

# The Eighth Commandment

8. THOU SHALT NOT  
BEAR FALSE WITNESS  
AGAINST THY NEIGHBOR.

## Introduction

The gift of communication allows for much ease and joy in life. Without it there is no baby's first word, no familiar voice on the other end of the phone, no ability to say, "I love you" or "help!" But sometimes speech can be quite damaging and a simple text can hurt more than any fist. Thus God has set down this command.

Opening Prayer: *Heavenly Father, I have indeed transgressed your commandments. I have been impatient in trials. I am unsympathetic and unmerciful. I do not help my neighbor. I am unable to resist sin. I do not tire of doing wrong. Dear Lord, pour out your grace on me and give me your Holy Spirit to help me to avoid being deceitful or spreading harmful information that hurts feelings and ruins reputations. Help me to defend others and to use my words to communicate love and encourage them. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**Lesson Aim:** How does God want us to view the gift of a good reputation?

## Part One

Read Exodus 20:16.

1) What is the Eighth Commandment?

Read Proverbs 11:9, 16:28, and 22:1.

2) Why is a good reputation so important?

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-6—*King Saul's son, Jonathan, and David were good friends. Yet, King Saul was jealous of David and wanted him to be killed.*

3) What did Jonathan do when he first heard of his Father's sinful plan?

4) Then, when Jonathan spoke to Saul, what did he do?

5) What effect did Jonathan's kind words about David have on his Father?

6) What kinds of things does God want us to say when talking about other people?

Read 1 Samuel 20:30-34—*Eventually, Saul grew tired of Jonathan's kindness toward David.*

7) What word in verse 30 best describes Saul's attitude toward his son?

8) What does what Saul says in verse 31 mean? *David is the son of Jesse.*

9) Why does this make Jonathan's kindness toward David even more remarkable?

10) Yet, what does Jonathan continue to do?

11) How did Jonathan repeatedly keep the 8th commandment?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:5-7.

- 12) How does Christian love guide the things we talk about?
- 13) How does Christian love guide the way we listen to others?

*God wants us to take the words and actions of others in the kindest possible way.*

Read Matthew 18:15.

- 14) Instead of talking bad about others, if someone does something wrong against us, what is good for us do?

*God wants us to show others their sins and lead them to repentance instead of gossiping about them.*

**KEY POINT 1** - God wants us to defend the good names of others and to do whatever we can to help them keep their good names if they do something wrong.

**What I've learned so far:**

## Part Two

Read Genesis 39:11-20—*This continues the story we looked at two lessons ago when Joseph denied the temptations of Potiphar's wife to commit adultery with her.*

- 1) How did Joseph obey the Sixth Commandment?
- 2) How did his master's wife feel about that?
- 3) What did she accuse Joseph of to her other servants and to her husband?
- 4) What happened to Joseph?
- 5) How did Potiphar's wife hurt Joseph with her words?

Read Psalm 109:2, Proverbs 11:13, and Proverbs 17:9.

- 6) How do we ruin the good reputations of others? - Look up each of the passages listed to answer this question three different ways.

One way we harm someone's reputation is by (Psalm 109:2)...

One way we harm someone's reputation is by (Proverbs 11:13)...

One way we harm someone's reputation is by (Proverbs 17:9)...

Read 1 Timothy 5:13.

- 7) Another way to break the Eighth Commandment is by...
- 8) What is gossiping?

**KEY POINT 2** - We can damage or even ruin the good reputations God has given to others when we tell lies about them, betray their secrets, or gossip about them.

**What I've learned so far:**

## Part Three

Study questions 108-116 in the Catechism and answer the following questions in your own words.

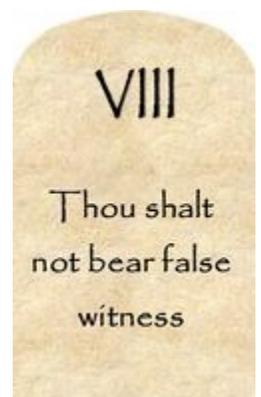
- 1) What different things does God forbid regarding his gift of a good name?
- 2) Why is the Eighth Commandment such an important one for us to remember and to obey?
- 3) What does God mean when he forbids false testimony?
- 4) What does God want us to do when we know about someone's sins?
- 5) How will our love and thanks toward Jesus lead us as Christians to live in regard to this commandment?

### Helpful Passages

Proverbs 31:8-9

What are good things we can do when we talk about other people?

Luke 6:37—Don't judge others without first judging yourself. Point out their sins to them so that you can tell them of forgiveness.



**Main point — God’s gift of a good reputation is very important. I should not ruin another person’s good name, but I should do everything I can to help him or her keep it.**

Final considerations:

- 1) The Eighth Commandment \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. is very limited in scope, since it refers only to false statements made in court
  - B. has a wide application, since it covers every untrue or unkind statement said against someone
  - C. really goes too far, since it calls things sins which are not really even bad
- 2) To take our neighbor’s words and actions in the kindest possible way means that we must \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. never believe that our neighbor has ever done anything wrong
  - B. whenever possible assume that what they did was meant for good, not bad
  - C. never under any circumstances say anything to our neighbor about bad things they do
- 3) When we see someone doing something wrong, we should \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. tell everyone about it right away, so that they will be ashamed of what they have done
  - B. not say anything to anyone, since we don’t want to hurt their reputation or feelings
  - C. speak to them personally to warn them lovingly about what they’re doing wrong before we talk to anyone else
- 4) We should not lie about \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. our neighbors
  - B. good people
  - C. bad people



Agree or Disagree

- 5) \_\_\_ It’s not as bad to say something bad about another person as it is to say something bad about God.
- 6) \_\_\_ It’s impossible to break this commandment if you just keep your mouth shut.
- 7) \_\_\_ As my grandma and Thumper always say, “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all.”
- 8) Why should we not give false testimony against our neighbors?
- 9) Who was the first to practice lies and deceit?
- 10) Think of an example where you should not baselessly assume the worst about someone because of what they do or say, but instead take their words and actions in the kindest possible way. Here’s one:

“Hi, Jenny,” Julie said. But Jenny walked right past her without saying a word. Man, what a grouch, Julie thought to herself. Only later did she learn that Jenny’s dad had lost his job and that the family might lose its house as a result. Imagine how terrible Julie felt then! Don’t jump to sinful conclusions. Assume first that there is a good reason for every person’s words and actions.

**What I’ve learned:**

**Commit to Memory:**

- The Eighth Commandment with Luther’s explanation.
- The Ten Commandments—Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5