



19 Minutes with Luther

The Eighth Commandment

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Introduction to the Lord's Prayer
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The Doxology

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

1. What is God protecting with this commandment? Why is this so important?

gossip

slander

defend

take words and actions in the kindest possible way
2. Define and/or give an example of each of the following, keeping in mind the sense of the Eighth Commandment.
3. According to the following passages, what does God want us to do, and not to do, when we learn of another person's sin?

"Do not betray another man's confidence" (Proverbs 25:9).

"When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself" (Ezekiel 3:18,19).

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matthew 18:15).

“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him” (Luke 17:3).

4. In Matthew 18:15 (above), Jesus states the first of four steps to be followed when disciplining a fellow Christian. What are the other three?
5. Explain the following passages. Give an example of the first. Why is it so difficult to keep one’s “whole body in check,” as mentioned in the second passage?

“[Speak] the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

“If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check” (James 3:2).

6. Evaluate: Jane feels that, in Christian love and for the sake of relationships, she should listen sympathetically when her friend complains to her about others.
7. According to 1 Peter 2:22,23: *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly,”* what did Jesus do to save us from our sins against the Eighth Commandment?

Luther said:

“When I want to harm my neighbor by lying—in body, possessions, honor, or name—this is telling real lies.” (Plass, Vol. 2, p. 870.)

Closing Prayer

Lord, keep us from sins of the tongue into which we so easily fall. Where we have failed, forgive us. Empower us to use the gift of speech in ways that glorify you and benefit others. In our Savior’s name we ask this. Amen.

At home

- Memorize the Eighth Commandment and its meaning.
- Read James 3:2-12 (the tremendous power of the tongue).

Helps

(1) God is protecting the gift of a good name. A person’s reputation is important because it determines whether or not others will respect and trust him. (2) Gossip: any nasty speech, true or untrue, which hurts another’s reputation; slander: to defame another by unfounded verbal attack; defend: to protect another with one’s speech; take words and actions in the kindest possible way: to be nonjudgmental and to give others the benefit of the doubt. (3) Proverbs 25:9: do not gossip the truth to others. Ezekiel 3:18, 19: do not keep silent and allow a person to continue in sin. Matthew 18:15: speak to a person in an attempt to lead him to repentance. Luke 17:3: forgive the penitent. (4) If a fellow Christian continues in impenitence, Jesus instructs us to (Step 2) take one or two others along, (Step 3) tell the church, (Step 4) excommunicate the person, all in an effort to lead the person to repentance. (5) God commands us not only to speak the truth but to do so in love. Examples will vary. It is impossible to keep the whole body in check (that is, to keep from sinning) because we cannot keep our tongues in check. Sins of speech come very easily. (6) Jane is wrong and is attempting to justify and cover her sin. Not only does she allow and encourage her friends to break the Eighth Commandment by listening to them, but she becomes a party to that sin. In addition, she is committing a sin of omission by not putting a stop to gossip and defending others. (7) Jesus saved us by keeping the commandment perfectly in our place—doing what God demands and refraining from what God forbids—and by suffering and dying for our sins of speech.