



### *Seventh Commandment*

For many of us, this might appear to be a simple commandment to keep. After all, we do our best, to be honest in our dealings with others, we return what we borrow, and avoid cheating people out of their property. Yet, the latter part of Luther's explanation may hit a few of us a bit harder.

#### **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.

You see, we are not just to refrain from taking that which does not belong to us, but we are actively called to protect the possessions of others. We learn in Proverbs 14:21 that "Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor." When applied to the seventh commandment this means that we are to be stewards not only of the blessings that God has given to us, but assist our neighbors in the stewarding of the blessings that God has entrusted to them.

This means that we are to treat the possessions of others with as much or more care than our own. Further, Luther is here arguing that we are to seek to improve our neighbors living conditions through our generosity. This means helping our neighbor to get ahead in life just as we seek to get ahead ourselves. Thus our donations to those in need should not be a collection of items that we would discard as unworthy of our own use, but truly items that seek to improve and care for their needs.

In the workplace, this means looking out for one another seeking to help others succeed and progress in their careers just as we desire to do so ourselves.

### *Thoughts for Reflection*

Who are the "neighbors" in your life and how can you seek to protect and improve the blessings that God has provided him/her through what God has blessed you with?