



"A government big enough to give you everything you want is strong enough to take everything you have."

—Gerald Ford

**16-Jul-21**

## **The Way of Get**

It is in no way shocking to claim that people own things. It is a fact of human existence. People possess money, land, homes, businesses, vehicles, jewelry, stocks and bonds, precious metals, collectibles, and a great deal of "lesser" items like food, clothes, phones, books, tools, and many other things. Many have close relationships with parents and siblings, spouses and children. Humans can claim rights and responsibilities that are theirs from [God](#) or from governments. Some have beliefs, ideas, and intellectual property unique to themselves. Everyone possesses their own lives and health, along with the time over which those lives are spent. It is part of the human experience to have things.

God made human beings in His own image ([Genesis 1:26-27](#)), and He possesses everything ([Genesis 14:19](#); [Job 41:11](#); [Psalm 24:1](#); [104:24](#); [I Corinthians 10:26](#)). While retaining overall ownership of all things, God has given mankind dominion over the earth and its creatures ([Genesis 1:26](#), 28; [Psalm 115:16](#)) as caretakers and stewards—under-possessors, if you will. He allows us to claim possession over things during our time on the earth, and they are ours to [buy and sell](#) or hold and develop as we see fit. We can pass them to our heirs. The Bible is full of examples of people owning land,

homes, gold and silver, businesses, servants, animals, rights to wells, birthrights, etc.

Because God allows and encourages private property, the eighth commandment—"You shall not steal" ([Exodus 20:15](#); [Deuteronomy 5:19](#))—is a necessary, foundational prohibition against having it taken by others. Contrary to some who claim that the command's word for "steal," *gnab* ([Strong's #1589](#)), alludes to a particular form of theft, it is a primitive root that simply means "to take that which belongs to another without his consent." As such, it covers all forms of stealing under any circumstance, including petty theft, fraud, embezzlement, robbery, burglary, and kidnapping.

The commandment's broad declaration means that it applies universally. It forbids, not just the individual, but also families, communities, institutions, or governments from taking what is not theirs. In Israel, God condemns families and tribes for moving or removing boundary markers to gain territory for themselves ([Deuteronomy 19:14](#); [27:17](#); [Proverbs 22:28](#); [Hosea 5:10](#)). His prohibitions concerning usury touch on institutions like banks gouging their customers by charging crippling interest rates ([Exodus 22:25](#); [Nehemiah 5:7](#); [Proverbs 28:8](#); [Habakkuk 2:6](#)).

In another instance, when Israel demanded a king like the nations around them, He illustrates the considerable thefts inherent in human monarchies ([1 Samuel 8:11-18](#)). When they are not taking things by eminent domain, all human governments demand various forms of taxes, levies, fees, and tributes, not to mention the service and sometimes the lives of its citizens or subjects, and these practices tend to become confiscatory. Some monarchies, dictatorships, and communist governments steal *all* private property from their subject peoples. Yes, [Jesus](#) famously advised, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" ([Matthew 22:21](#); see [Romans 13:6-7](#)), implying that taxes have their place, but His answer also hints that there are limits to what Caesar is due. Beyond these limits, governments steal from their people.

However, we do this commandment against stealing a disservice if we consider it merely an economic principle. Like the other commandments, the eighth expands to cover spiritual realities that affect relationships. Like the

sixth and seventh commandments forbidding murder and adultery, this commandment, by prohibiting theft, creates an environment of trust if followed. A person stealing from another breaks that trust, causing loss and perhaps considerable hardship.

Further, the distrust and suffering spawned by theft spread beyond the primary parties involved, ultimately expanding throughout entire societies. Because of stealing and the distrust it breeds, modern America—in fact, the whole of Western civilization—has developed layer upon layer of security systems, officers, mechanisms, and protocols to ensure the safety of people's possessions. The friendly constable walking his beat and neighbors looking out for each other are no longer enough. Lights, bars, locks, and safes are just the beginning of security devices people employ to feel secure. We now have personal identification numbers; passwords; multiple-step authentications; face, fingerprint, or retina scans; and other high-tech security measures just to keep our identities and personal information from being purloined for nefarious purposes! [The world](#) has come a long way since the days of leaving one's home or car unlocked.

It is bad enough that we must put so much time and effort into securing our material possessions, but it is another thing altogether that we must protect our minds and the truth that God has revealed to us ([Philippians 4:6-7](#); [I Timothy 6:20-21](#)). They, too, are at risk! The apostle Paul urges the Colossian brethren, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" ([Colossians 2:8](#)). Jesus Himself warns us in these end times, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" ([Revelation 3:11](#)).

These warnings come as a result of the "way of get" fostered by [Satan](#) the Devil and his minions, both demonic and human. God's way is one of give, of [love](#), of outgoing concern, but the attitude of unconverted humanity, following its compromised nature and Satan's influence, is to take for itself whatever it can. Sadly, that includes trying to undermine and even eradicate our belief in the truth and allegiance to God because those things condemn them and their sinful behaviors.

Realizing the world's pervasive, grasping character, we can understand this commandment to sound a warning that, despite God's prohibition, the world is out to take what is ours, not just physically but spiritually as well. Jesus helps us to understand what we must do:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ([Matthew 6:19-21](#))

His advice? Prioritize our possessions and value God's spiritual gifts and purposes higher than anything else. Those things safeguarded by God will never be stolen.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [The Eighth Commandment](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

Possession of property and the right to own property is a blessing given by God, a principle taught extensively throughout the scripture. The Jubilee (Leviticus 25:9) taught that land which a family had lost through carelessness would be restored on the fiftieth year, enabling a family to gain wealth. When the Israelites clamored for a king (patterned after Gentile form of government), they sought a government that would "legally" steal through confiscatory taxes and eminent domain. American corporations and industries are stolen blind by 'faithful' employees who do not think the company will miss the items they steal. In the past 50 years, the theft-related crimes such as burglary, larceny, robbery, embezzlement, and motor vehicle theft have more than doubled. In America, the annual collective cost for automobile theft is over \$8.6 billion. Surprisingly however, white collar crime dwarfs these figures into insignificance, with employee theft

exceeding \$50 billion. Internet scams have leached \$40 billion annually. Though God Almighty has indicted Gentile nations for violent crimes, He has indicted modern Israel for its gross lack of trustworthiness and its eager tendency to defraud or misrepresent. Inflation is the net or cumulative effect of businesses and corporations stealing legally. Property and possessions are to be gained only by honest labor or hard work, enabling the individual to generously give to those less fortunate. Our Elder Brother Jesus became poor in order to make us rich. To steal is an affront to God's family name.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Tithing: God's Financial System](#)**

by John O. Reid

God has set in place a wonderful system to pay for the promulgation of His truth. John Reid discusses tithing in general, the different tithes and what income is titheable, and answers several common questions on the subject.

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