

IF IT IS NOT YOURS, LEAVE IT ALONE!

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

LOVE CONSEQUENCES SIN ACCEPTANCE

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help students know that stealing is a sin and that it carries lots of consequences.

MEMORY VERSE

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mark 12:30-31a, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Even though stealing is not uncommon in preadolescents and teenagers, some will say that they have never taken anything that was not theirs. Maybe they are telling the truth or maybe they have the wrong idea about what is stealing. Some do not know that stealing can be in the form of cheating in games, or copying someone else's work during tests.

Since personal image and being popular are so important to young people, they try to do whatever they can to gain acceptance from their desired peers.

Some are pressured to steal from a store to show how "brave" they are. Others look for better strategies to goof off in class and become the center of attention.

It is important that the students understand that any sort of stealing is a sin to God, whether it is a magazine or a bank. Stealing will always bring negative consequences into their lives, and above all, their relationship with God will be broken.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Exodus 20:15. The eighth commandment is simple and direct: 'You shall not steal'. Sometimes we think we would not have a problem carrying out this law because we have never robbed someone. Regardless, some ignore that this commandment is much more than we could ever imagine. For example, the employee who takes things from the office, even if people do not see or notice, or the person who does not pay their taxes, the friend who borrows money without intending to return it and the student who cheats on an exam. All of these are forms of stealing.

The city of Israel had a concept of property much like ours. For them, property was an extension of the owner itself. Therefore, if you stole property, it was a violation against the people themselves.

Robbing or stealing is a sin against people because we think only of our gain. We forget the needs of our brother or sister. But, it is also a sin against God because we are violating one of his commandments.

Of course, robbing and stealing always come with consequences, whether it is morally, emotionally, familial, even including legal. But, the gravest of consequences is that this sin takes us farther and farther away from God.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Surprise!

Ask the students if they are willing to put all their valuables on a table in the front of the group (watch, ring, money, keys, etc.). Ask those who are willing to put their valuables on the table and then return to their seats.

Show them all the objects and have some students comment on them. Then separate two objects from the group. Return the large group of valuables and hold the two that you took out.

Show the class the two items you kept. Then as if you can keep them because like them very much, then put them in your bag or pocket. When the owners do not agree with what you just did, take advantage of this time and ask them why. Use this activity to help the students understand how people feel when they are robbed. Tell them, "It makes all of us unhappy to have things taken from us, especially when they are stolen from us. We all know that stealing is bad. In today's session we'll see what the Scripture says about stealing." (Be sure to return the valuable objects to the owners.)

Raise your hands!

Ask your students to think of five objects they own that they would not miss if they were stolen. Let a few volunteers say their answers.

Then, have them think of five objects that they do not want taken away from them.

Ask them, "How would you feel if someone robbed you of an object that you have taken care of for a long time?"

Listen to their answers and explain to them that it does not matter the value of the object, stealing always makes people feel insecure. Today's lesson shows us what the Bible says about stealing.

TEACH THE LESSON

Discuss the definitions for 'to steal' and 'restitution.'

Steal: to take someone else's property without permission.

Restitution: return what was stolen or pay the owner what the stolen item was worth.

Then, gather them into small groups to answer the following four questions after consulting the Bible passages.

What is God's law about stealing? (Exodus 20:15).

If we want something, what should we do instead of stealing it? (Ephesians 4:28)

According to the concordance in your Bible, how many times does the word "steal" appear in the Bible?

If a preadolescent steals someone's watch, what should they do to restore the damage?

Give time at the end for them to share their answers with the rest of the group.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Consequences of stealing

Remind the students of various kinds of stealing:

Steal: to take something that is not yours without paying for it.

Copy: to use another person's ideas as if they were your own.

Defraud or Swindle to take something from someone by being tricky or deceitful.

Defame: to discredit someone, verbally or in writing, to damage their reputation.

Vandalism: to damage someone else's property on purpose.

Filch: to steal, especially something of small value.

Give time for your students to read the sentences on Student Activity Sheet #320. Ask them to think about each and write down possible consequences that each type of stealing could bring.

Without a doubt, you will have a variety of answers. But, help them understand that any type of stealing is a sin and can affect our relationship with God. This is the biggest consequence.

Then reflect on the question: "How can you avoid these consequences?" Tell them that it is necessary to ask for forgiveness from God and the person that we hurt. The Bible shows us that restitution is very important. Leviticus 6:5 says, "They must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day they present their guilt offering."

Regardless, the most important way to avoid the consequences is walking away from this kind of this sin.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Encourage the children to memorize it. You can play the invisible word game to help them learn the verse. Start by writing the verse on a chalkboard or whiteboard. Say the verse together, aloud. Then erase a word and say the verse again, inserting the erased word in the appropriate place. Continue erasing one or two words and repeating the verse until all the words are erased. You could give a small prize to those who can say the verse once all the words are erased.

(If you do not have a chalkboard or whiteboard, write the verse on sheets of paper, one word on each sheet and tape it to the wall. Then, instead of erasing a word, take a word off the wall.)

WRAP-UP

Pray

To finish the class, have everyone make a circle so everyone can ask for prayer if they would like. Have a couple of students pray on others' behalf. Then give thanks to God for having given us codes of conduct that help us live correctly in His eyes.

Encourage

Encourage the group to give up every kind of robbing to maintain a firm foundation in their relationship with God.

Invite

Lastly, sing a song or two of praise to end the class. Be sure to encourage them to come for the next session and to bring a friend.