however, no self-aware, humble person would insist he never has coveted.

- C. The words of the 10th commandment are surely familiar to us, but think about common examples wherein we could have thoughts that, if not checked by biblical values, could cause us to be guilty of covetousness (and may inherently involve us in various sins prior to the coveting!). We have provided one or two practical examples in each area; you provide another:

1. You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

a) “Their house is so beautiful. Why can’t we have a house that could be out of *Southern Living*?”

b) _____

2. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.

a) “Wow, that woman is beautiful. Why can’t my wife age like that?”

b) _____

3. You shall not covet ... his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey.

a) “I wish my kids were more like their kids.”

b) “Why can’t we go on picturesque vacations like them? We’re lucky if we get to go to our parents’ house during the holidays.”

c) _____

4. You shall not covet ... anything that is your neighbor’s.

a) “Why couldn’t I get a normal family?”

b) _____

- D. The Bible does not prohibit every kind of longing, want, or thought of having something nice or better, but we must guard these thoughts so that we do not lapse into willingness to sin by stealing or by accusing God of giving us too little. When does innocent admiration or desire become the sin of covetousness? Write a one-page answer to this question, incorporating the following two texts:

1. Romans 1:28-31.
2. Selections from the book of Job, showing why he had to repent of accusing God of treating him wrongly.

III. The context of the command.

A. The Bible writers used a number of words that share a field of meaning with the words translated “covet” in Exodus 20:17. With a language aid, define each of these Hebrew or Greek words and find at least one Scripture which uses each word.

1. Hebrew:

a) נָאָץ (’ā·wā(h)): _____

2. Greek:

a) ζηλόω (*zēloō*): _____

b) πλεονέκτης (*pleonektēs*): _____

c) φιλαργγυρία (*philargyria*): _____

B. In your own words, explain the nuances in meaning behind these words. What is the difference between each word?

IV. The casting aside of the command.

A. Revisit the lives each of the following Bible characters and describe the covetous actions of each:

1. Achan
2. David
3. Judas

B. Name two more Bible characters that cast aside the command, “You shall not covet.”

1. _____
2. _____

V. The comprehensiveness of the command.

A. The last of the 10 Commandments, “You shall not covet,” emphasizes that God’s law does not concern itself with our actions alone. “You shall not covet” unqualifiedly

proclaims that our thoughts, feelings, inclinations—matters of the heart—matter a great deal to the Lord. Someone has said that when we break *any* of the first nine commandments, we also break the 10th commandment. Is this true? Why or why not? Use Scripture to support your answer. Consider Matthew 22:37-39 in your answer.

VI. The criteria for following the command.

- A. How do we combat this sin of the heart? There are at least three easy-to-understand biblical principles that help us overcome covetousness:
 1. *Look to Christ and the things above.* If we are seeking heaven, lesser things will pale in comparison (Matthew 6:33). The more we value Christ, the less we will value earthly things.
 - a) Meditate on Hebrews 1:3. Honor, wealth, material possessions, reputation, worldly success – all of these things offer little compared to the radiance of the glory of God in the person of Christ.
 - b) One problem of covetousness is that it can never be satisfied. In contrast, does the pursuit of God offer lasting satisfaction? Use Psalms 103:17 and Matthew 11:28-30 in your answer.
 2. *Seek contentment.* Every good and perfect gift is from God above (James 1:17). If God thought it would be good for us to have more, He would have given us more. Contentment is a rare jewel; once found and treasured, it fills the soul with delight.
 - a) Meditate on Philippians 4:11 and 1 Timothy 6:6, and as you do so, read the book of Ecclesiastes.
 3. *Rejoice in thankfulness.* Thankfulness steers the Christian life away from discontentment. Practically, perhaps the greatest weapon against covetousness is joyful thankfulness.
 - a) What is Paul's answer in Philippians 4:6 to those struggling with anxiety?

Conclusion.

- A. Covetousness is the master of some and a threat to all. If we are covetous, we must repent. The only way to avoid covetousness is to increase both our trust in Christ (Hebrews 13:5) and our love for man (Romans 13:9). Faith in the Lord brings contentment and love dispels the desire to do evil to other people. Do not let covetousness adversely affect your life and eternal destiny.