

God's Plan
for Us

Respect for
Others



Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

Please Pray That

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to respect others by respecting their property.
- Families will foster an attitude of gratitude and contentment to combat the materialism of our culture.
- Parents will have the strength to selfless generosity in a culture of selfishness.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the gifts of life and family.
- Our children will find support inside the family and out to practice self-control and balance.

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The 7th Commandment - Justice & Human Dignity

When I tried to foresee what challenges my wife and I would face as parents, I never imagined that one of them would be stealing. To me, "Do not steal" was such a basic Commandment - sort of like "Do not kill." Only really bad people committed these sins - or people with major psychological disorders. But not my kids.

God has a great sense of humor.

It has happened at least 4-5 times. I found my son playing with a handheld video game that I knew he didn't own. My wife found an MP3 player hiding in his backpack. He showed off a cartridge for a game that a friend "gave him" but for which we don't have a console. Our son was stealing.

Our first thought as parents was, "What is wrong with our son?" After all, the 7th Commandment is so obvious! Our son isn't evil. He **must** be suffering psychologically. So we took him to a family therapist.

That's when our eyes were opened. We came to realize that our son's stealing wasn't as strange as we thought it was. Apparently the 7th Commandment **wasn't** so obvious to 8-year-old boys. After all, we live in a culture of instant gratification. Despite our best efforts as parents not to spoil our children, the very air our children breathe is an atmosphere of immediate gratification. Our children have learned that getting something is good, but getting something NOW is better. They have learned that the goal of life is to be entertained constantly. So why wouldn't they see taking what they want as a viable option in such an atmosphere?



Parents can no longer assume their children know that stealing is wrong. But instead of getting us down, parents can see this change in our culture as an opportunity to teach the deeper meaning of the 7th Commandment.

What are the deeper reasons we shouldn't steal?

1. Stealing not only disrespects someone's physical property, it also disrespects the labor and effort that went into obtaining the property.
2. To love means to "will the good of the other" (CCC 1766). To steal means to want what's good for yourself at the cost of others.
3. Stealing does not only injure individuals. It also injures society by destroying the bonds of trust between people, injuring safety and security, and forcing people to become more isolationist as they look out for themselves.
4. Stealing also destroys our personal character by making us untrustworthy. It has the same effects on us as lying.

So the 7th Commandment is about respect, love, the good of society, and the good of our own hearts.

How do we teach our children to live the deeper meaning of the 7th Commandment? A great place to start is with the virtue of justice. Justice is one of the four Cardinal Virtues. That means that helping our children develop this virtue will make it easier for them to develop other virtues that are related to Justice.

Justice is the virtue of giving to each person what is owed to him or her. This includes paying back debts, giving an honest day's pay for an honest day's work (and an honest day's work for an honest day's pay), and treating others fairly in business dealings. But it also means giving others the respect that is due to them just because they are human beings created in the image of God.

By emphasizing justice to our children, we can build in our children a respect for others that includes a healthy respect for property. We can teach them that people are more important than possessions, and more important than instant gratification.

So how do we teach our children the virtue of Justice?

- Teach your children the difference between fairness and equality. Just because other kids have possessions doesn't mean everyone has the right to those things, and it's not fair to take things from others.
- Encourage your children to show respect to others by using good manners.
- One great way to teach children the value of possessions is to talk about them in terms of the amount of work that goes into buying them. "This video game console costs \$300" may not mean much to a child. But "Mom would have to work 12 hours just to buy this game" shows them the connection between possessions and labor.
- Rather than buying your children things right away, show them the value of working and saving for the things they want.

This article tells about just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the [Teaching the Way of Love](#) program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the [Teaching the Way of Love](#) home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.