

LEND FREELY, LK.16:1-14, HC.110

Ten Step Program #8

◆**Intro:** Why do some people not mind taking other peoples things? When I was a boy a classmate stole my hot-wheel track! ...and so began my life of delinquency... When we lived in New Jersey, if you didn't bolt it down it was gone in the morning. So when we took a job in Iowa I rode my bike to the church and took it in my office so I could keep an eye on it while I studied ancient Hebrew. I'll never forget when Dale walked in to talk with the new guy. He was to be a close Christian friend for the next decade. His very first words to me as he eyed my bicycle were, "You're not from around here, are ya?" I started to understand later when I rode past the local school where there were literally hundred's of bikes, not a one locked. Some were left there all weekend! Some were left there all winter, just begging to be stolen. Nope. It didn't happen there. Why didn't these people take other peoples stuff?

◆[I suppose there are many psychological reasons for thievery: a sense of power or greed; fear of the future and not having enough; the misconception that having a lot makes people happier. Maybe more.] What's the opposite of stealing? Anyone? the God-follower Paul wrote to the First Century Christians in Ephesus that the opposite of stealing is sharing.

◆*"He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need." Ephesians 4:28, NIV.*

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◆ So what has to die off in us, according to the God's Step 8 for healthy living, is taking other people's stuff. And what has to come to life in us, according to the Step 8, is happily giving to other people. So we will summarize this step with the title "Lend Freely". Lending is a term that captures openness to helping others. We lend a hand. We lend a loan. We even lend our ears and listen to another. The Psalmist says,

◆ *"Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice." Psalms 112:5, NIV.*

◆ How do we overcome being a taker? Simple answer is: Practice being a giver. But how shall we do that?

◆ **1. If I keep my eyes fixed on heaven I can be much more free with the things of earth.** God consistently advises us to set our desires on greater things than, well, things. Matthew 6 is the famous passage about worry in which Jesus reminds us that God takes care of birds and flowers but that he is much more in love with you and me! Seek first the Kingdom, says Jesus, and all the other stuff will work out.

◆ A. No one who sets their eyes on earth is ever very good at being generous. Did you know that, on average the more people make, the less percentage they give away? The people group that gives the highest percent of their income away are those who make under \$25,000 per year (12%). Those who make over \$200,000 per year give the smallest (2.6%). I know, it seems backward, doesn't it? Why do you think that is? ... Perhaps we

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begin to tether our hope to our own provision. A 2012 Boston Globe article asked the following question: Does money change you? "Here in the home of the American dream," the article stated, "most people are convinced that gaining a lot of money ... wouldn't change who they are as people." But is that true? The article reported that a mounting body of research is showing that wealth can actually change how we think and behave—and not for the better. According to the article, rich people have a harder time connecting with others, show less empathy to the extent of dehumanizing those who are different from them. They are less charitable and generous. They are less likely to help someone in trouble. And they are more likely to defend an unfair status quo. Wow!

- ◆ A series of studies from the University of California at Berkley concluded that wealthier people tend to be less compassionate towards others in a bad situation than people from lower-class backgrounds. The article noted that "if you win the lottery and you want to avoid becoming an insensitive lout," there is a simple solution. One of the researchers summarized it this way: "Give at least half the money away." *Britt Petterson, "Why it matters that our politicians are rich," Boston Globe (2-19-12)*
- ◆ B. Now at first glance Jesus' parable seems to encourage us to make shady deals to pad our accounts like the manager in the story he tells in our text. It almost looks like he's saying, "Yo, get

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what you can while you can and then sit on the can!" But that's obviously in contradiction with all the rest of Jesus' own teachings, and of those who follow Jesus. What's really going on is that Jesus is illustrating something he's said in other places...

◆ *"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." Luke 12:33*

◆ *"When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.""* Luke 18:22

◆ Do you see a principle? A common thread? See the phrase "treasure in heaven"? Check that with verse 9 in our text:P

◆ *"I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Luke 16:9, NIV.*

◆ Look toward, get ready for, what's coming later. People sometimes think it's clever to say that those who are heavenly minded are no earthly good. That's actually not true at all.

◆ CS Lewis once said, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next ... Aim at Heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither."

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◆C. Jesus' teaching in our text is moving us from the physical, which we easily get lost in, to the spiritual, which most people easily ignore altogether. He bids us raise our eyes from earth to heaven, from the temporary to the eternal. Let me show you a parallel.

◆verse 4: asks 1) "what must I do" (ποιεω), 2) "so that when", and 3) "they take me into their homes".

◆Verse 9 quite literally reads 1) "do/make (ποιεω) friends", 2) "so that when", and 3) "you have a dwelling." There's even another revealing word in v9 for "gone". It's not just a word for running out. It's the word is εκλιπω, from which we get the word "eclipse." Something is *eclipsed* when something *bigger*, or closer, or better gets in the way of it, or outshines it, holds greater interest.

◆Do you follow the train of thought here? Something greater than this world is the true reality. Something more important than making six figures a year, and owning lots of cool property, or building a bigger business. That something is God's kingdom and it encompasses more than what we have. This is a drop in the ocean. That...is eternity.

◆This is a repeated biblical teaching. You never see a U-haul behind a hearse. When we all face our Maker someday he will not be asking how much we made, or how much we saved, or how big our house is. Material wealth is only a

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tool. What matters is if what I build with it will last into eternity or not.

◆“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” Luke 16:10, 11, NIV.

◆Jesus is saying that what you do with worldly wealth could keep you from living in the Kingdom of God, both here, and there. *How are you looking at the wealth the surrounds your life?*

◆So where are your eyes focused? When you get up to go to work is it the “another day another dollar” philosophy? Is what you see in the future a bigger house, a newer car, or more trips to Mexico? This step in God’s recovery program, of lending freely for the sake of healthy living, is all about our reasons for getting up. If you get up in hopes of someday having a better bicycle, then you will be tempted to take someone else’s from the school yard. If you get up intent upon someday having the biggest business in town, then you will see your employees as financial liabilities, rather than god-given opportunities to do good in the world. If you get up and go to work, and come home with your eyes on Earth, you will push your children into things and careers that look impressive, or pays high wages. But if you get up and go to work and come home with your eyes on

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heaven, you will push your children to learn things that bless their souls and the world. Set your treasure in heaven and your eyes on heaven.

◆**2. I need to stop living as a consumer to start living as a giver.** Think about it. What do we say when we've purchased something at a ridiculously low price? We say "At \$4.50 bucks this was a ... *steal*." That's the terminology of consuming. The world tells you to work hard with your hands *so that you can move on up in the world*. God says work hard with your hands so that you can help needs. (remember Eph.4?)

◆Now, a consumer is someone who uses things up. Like a vacuum cleaner. It's always sucking in. Many folks live as consumers without even realizing it. They live to store up everything they "might" need. They hate the idea of borrowing from someone else. They'd rather have their own. Here are some examples of how you and I might be living as consumers and so breaking the 8Th Commandment...

◆1) We have too much of one thing. For example, maybe they have more jackets than they can ever hope to wear, but you never know, there might come that one day when you get invited to a St Patrick's Day Outdoor Bonanza, so you better hang onto that lime-green leather jacket you NEVER wear. You wouldn't want to be without it then!

◆2) Another example of our consumer mentality. In one year (2003) \$29 billion in losses were reported by retailers.

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Employee theft made up the largest percentage (44%), more than shoplifters! (32%). We steal from our employers! Conversely when employers fail to provide an adequate wage to those lower on the ladder while they themselves have more than they can spend -isn't that also consumerism? God-followers ought to be the best employers, pay the best wages, and work the hardest at helping those under them to do well right along with them.

◆3) How about when you dent someone's car in the parking lot, and no one is around. Do you leave your name and address? Or do you simply steal the value of their property. Burning a copy of a movie for all your friends? Isn't that stealing the value from someone else?

◆ *"If a man borrows an animal from his neighbour and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, he must make restitution.(Exodus 22:14, NIV).*

◆4) How much do we have that really doesn't belong to us at all? Stuff in the garage we've just been treating like it's ours. Tools from work. Items borrowed from your brother and not returned. It might be a spiritual exercise you need to do, to go home and make a list of the stuff in your house that really isn't yours and return it by the end of the month.

◆5) Overcharging is a form of stealing. We take from others by deception because they don't know we're overcharging them. People in sales have a huge challenge in this

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commandment. Do you sell someone something you know they can't afford. Or do you recommend something else. Do you tell the lady she needs 4 new struts for her suspension when she really needs one, but wouldn't know the difference? Listen, that's not God's way.

◆ The LORD detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him. Prov.20:23

◆ 6) How about living on borrowed money you can't pay back, or with bills you simply don't pay off. Oh you'd be glad to pay, if you had the money. But you're strapped right now...on account of that boat you bought, and that new truck because you got sick of last year's color, and told yourself you were being responsible because new things don't break down and cost you as much when they're new. Or those weekends out of town seem to get paid for because, well, everyone does that, and...

◆ **3.** For the healed life, I need to ***use my wealth for someone else.*** When I use my wealth to bless those around me, I live more fully. The Ten Commandments or the Ten Step Program as we've been calling it, is not about restraint, friends. It's about full life. The opposite of being a consumer by nature is being a giver by nature. God's way is not to collect it, but to direct it to where it's needed.

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◆“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Hebrews 13:16, NIV.

◆What would the world be like if big business owners bought warehouses and started up service businesses that didn't make them wealthier, but did give people jobs? That would be a way of sharing their wealth instead of collecting it.

◆Lu 3:11 *"The man with two coats should **share** with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."*

◆What if we worked hard, not so that we could “do better” or have more, but so that we could fill the town with blessings and fulfill our vision to be passionately involved with our community?

◆**Q & A 111 What does God require of you in the 8th commandment?** *That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.*

◆**Conclusion:** Ok. So why is it a good idea for you and I to follow the 8th Commandment? Lets sum it up.

◆1) Over and over God tells us that consumption may fill you but it will never fulfill you. You want to live fulfilled? You need to look to where your life is headed. Eyes on eternity. Not here.

◆2) Why follow the 8th Command? v13 You cannot serve two masters. If we chose the stuff of earth, we will not see God when

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he shows up. If we miss God in this life, we have no hope to enter the next.

◆3) All of human history culminates in the person of Jesus Christ. Our debt to God grows daily. But he paid with his life, lent us his life, so we could be forgiven. Keeping the 8th Commandment is following his example, the example that brings redemption.

◆"And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners', expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." Luke 6:34, 35, NIV.