

## Thou Shalt Not Steal

A playlet about the eighth commandment. Useful in class or assembly.

It can stand on its own or as part of a larger theme, e.g. The Ten Commandments or something like 'No-one is an island' which is outlined at the end

You need up to eighteen children.

Beforehand you need to prepare sixteen flashcards. On one side there is the title (capital letters in the list below) and on the other side the flashcard has the basic words of the script.

The advantage of this playlet is that it doesn't need much rehearsing. When you perform the playlet as an assembly, have a row of chairs ready in a convenient place with the flashcards laid out on each chair. At the end of your playlet, the cast take their places, pick up and display in turn the title whilst repeating the sentence each one said when they were acting. In this way the point is reinforced.

### **Flashcards:**

1. *Envyng*: Look at Wayne's pen. I'd like one like that!
2. *Suggesting*: Let's nick it!
3. *Agreeing*: A good idea! I go along with that!
4. *Planning*: We could do it now!
5. *Prompting*: You do it, Sammy!
6. *Daring*: Go on, Sammy! I dare you!
7. *Flattering*: Go on, Sammy! You're good at things like that!
8. *Stealing*: I've got it!
9. *Abetting*: Here quick! I'll take it!
10. *Concealing*: I'll hide it!
11. *Lying*: I didn't see anything!
12. *Covering up*: He was with me all the time!

13. *Keeping Quiet*: (silence)

14. *Excusing*: He was only having a bit of fun sir!

15. *Defending*: It's only a pen.

16. *Justifying*: He deserved to lose it anyway. He's careless. And he's a cissy anyway. And he's a tell-tale.

*ALL*: Finders keepers! Losers weepers!

This is just one set of flashcards but it's fun rehashing it with each new cast and deciding what words to use.

Our playlet includes a child acting the part of 'teacher'. When the seventh character has said his line (adding more if he wishes and, incidentally, using the real names of the actors) the victim takes his work up to the 'teacher' leaving his pen behind. When he discovers the pen is missing he returns to the 'teacher' and announces that it has been nicked. The 'teacher' delivers a suitable series of admonitions and then there is a search. The pen is found on the tenth child and then there are the rest of the statements as the 'teacher' works along the line asking who knows anything about this.

*Question*: Who stole the pen? (Emphasise the involvement of all the characters.)

In class, this can be used when doing the Ten Commandments or as a moral education lesson.

An entertaining short story to read beforehand is George Layton's *Balaclava* story (Longman's Knockouts series).

The teacher dishes out the flashcards, appoints the extra two characters and all the class take part, remaining in their desks. The class pretends to be a class being taught by the child playing the teacher.

The flashcards are numbered so that the children can say their lines in the right order. At the moment of the theft, the victim leaves his pen and takes his work to the 'teacher', but, apart from that, the whole scene can be done with the minimum of movement and very little waste of class time.

### **Development of a theme, 'No-one is an island'**

When using the playlet about stealing for assembly, it can be used as part of a sequence on the theme, 'No-one is an island'.

The 'Naboth's Vineyard' playlet continues the theme of responsibility and involvement. It leads logically on to the idea of teamwork with involvement being to a good end instead of a bad one as in 'Naboth's Vineyard'.

For the idea of teamwork, brief some children to form a football team. When the captain has chosen the team, he asks them each what position they want to play. (Obviously you have set this up beforehand.) Each member asks to be a goalkeeper.

The same point can be made with broken pieces of a watch (the old-fashioned sort with hands, cogs and springs), or any other pieces of machinery. The lesson is that every part has its own job to do and the whole can only function if the individual pieces are doing their jobs.

In church, the next step would be to relate this to the members of the Body of Christ but for secular assemblies in school, this series is a useful reminder of the need for every person in the community to be pulling their weight. A school wouldn't work if it was full of headmasters – it even needs the first years.

Of course, everybody's role changes as time moves on.

A unit that follows on from here is one on the importance of the individual, recognising one's own worth and fulfilling one's own potential.

An entertaining visual aid is to get the smallest and largest persons in the room to take off their jackets beforehand and come on stage wearing the wrong jackets. The point is that education is not just borrowing second-hand ideas, wearing someone else's thinking; it is developing your own thinking, your own beliefs.

An illustration to show how one's own development can be stunted is that good old-fashioned example when you bring in a candle on a plate and a glass. A useful tip: don't forget the matches. Light the candle then place the glass over it. Keep very quiet whilst the glass cuts off the flame from the oxygen and the flame dies. In Biblical terms, sin separates from God. In secular terms, discuss with the children the things that can smother the growth of a person. Do remember that an illustration is only an illustration. It is not a proof. Children get very irritated when adults use demonstrations as proofs.

A Christian development of this theme can use the illustration of stars and planets. Christ is our star. We, like planets, have only reflected light. If we behave as if we are stars, we become planets out of orbit. As Jesus said, 'Without me, ye can do nothing'.

All the traditional Biblical imagery can conclude this series: Vines; Fruits of the Spirit and the whole armour of God, John 15; Galatians 5; Ephesians 6, taking an assembly for each.

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