

## DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 10 MAY 2021 – 16 MAY 2021



**UPPER  
HUNTER**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

This week, we are looking at Questions and Answers 110 and 111. These are about the eighth commandment, “You shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15)

Like other commandments we have seen so far, this simple commandment speaks into our lives in many ways. It is not merely about not entering someone else’s house and taking their iPad and laptops. It also means that we do not run Ponzi schemes or cheat on tax returns. Not only that, as the Catechism points out, we are not to pointlessly squander what God has given to us. Instead, we are to treat others fairly, and even share with people in need what we have earned by our own honest and hard work.

God teaches us about possessions and wealth in the Bible extensively. But, as Kevin DeYoung noted, we should not be simplistic about it. For example, we often hear people say, “money is the root of all evil”. But, that’s not what the Bible says. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.” In the Bible, wealth is often times a sign of God’s blessings (think Job, Abraham, Mosaic Covenant, etc), but sometimes it is also a great hinderance to receive the greatest blessing of entering into God’s Kingdom (Mark 10:23).<sup>1</sup> And there are plenty of places in the Bible where we are told to use our wealth for the good of others (Luke 3:10–11, 1 John 3:17, 1 Timothy 6:17–18, and many others). On the other hand, the very fact that God commands us not to steal implies the right of ownership by individuals.

As usual, the problem is often with our own hearts rather than with our bank accounts. Instead of giving into greed, which may result in outright theft or gambling or any other fraudulent activities, we should exercise the opposite of greed, which is generosity. Sharing what we have for the good of others should be Christian’s second nature. No wonder so many charity organisations have been set up and run by Christians. In Ephesians 4:28, even the diligent work ethics is tied to the purpose of helping others in need: “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”

I hope this week’s devotional aid will help us grow in diligence, justice, and generosity.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

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### THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM<sup>2</sup>

#### Lord’s Day 42

#### Q110) What does God forbid in the Eighth Commandment?

A) He forbids not only outright theft and robbery, which governing authorities punish. But in God’s sight theft also includes cheating and deceiving our neighbour by schemes made to appear legitimate, such as: inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God. In addition He forbids all greed and pointless squandering of His gifts.

#### Q111) What does God require of you in this commandment?

A) That I do whatever I can for my neighbour’s good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may help the needy in their hardship.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Kevin DeYoung’s *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p199–201.

<sup>2</sup> The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.

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**LUKE 16:10–13**

*Luke 16:10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. 11 If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12 And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13 No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

Jesus teaches here that we cannot serve God and money. It is probably safe to say that none of us think we are serving money. Yet, we have to make money-related choices every day and some times we will sense a conflict within our minds. "Is this the right way to earn money?" or "Is this the right way to spend my money?" The situations we find ourselves will be diverse, no doubt. A pay-rise which will mean less time to be at church or be with family. A business deal that is favourable to you but not really fair for others involved. Or, spending large sums of money on non-essential things (entertainment, hobbies, travels) repeatedly. Investing in a risky business only because of possible high return. Or squandering money on things like gambling. All these may indicate that we may be serving money because we have been enslaved by the lure of money. But God frees us from such enslavement. Knowing that God looks after us, and that we are destined for a great future in the New Creation, we will be able to earn and use our money more wisely.

**Prayer**

Gracious Father, please forgive me for those times I chose money over You. Please change my heart and direct my thinking so I may know the riches of Your grace and be content with what You give to me each day. And please free me from the enslaving power of greed so I may be generous with what You have entrusted to me to steward. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

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**EPHESIANS 4:28**

*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*

In this passage in Ephesians, we are told a purpose in doing honest work. We tend to think God is only interested in how I work and earn money. So long as I don't steal or cheat anyone, or so long as I am working faithfully and diligently, that's all God's interested in. Not so, this passage says. We work and earn money, not merely to put food on our own table, and certainly not to accumulate more and more luxury items in my house, but in order to help someone in need. If you have been working hard, good. But next time you get your paycheque, consider how (much) you might set aside from your income in order to help someone in need. Perhaps these charity organisations will give you some ideas:

<b>Charity</b>	<b>Who does it help/what does it do?</b>	<b>Website</b>
Voice of the Martyrs	Persecuted Christians	<a href="https://vom.com.au/">https://vom.com.au/</a>
Compassion	Children in poverty	<a href="https://www.compassion.com.au/">https://www.compassion.com.au/</a>
Samaritan's Purse	Disaster relief, children in poverty, resourcing Christian churches	<a href="https://samaritanspurse.org.au">https://samaritanspurse.org.au</a>
Diamond Women	Women in unplanned/crisis pregnancy	<a href="https://www.diamondwomen.com.au">https://www.diamondwomen.com.au</a>
CMS (Church Missionary Society)	Sending and supporting Christian missionaries	<a href="https://www.cms.org.au/">https://www.cms.org.au/</a>