

### A Thief in the Night

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a hearty meal they got into their tent and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend awake. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?" Holmes questioned.

Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Chronologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant. What does it tell you?"

Holmes was silent for a moment and then spoke. "Watson, you fool. Someone has stolen our tent!"

#### Monday – Stop Thief!

*"Having lost all sensitivity, they have ... a continual lust for more."* Ephesians 4:19

1. Please read Exodus 20:15. What images come to mind when you think of someone stealing? Has anyone ever stolen from you? What did it feel like?
2. What types of thievery are listed in Exodus 22:1-4? How might some of these punishments seem odd to our modern sensibilities?
3. What is the bottom line in Ephesians 4:28? How does this verse give new dignity to various kinds of work?

**Making it Personal:** Ephesians 4:28 is a mini-picture of the character of God. We cease from stealing, and instead we work so we can give generously to others. What is one practical way you share with someone in need today (or this week)?

#### Tuesday – Honestly Now!

*"Honest scales and balances are from the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making."* Proverbs 16:11

1. Please read Leviticus 19:35-37 and Deuteronomy 25:13-16. What tips can you pick up from these passages for living honestly in today's world? What is a modern day correlation to "scales and weights?"
2. What does Proverbs 16:8 tell you about finding satisfaction? What difficulties do you have in accepting this wisdom and living it out?

**Prayer Focus:** Pray for FBC and for God's people in general. Ask God to help us to be known for our honest dealings with everyone around us.

#### Wednesday – Trying to Pull a Fast One!

*"There are men ... so inveterably dishonest that theft is to them a master passion."* William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army

1. Please read 2 Kings 5:1-12. What had Naaman brought with him (verse 5)? Why do you think Elisha did not go out and receive these gifts before telling Naaman how to be cured?
2. Now read 2 Kings 5:13-16. Why might Elisha have held to his original decision regarding Naaman's gifts?
3. The story conclusion is found in 2 Kings 5:19-27. How did Gehazi violate Exodus 20:15? Do you think Gehazi's punishment is justified? Why or why not? What does this story tell you about God's heart for honesty and integrity?

**Text Insight:** Naaman brought substantial amounts of precious metals; the gold weighed 75 pounds, and the silver 750 pounds. The 10 sets of clothing would have been of very high quality, fit for royal officials.

#### Thursday – My Own Brother?!

*"It is the nature of ambition to make men liars and cheats."* Sallust, 1<sup>st</sup> c. B.C. Roman historian

1. Please read Genesis 25:21-34. How did Jacob take advantage of Esau? In light of Ephesians 4:28, why might Jacob's gesture be considered a form of thievery.
2. What scheme did Jacob's mother Rebekah come up with in Genesis 27:1-17? Verses 18-29 show that Jacob was a willing and active participant. How does he add to his guilt in verse 20?
3. Now look at Genesis 27:30-41. What did this theft mean to Esau? What does verse 36 tell you about Esau's view of the events in Genesis 25:21-34?

**Making it Personal:** Are you satisfied with the blessings that God, your Heavenly Father, has given you, or do you sometimes wish for those blessings you see other people receive? An antidote to thievery and discontent, is the practice of gratitude. God has given you much. Take time today to recognize his generosity and give thanks to him for all he has given you.

#### Friday – The Ultimate Theft

**Tithe**, *noun* - the tenth part of agricultural produce or personal income set apart as an offering to God or for works of mercy." Source: dictionary.com

1. Please read Malachi 3:6-12. What accusation did God bring against his people? What did he promise them if they would turn from their ways?
2. How does Jesus view giving in Luke 21:1-4 and Matthew 6:1-4?

**Text Insight:** Rather than divide her money by giving half to God and hoping to be able to buy some small morsel of food with the rest, the widow gave everything she had.

3. How did Barnabas honor God in Acts 4:32-37? Why do you think Ananias and Sapphira acted as they did in Acts 5:1-11? How do they remind you of Gehazi (from Wednesday's reading)?

**Digging Deeper:** We grow in generosity by changing our habits, one step, one day at a time. What can you do today (or this week) to be more like the widow in Luke 21?

**For the Weekend:** Re-read Exodus 20:15, Malachi 3:6-12 and Ephesians 4:28. Consider how you can honor God with all you have, and trust him to give you more than you'll ever need.