

***BEAUTIFUL SAVIOR***  
***LUTHERAN SCHOOL***  
***PRESENTS:***  
***PEARLS OF LOVE AND LOGIC***  
***Special Thoughts on Raising Kids***

### **Stealing**

“Oh no, does this stealing incident mean my child is headed for a life of crime?” Few behaviors are more upsetting to parents than stealing. Even occasional stealing by a child causes parents considerable concern.

Like lying, stealing is almost always a childhood phase. Children aren’t necessarily practicing for a career in crime! Most outgrow the behavior if their parents handle the situation calmly, by praising a child for returning stolen objects instead of becoming enraged at the actual act of stealing.

#### **Let Consequences Teach**

Most children will change only when they realize the satisfaction they get from stealing isn’t worth the consequences they must pay for their behavior. Consequences, provided with empathy and sadness in place of anger, go a long way in helping children think about their actions.

When Travis is caught stealing art supplies at school, Dad provides plenty of empathy, while making sure Travis feels the consequences.

Dad: “I’m sorry to hear you’re in trouble at school. I’ll bet that makes you feel real bad.”

Travis: “Yeah, my teacher says I can’t use the art room for a whole month!”

Dad: “I’m sorry for you son, and even though I love you, your teacher is doing the right thing. It’s not fair to others when you take things from the classroom. Maybe you’ll be able to finish your projects next month. I think that’s up to you.”

#### **Chronic Stealing**

When stealing becomes chronic behavior, parents must try to understand the reasons behind this undesirable activity.

Children who steal often feel empty and unloved. Unlike adults, who have several positive or negative ways to fill emotional voids, children have few avenues to remedy the pain and emptiness they feel. Stealing by a child can be translated into the words, “I’m not getting my fair share.” It provides temporary relief from the empty feeling, therefore the behavior may become a habit.

Chronic stealing is a symptom of underlying problems. The solution usually is found in helping the child feel more loved, accepted and recognized.

#### **Spend Extra Time with Your Child**

Plan a special time each week to give your child your undivided attention. Whether you take a walk, play one of your child’s favorite games, or just nuzzle and watch TV together, you will be helping to fill the void your child might be feeling.

Teachers can be enlisted to help by increasing the amount of daily eye contact and recognition provided to your child. You can also request that the teacher avoid unnecessary humiliation of your child, by keeping the consequences for stealing a private matter between the teacher and student.

#### **When Stealing Continues**

If, after three or four months, you see no change in your child’s behavior, professional help may be needed to help identify the underlying reasons for the stealing.

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