

# END-TIMES ISSUES

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

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**#127** Commandment #8 – Obligations (2).

1

## The Eighth Commandment

represents a **category** of instructions that teach us **how to treat people.**

**You shall not steal.**  
Exodus 20:15 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:19

OUR OBLIGATION IS TO **BUILD UP, NOT TO TEAR DOWN!**  
(Not doing this is to "steal.")

**The "Negative" part:**

- ⇒ You shall not take, damage, or waste anything that belongs to you or to another person—whether money, possessions, time, talents, reputation, or dignity.

**TODAY'S FOCUS**

**The "Positive" part:**

- ⇒ Instead, you shall work diligently to build up and protect what God has entrusted to you and to others, and use all your gifts responsibly, for doing what is good.

2

### LIKE MANY OTHER COMMANDMENTS...

- Our duty is to **REPLACE** ⇒ 

conduct compatible with <b>DEATH</b>	with	conduct compatible with <b>LIFE.</b>
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- ✓ **Crossing over the boundary**, from the realm of **DEATH**.  
AND THEN:
- ✓ **Staying inside the boundary**, in the realm of **LIFE**.
- Followers of Jesus will **want** to do this!
  - ✓ God has embedded within them the desire and ability to do this. (See Philippians 2:13.)
  - ✓ It's the **UNSAVED** who prefer to spend their time **OUTSIDE** the boundary—in the realm of **DEATH**, unwilling to repent.

**SIN & DEATH**

3

### AS WE CONTINUE OUR LOOK AT THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM...

**You shall not steal.**  
Exodus 20:15 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:19

We will remember that **SCRIPTURE is our final authority!**  
(The catechism helps us organize what we find in Scripture.)

⇒ Today's question... **"What can I do to show my love for God, and gratefulness for what he has done?"**

- ✓ Since God has offered us such a wonderful salvation, and he is the source of our comfort and joy, in life and in death... how could we *want* to respond in any other way?

⇒ The answer is much shorter than the question about what we **should not do!**

- ✓ Since people living in sin have invented *so many* ways to sin, it takes much longer to deal with them.

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⇒ When God **saves** people, he **changes** their values.

- ✓ Even our *attitude* toward doing what is right **changes** (even though our "flesh" keeps protesting against the change).
  - » The **unsaved** person typically views "following Jesus" as a burden; the **saved** person doesn't.
  - » The **saved** person's "burden" is the need to fight the "flesh," our old habits, and the attacks of the devil. It's not *righteousness* that burdens us, but *sin* and all its effects!

⇒ Jesus offers us a choice! Keep our **heavy** burden, or choose his **light** burden!

**"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

Matthew 11:28-30 (BSB)

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⇒ If God has **changed** our values... obeying this commandment **ceases** to be a burden!

- ✓ **Previously, as unsaved people**, we considered it *too burdensome* for us to obey it. *Slavery to sin* seemed much easier!
- ✓ **But now, as people who are "born of God,"** his "seed" is now in us (1 John 3:9; we could call it "spiritual genetics"). We begin to *trust* God, to *love* God, and to *want* to do his will.
- ✓ **The result?** ① We no longer treat "following Jesus" as something to be avoided! ② We find ourselves *fighting* our old "selves."

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome, because everyone born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.

1 John 5:3-4 (BSB)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

6

### THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT "POSITIVE" OBLIGATIONS:

- The Westminster Catechism, as we might expect, gives us a large number of specific applications of this commandment to various areas of life. It has a greater focus on *details*.
- The Heidelberg Catechism, in contrast, condenses all our obligations into three interrelated *principles*. If we let these (and what they imply) guide our lives, we will successfully follow the Eighth Commandment.
- ✓ These three principles can be summarized by the *second* greatest commandment. But *how* we express them in life will also be influenced by the *first* greatest commandment. (Love for God will *define* the nature of love for neighbor.)

Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the **first and greatest commandment**.

And the **second** is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40 (BSB)

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### Q. What does God require of you in this commandment?

A. That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, ...

- **Who is our "neighbor"?** As we look through Scripture, we discover that this refers to people we *know*, people we *don't know*, and even our *enemies*.
- In obeying this commandment, our focus will be on what is "good" (as *God defines it*). We will *not* want to ① sin against our "neighbor," ② encourage or participate in sin they may be already doing, or ③ tempt them to start sinning.

#### ↳ What does Scripture say?

- **The basic concept.** This means promoting the wellbeing of *others*, not just *our own* wellbeing.

Each of you should look **not only to your own interests**, but also to **the interests of others**.

Philippians 2:4 (BSB)

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**The way we treat *others* has eternal significance!** It will influence what type of "harvest" we will "reap" in eternity: destruction or eternal life. **So don't get weary in doing good!**

THIS PRINCIPLE IS TRUE, BECAUSE THE NEW COVENANT CHANGES ONE'S CONDUCT.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN CONDUCT AND ETERNAL DESTINY.

DON'T GIVE UP DOING GOOD! YOU WILL "REAP" ETERNAL LIFE!

(THEREFORE) DO GOOD TO ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY TO YOUR SPIRITUAL FAMILY!

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. **A man reaps what he sows.**

Whoever **sows** to please their flesh, from the flesh will **reap** destruction; whoever **sows** to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will **reap** eternal life.

**Let us not become weary in doing good**, for at the proper time we will **reap** a harvest if we do not give up.

Therefore, as we have opportunity, **let us do good to all people**, especially to those who belong to **the family of believers**.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NIV)

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- **What does this include?** Protecting what God has given them, when the need arises. The following example focuses mostly on rescuing their animals (= the principle applied in an agricultural society); but the principle would apply to *anything* that belonged to one's "neighbor."

WHEN IT'S LOST AND YOU FIND IT

(UNKNOWN OWNER)

WHEN IT'S LOST AND YOU FIND IT

WHEN HELP IS NEEDED

If you see your brother's **ox or sheep straying**, you must not ignore it; be sure to return it to your brother.

If your brother does not live near you, or if you do not know who he is, you are to take the animal home to remain with you until your brother comes seeking it; then you can return it to him.

And you shall do the same for his **donkey, his cloak, or anything** your brother has **lost** and you have found. You must not ignore it.

If you see your brother's **donkey or ox fallen on the road**, you must not ignore it; you must help him lift it up.

Deuteronomy 22:1-4 (BSB)

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- ✓ This obligation applies even when the "neighbor" is your *enemy*.

If you encounter your **enemy's** stray ox or donkey, **you must return it to him**.

If you see the donkey of **one who hates** you fallen under its load, do not leave it there; **you must help him with it**.

Exodus 23:4-5 (BSB)

- ✓ Our *attitude* toward others must be controlled by "love for neighbor" (as well as "love for God"). This includes when responding to our *enemy's* misfortune.

**Do not gloat** when your enemy falls, and **do not let your heart rejoice** when he stumbles, ...

Proverbs 24:17 (BSB)

- **What this does NOT include:** Anything that violates the "DO NOT" aspect of this commandment.

- ✓ There are many things in the "DO NOT" section that the *world* views as being legitimate and good.

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... that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, ...

- **People often call this the "golden rule."** This essentially summarizes our whole obligation, and would *imply* the other two parts of this catechism's "positive" answer. However, each section has a slightly different (though overlapping) emphasis.
- This section includes our "moral framework" – the *values* and *attitude* that influence *how* we interact with others. Specifically: even when considering how we want to be treated, we need to be "*other*-people focused."

#### ↳ What does Scripture say?

- **The basic principle, as Jesus said it.** (Actually, he was just repeating what the Law and the Prophets had already said!)

**In everything**, then, **do to others as you would have them do to you**. For this is the essence of the Law and the Prophets.

Matthew 7:12 (BSB)

12

- If you don't like people sinning against you... then don't choose to sin against them! Don't violate the "DO NOT" aspect of this commandment!
  - ✓ This includes not only the obvious visible ways of violating the commandment, but also the sneaky "behind the scenes" ways that others might not notice, or even ways that seem legal (from the *world's* perspective).
- Here are some of the moral qualities that we will want to develop. They are the same qualities that we want others to have! (These are not the *only* ones, but are a good place to start.)
  - ✓ **Integrity** – Willing to be truthful and faithful, and to promote justice in our interaction with others.

"These are the things you must do: **Speak truth** to one another, render **true and sound judgments** in your gates, **do not plot evil** in your hearts against your neighbor, and **do not love to swear falsely**, for I hate all these things," declares the LORD.

Zechariah 8:16-17 (BSB)

13

- ✓ Psalm 15 describes many of these *necessary* moral qualities.

Would you like to stand in God's presence?

**LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent?  
Who may live on your holy mountain?**

The one whose walk is **blameless**,  
who does what is **righteous**,  
who **speaks the truth** from their heart;  
whose tongue utters **no slander**,  
who does **no wrong** to a neighbor,  
and casts **no slur** on others;  
who despises a vile person  
but **honors those who fear the LORD**;  
who **keeps an oath even when it hurts**,  
and does not change their mind;  
who **lends money to the poor without interest**;  
who **does not accept a bribe** against the innocent.

**Whoever does these things  
will never be shaken.**

Psalm 15:2-5 (NIV)

14

- ✓ **Restitution** – A willingness to make proper restitution\*, if you *do* sin against your "neighbor." (Since it's also a sin against God, the O.T. requirement also included a "guilt offering.")

"If someone **sins** and **acts unfaithfully against the LORD** by **deceiving** his neighbor in regard to a deposit or security entrusted to him or **stolen**, or if he **extorts** his neighbor or finds lost property and **lies** about it and **swears falsely**, or if he commits **any such sin** that a man might commit—once he has sinned and becomes guilty, he must **return** what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or the deposit entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, or anything else about which he has sworn falsely.

He must **make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value, and pay it to the owner** on the day he acknowledges his guilt."

Leviticus 6:2-5 (BSB)

\* (*Not* the modern-day perversion of "restitution," which often tries to force *innocent* people to pay others that they have *not* sinned against.)

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Restitution (continued) – A New Testament example.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, half of my possessions I give to the poor, and **if I have cheated anyone, I will repay it fourfold.**"

Luke 19:8 (BSB)

- You will view *people* as more important than *religious activities*.
  - ✓ There is a *difference* between religious activities and love for God! Such activities *can* be an expression of *love for God*... but *not* when they get in the way of *love for neighbor*! (There is also a difference between religious activities and *obedience* to God – as seen in 1 Samuel 15:22-23.)
  - ✓ Example: The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).
  - ✓ In the Old Testament, Israel complained that *God* was ignoring their religious activities. God's reply: He ignored them because *they* were ignoring justice, mercy, sharing with the needy, and many other expressions of love for neighbor! (Read Isaiah 58; see also Zechariah 7:4-10; 8:16-17.)

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... and that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.

- This focuses on **how we are to treat those who have experienced misfortune**: with expressions of mercy and compassion. However, it does not include doing things that *reward sinful conduct* under the guise of "showing them mercy and compassion." *Doing this would be a sin against both God and neighbor!*
- Though not expressly stated, we can also include the issue of how we treat *ourselves* – for *that will influence the way we treat others*. If we are preoccupied with *our own selves*, we will be unable to fulfil our obligations to people who are in need. But if we live with God as our focus, we will succeed.

↳ What does Scripture say?

- This "key verse" focuses on both us and our *neighbor*:

He who has been stealing must **steal no longer**, but must **work, doing good** with his own hands, that he may have something to **share with the one in need**.

Ephesians 4:28 (BSB)

17

- Typical verses about sharing:

- ✓ Many verses tell us *who* to share with, *how* to do it, etc.

Now if your **countryman** becomes destitute and cannot support himself among you, then you are to **help him** as you would a **foreigner** or **stranger**, so that he can continue to live among you. **Do not take any interest or profit from him**, but fear your God, ...

Leviticus 25:35-36a (BSB)

**Give generously** to them and do so **without a grudging heart**; ...

Deuteronomy 15:10a (NIV)

- ✓ And if you *don't* do this?

If anyone has material possessions and sees a **brother or sister in need** but has **no pity** on them, **how can the love of God be in that person?** Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:17-18 (NIV)

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✓ Don't forget your own family – especially if you *claim* to be saved!  
 If anyone does **not provide for his own**, and especially his own household, he has denied the faith and is **worse than an unbeliever.**  
 1 Timothy 5:8 (BSB)

- We are **not to encourage sin!**
- ✓ "Sharing" that *encourages sinful conduct* is *itself* sinful conduct. We end up sinning, not only against that person, but also against God, who wants that person to repent! Here is just one example, which shows us that such "sharing" is the *opposite* of "well-doing."

DON'T SHARE!

↓

DOES NOT GO AGAINST

↓

DO GOOD!

For even while we were with you, we gave you this command: "If anyone is **unwilling to work, he shall not eat.**"

Yet we hear that some of you are leading **undisciplined lives** and **accomplishing nothing** but being **busybodies**. We command and urge such people by our Lord Jesus Christ to **begin working quietly to earn their own living.**

But as for you, brothers, do not grow weary in **well-doing.**

2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 (BSB)

- Some passages deal with **difficult situations.**
- ✓ Examples of this are: responding to an enemy who has a genuine need, or responding to injustice. *What should our attitude be?*
- ✓ These verses have a **context**. They do not apply to *all* situations in life! For example, they do not tell us to be gullible, and give to any stranger who randomly walks up to us and asks for something!

**Give** to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what is yours, **do not demand it back.** ...

But **love** your **enemies**, **do good** to them, and **lend** to them, **expecting nothing in return.** Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He is kind to **the ungrateful and wicked.** ...

**Give**, and it will be given to you...."

Luke 6:30, 35, 38a (BSB)

**WHAT ABOUT A FOCUS ON OURSELVES?**

- Enjoying things is **not** a sin ... unless you're doing it in a sinful way!
- ✓ **Everything must be done in a way that honors God.** This "everything" includes the things that God has entrusted to us – not only *possessions*, but also our *abilities, circumstances* in life, etc.
  - » Are we preoccupied with "Me, myself and I"?
  - OR: Is our greatest desire to "Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)?
  - » Are we expressing love and gratefulness to God for what he has entrusted to us, **AND** desiring that *others* prosper and also express love and gratefulness to God?
- ✓ **Basically, we can enjoy things, just like we want others to enjoy things** (= an application of the "golden rule")...

★

If our goal is for God to be honored in all things, that will influence the way we enjoy things, as well as the way we want others to enjoy things.

<< WE WILL HAVE TO LOOK AT THIS ISSUE NEXT TIME. >>

- ✓ In the meantime, consider the following statement.
- ✓ Compare it to what you find in Scripture. To what extent does it agree or disagree with Scripture? (That's what *really* matters.)

IF ALL THAT WE HAVE COMES FROM GOD...  
WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE?

"The logic is clear: if everything originates with God, then our role is neither to hoard nor to boast, but to channel these resources toward others' benefit.

This understanding transforms how we relate to our possessions, abilities, and advantages—they become instruments entrusted to us temporarily, not trophies we've earned or assets we ultimately own."

★ ★ OUR MISSION: ★ ★

LIVE the "POSITIVE" aspect of the Eighth Commandment!

Doing so places us in the "Land of Life and Freedom," where the  *blessings of others* – and even  *our own blessings* – cease to be either a burden or a snare to us...

DO NOT!

LIFE!

★ BECAUSE OUR FOCUS IS ON SOMETHING EVEN GREATER! ★

SIN & DEATH

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- Heidelberg – <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/HeidelbergCatechism.pdf>.

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