



### The Pencil and the Eighth Commandment

Jeremy had been studying the Ten Commandments for as long as he could remember. The last lesson had been about not stealing, and Jeremy had thought to himself, "God doesn't love a thief, so I'll never steal anything."

The next day at school, he looked across the aisle at Mike. Last week, Jeremy had seen Mike steal something off of the teacher's desk. Now Jeremy decided that Mike didn't follow the Ten Commandments.

Later that day, Jeremy was looking for a book in the library center. He found a book and was turning around to go back to his seat when he saw Mike take his new pencil off of his desk. When Jeremy got back to his desk he asked Mike where his pencil was. Mike said that he didn't know, and it wasn't his job to look after Jeremy's pencil.

Jeremy was very angry and he began to argue with Mike. It ended when the teacher made them stop and sit down in their seats. Jeremy still didn't have his pencil returned to him before it was time to go home.

When he got home, his mother noticed that he was not a happy boy. She asked him what had happened at school. Jeremy told her that Mike had stolen his pencil and wouldn't give it back. "I wish I didn't have to sit across from Mike at school," said Jeremy. "He is a thief and I'll never have anything more to do with him."

Mother put her arms around Jeremy and said, "You know you have been studying the eighth commandment about stealing, and it seems that Mike has disobeyed it. The commandment you will be studying next is the ninth and it says, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.' What do you think that means?"

"Well," said Jeremy, "I guess it means that you shouldn't tell lies about anyone. But I can't see what that has to do with what I told you about Mike. I told you the truth about him, I didn't tell you a lie. He did steal my pencil."

Mother then asked Jeremy if he remembered the lesson that told him that God made everything in His own image, and everything that he made was good. So if God made everything good, did he ever make a thief?

Jeremy had not thought about it that way and it did make sense to him. "Also," said Mother, "Jesus gave us a good commandment that that helps us everyday to decide how to treat other people. The commandment says, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Since Mike is your neighbor at school, Jesus is telling you not to see him as an evil person that steals, but as the person that God created and that person is good."

Jeremy liked all that Mother was telling him and he said that he would start seeing all the boys and girls at school as God's perfect creation.

When Jeremy got to school the next day, he began working on his school papers. Then something really neat happened. Mike leaned over his desk and handed him back the new pencil that he had taken. Mike told him that he didn't want it so he was returning it. Jeremy thanked him and that was the end of any problem between the two boys. Jeremy was so happy that he was not only learning the commandments, but he was using them to help him to see others as they really were, God's perfect creation.

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*Exodus 20:15 "Thou shalt not steal."*