

END-TIMES ISSUES



#52 Commandment #1 – Honoring God in all things: Examples (2).

1

ONE OF THE WAYS WE FULFIL THIS COMMAND IS BY HONORING GOD IN ALL THAT WE DO.

"You shall have **no other gods** before Me."
Exodus 20:3 (BSB); also Deuteronomy 5:7.

And **whatever you do**, in word or deed, **do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
Colossians 3:17 (BSB)

So whether you eat or drink, or **whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.**
1 Corinthians 10:31 (NET)

Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people ...
Colossians 3:23 (CSB)

... **in all your ways acknowledge Him**, ...
Proverbs 3:6a (BSB)

HOW? Let's look at some EXAMPLES!

2

BUT FIRST, A REMINDER: THE NEED TO PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME!

⇒ If we aren't willing to find out what Scripture says, we will be **less prepared** for the decisions we need to make.

- ✦ We might even be *blind* to our lack of preparedness; because *only Scripture* can open our eyes to a true understanding of reality.

⇒ This is a lifelong journey of *growing* in the knowledge of the way of Christ.

- ✦ We *will* make mistakes along the way; but we can trust God to use even our mistakes to *ultimately* cause good in our lives. (We won't always see good immediately.)
- ✦ Mistakes? YES – just like in any other area of life. Any learning, skill or ability requires *growing* – and mistakes always occur during the growing process.

3

NOW FOR SOME MORE EXAMPLES!

These are generalized examples; your situation may have other factors for you to take into account.

⇒ "What about doing work for other people – not as a business, but mainly to save them money?"
[Examples: Car repairs, construction projects.]

⇒ "What about helping those people we see on street corners, who are always asking for money?"

(These two examples are similar enough that we can look at them together. Both involve one person doing something that results in another person benefitting from it.)

4

Things to consider:

- There is a sense in which these questions encompass much of what it means to "**love your neighbor as yourself.**"

(**What people tend to ignore** is that the command to "love" applies to **both giver and receiver**. People usually apply it to the *giver* (sometimes taking them on a guilt trip) and ignore the obligations of the *receiver*!)

- Since there are so many possible situations, and they don't all require the same response... Perhaps the best way to look at this issue is to examine various background issues and explore the "boundaries" that define the range of good choices.

✦ **From the Ten Commandments:**

- The principles related to these various ways of "giving" are represented by the command, "Do not steal." (Remember that "negative" commandments also imply a "positive" response.)

5

(Ten Commandments ... continued)

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

- We are going to illustrate how "positive" and "negative" principles are implied by this command:
 - ✓ **This is not a new idea.** We can see it in some of the catechisms [= Scripture teachings, given in question/answer format] that were written centuries ago. Some give brief *summaries*; others give very *extensive* descriptions, along with the Scripture passages to support what they say. We will look at an example from a catechism that is in the middle of this range.
 - ✓ **Our example** is from The Heidelberg Catechism (1563),* updated to modern English.
 - ✓ **Question #110** focuses on the "negative" aspect of this commandment. **Question #111** focuses on the "positive" aspect.

*(<https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/HeidelbergCatechism.pdf>)

6

110 Q. What does God **forbid** in the eighth commandment?

A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. (Exodus 22:1; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:9-10)

This is what we normally associated with the eighth commandment – obvious, visible expressions of stealing.

But in God's sight theft also includes all scheming and swindling in order to get our neighbor's goods for ourselves, whether by force or means that appear legitimate, ...

These types of conduct are less-visible expressions of stealing. Some might even have an appearance of being legitimate. (Examples on the next page.)

The Scripture passages given as support for what is stated in the catechism may include commands and statements, or may just mention the concept(s). Occasionally, if we aren't sure why they chose a specific verse, we can look for others that support the statement.

... such as

inaccurate measurements of weight, (Deuteronomy 25:13-16;
size, or volume; Psalm 15:5; Proverbs 11:1;
fraudulent merchandising; 12:22; Ezekiel 45:9-12;
counterfeit money; Luke 6:35)
excessive interest;
or any other means forbidden by God.

Examples of the less-visible expressions of stealing.

In addition God forbids all greed (Luke 12:15; Ephesians 5:5)

A focus on *attitude* – which *people* might not see (but *God* does).

and pointless squandering of his gifts. (Proverbs 21:20; 23:20-21; Luke 16:10-13)

Misusing what God has given you is also a sin in this category.

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

A. That I do whatever I can for my neighbor's good, (Isaiah 58:5-10; Matthew 7:12; Galatians 6:9-10;
that I treat others as I would like them to treat me, and Ephesians 4:28)
that I work faithfully so that I may share with those in need.

A failure to do these is a violation of the eighth commandment.

Two more examples on the following pages, showing typical examples of "negative" and "positive" applications of this commandment.

(The original texts include Scripture references.)

TWO MORE
CATECHISM
EXAMPLES

#1 – The Baptist Catechism 1693

[Example of a shorter summary.]

Question 79: Which is the eighth commandment?

Answer: The eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal."

Question 80: What is **required** in the eighth commandment?

Answer: The eighth commandment requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward state of ourselves and others.

Question 81: What is **forbidden** in the eighth commandment?

Answer: The eighth commandment forbids whatsoever does or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward state.

(https://gbfpublic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/1693_The-Baptist-Catechism_William-Collins.pdf (Supporting verses can be found at this link.)

#2 – The Westminster Larger Catechism (1648) [Example with much greater detail.]

Q. 140. Which is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, *Thou shalt not steal.*

Q. 141. What are the duties **required** in the eighth commandment?

A. The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose these things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

Q. 142. What are the sins **forbidden** in the eighth commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the eighth commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are, theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving any thing that is stolen; fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing landmarks, injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; oppression, extortion, usury, bribery, vexatious lawsuits, unjust inclosures and depopulations; ingrossing commodities to enhance the price; unlawful callings, and all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbour what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness; inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise idleness, prodigality, wasteful gaming; and all other ways whereby we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate, and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.

(https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Larger_Catechism.pdf (Supporting verses can be found at this link.)

Typical reaction to our Catechism example – the "negative" applications:

- **The part about theft and robbery:** ➡ This is what most people think of, when reading this commandment.
- **The part about the less-visible forms of theft:** ➡ Once people are told this, it tends to make sense to them. (Those guilty of this might oppose the idea.)
- **Greed:** ➡ Probably a mixed reaction. Many people don't think it's that serious, if it's not obvious to others.
- **Misusing the gifts and abilities that God has given you:** ➡ More people will take offense at this concept. We tend to think it's our *right* to do as we please with what we have.

Typical reaction to our Catechism example – the "positive" applications:

- ➡ First of all, most people don't associate *any* of these with the eighth commandment. They may think of them as "good ideas," but NOT consider them morally binding obligations.
- **Doing everything possible for the good of one's neighbor:** ➡ This duty is often ignored, except maybe in a crisis situation. Many people have no interest in their neighbors.
- **Treating the others the same way I want treated:** ➡ People may describe this as the "golden rule"; but not many consider it a *moral obligation*.
- **Working (or doing whatever necessary) with a goal of sharing with others:** ➡ This goes contrary to the way most people live.

IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS WHAT I DO WITH MY STUFF!

IT'S ALL MINE, TO DO AS I PLEASE!

13

(Ten Commandments ... continued)

- ➡ **Ask yourself...** How can the *GIVER* obey this commandment?
How can the *RECEIVER* obey this commandment?

✓ Not wrongfully taking from the other –

- ① directly, or
- ② indirectly (secretly, by trickery, through sympathy and guilt manipulation, etc.),
- ③ by *not* using one's gifts/abilities for the good of others.

✓ Building up others –

- ① pursuing their good
- ② enabling them (when possible) to have the opportunity to prosper or benefit,
- ③ encouraging them to help the truly needy.

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✚ Love for God and neighbor: As pertaining to our "neighbor":

- **Love for God takes precedence;** so any interaction with our "neighbor" that violates love for God is not an option.
- **A good example:** The apostle John's was interested in their *physical* well-being, but it was placed within the context of their *spiritual* well-being... which was already in good condition. "I pray that your *physical* condition will be as good as your *spiritual* condition."

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy **good health** and that **all may go well** with you, **even as your soul is getting along well**.

3 John 1:2 (NIV)

- It's *not* love for God or neighbor, if we ignore the spiritual issues, or if it reinforces (or causes) sin in their lives!
- They might *never* become followers of Jesus. *But if they don't, it better not be our fault!*

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✚ Love for God and neighbor: As pertaining to ourselves:

- **Are we tempted to take our focus off God?** Do we put so much emphasis on what we are doing, that we start to forget God? Don't let "doing good" become an idol!
- **We need to recognize our dependence on God** for the good works that *he* wants to do! Any genuine good we do gets its goodness from God. Even in the very act of doing good, we need to trust God to make it accomplish *his* purposes.
- **Are our priorities right?** Do we act as though a person's temporary *physical* needs are *more important* than their eternal *spiritual* needs? If we do, there will be little long-term value in what we do.

For we are God's handiwork, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance** for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)

16

✚ Romans 8:28 and our circumstances:

And we know that **God works all things together for the good of those who love Him**, who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 (BSB)

- **A willingness to learn through suffering and needs.**
 - ✓ People normally want a life characterized by all the "good" things they can attain – possessions, blessings, health, etc.
 - ✓ Sometimes there are things that we can learn only through **difficult circumstances and trust in God**.

I know what it is **to be in need**, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the **secret of being content in any and every situation**, whether well fed or **hungry**, whether living in plenty or **in want**.
I can do all this **through him who gives me strength**.

Philippians 4:12–13 (NIV)

- ✓ Even if our difficulties are our own fault, trust in God *guarantees* that *in the end*, God will have accomplished good through it.

17

✚ THE WORLD'S DISTORTION OF THE ISSUES.

- **The world's goal is to remove God from the issue.**
- **They lie about human sinfulness ...** They reject this fact... but denying it *cannot* cause it to *stop being true*. **EXAMPLES:**
 - ✓ **People who receive** can take advantage of, and manipulate those who give.
 - ✓ **People who give** can be tempted to have feelings of superiority, or can try to gain a good reputation by giving. (Compare to Matthew 6:1; Acts 5:1–11.)
- **They lie about human nature...** They treat people as helpless victims, instead of having responsibility for their choices.
- People often make choices that turn them into *slaves* of sin. We cannot get freedom from such sins *without* Jesus! By denying it, the world's "solution" *encourages* and *reinforces* that slavery!

(Even when something happens that people truly have no control over, the way they respond to it is a choice.)

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Other common distortions:

- **Promoting HALF-truth ...** It's easy to focus on one issue, and to overlook (or sometimes to deliberately suppress) other related issues.
 - ✓ It's easy to find verses that focus on *helping* others – and to *ignore* verses that point to *restrictions* or *limits* on helping.
 - ✓ It's easy to ignore the *obligations* for the receivers of gifts, and the Scripture *priorities* that apply to all (giver and receiver).
- **Not giving people what they need ...**
 - ✓ The world *can't* clearly understand what people need, because they have rejected what *God* says about people's needs.
 - ✓ People who do not know the situation (or the people involved) often end up giving handouts to people who are *not* actually needy, and leaving those who *are* needy to suffer.
 - ✓ Sometimes the world's giving involves indiscriminate handouts to anyone who wants (or demands) it.

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(More distortions ...)

- **Emphasis on emotions, instead of reality ...** Until Jesus returns, there will *always* be needs in the world. (Compare to Mark 14:7.) You *cannot* "end world hunger" – or any other similar problem.
 - ✓ You have to let Scripture guide your response.
 - ✓ You have to place limits on what you do. (You have to take care of your own needs, or you may destroy yourself in the process.)
- **Replacing individuals and church with government help ...**
 - ✓ Scripture places responsibility on individuals and families and churches, *not* on government.
 - ✓ Perhaps there may be specific ways that a government may be involved. But when they do so, there is always the potential for trespassing into responsibilities they do not have.
 - ✓ A government that does not honor God will eventually turn helping into a means of control.

20

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GIVER/HELPER.

- **The priority of God's people *working together as a family* ...**
- God has given each of us gifts and abilities, to be used for the good of the *group*, not squandered for personal benefit.
- When we work together, there will be fewer "helping" situations that need special attention.
 - ✓ The early church examples (Acts 2:42-47a; 4:32-35) involved *all* the people voluntarily working together.
 - ✓ This can include people taking turns helping *each other* – different groups having needs at different times (2 Corinthians 8:13-14).
- Since God *changes* the hearts and minds of his people – changing their values and desires – there is no need for *coercion*. Helping becomes a *desire*. So the New Testament doesn't have to *force* people to help others, to contribute money to the church or its ministries, etc.

21

- **The priority of *helping one's family* ...** This is our *first* obligation.
- The #1 emphasis was on family – **biological family** and **Christian family**. They know the real needs we have.
- When people need help, the first responsibility falls upon their *physical* family.

Anyone who does not **provide for their relatives**, and especially for **their own household**, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8 (NIV)

- Jesus condemned people who invented religious excuses to *avoid* taking care of their family.

"But you say that if anyone says to his father or mother, 'Whatever you would have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he need not honor his father or mother with it. Thus **you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.**"

Matthew 15:5-6 (BSB)

- When there is no physical family to help, the responsibility then falls upon their *spiritual* family – *if the person qualifies*.

22

• What about unsaved people – "outsiders"?

- Others were *not* refused help (when the need was genuine); but it wasn't the #1 emphasis. Note the priority in this passage:

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and **especially to the family of faith**.

Galatians 6:10 (BSB)

- This "family focus" is seen when the Corinthians (and others) sent financial gifts to the poor in Judea: There were many poor people in Judea; but this donation was specifically for the poor *believers*.

For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among **the saints** in Jerusalem.

Romans 15:26 (BSB)

- When dealing with *unbelievers*, we need to remember the priority that *eternal* salvation has over *temporary* matters. (More is mentioned about this issue elsewhere.)

23

• The issue of *accountability* ...

- We are to help those who have *genuine* needs, not give indiscriminately to anyone who demands something.
- EXAMPLES of helping those who have *genuine* needs: People who are destitute and helpless.
 - ✓ Dorcas helped needy widows (Acts 9:36-39; compare to James 1:27); but Paul gives instructions regarding widows who *should* and who *should not* be helped (1 Timothy 5:1-16).
 - ✓ In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30), the kindness was shown to a person who was wounded and half-dead, not someone who just wanted free room-and-board at the local inn.
- **Responsible evaluation of needs.** When money was given to help a community, it could be given to the *leadership*, who could *responsibly* distribute it. Acts 4:34-37; 6:1-6.

24

No indiscriminate handouts. Scripture discourages:

- ✓ Helping the lazy.
- ✓ Helping those capable of being taken care of by others (i.e., biological family).
- **When giving money to people you don't know...**
 - ✓ NOT blindly giving it to strangers, with no idea of what they will do with it.
 - ✓ Giving it to qualified people or organizations who can determine the genuine needs, and can have accountability.
 - ✓ (Even then, you need to know about the people/organization.)
- **WHY check even people and organizations? Here's an EXAMPLE:**
 - ✓ Today, there are organizations that claim to be collecting donations "for the children." What they don't tell you is specifically *how* they're using the money. Some use it to teach children the morally perverse values that are currently popular in the world.

25

- **The motives of the giver ...** With love for God and neighbor.
 - ✓ Voluntarily (not with coercion), and as able – Acts 4:34; 2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:7. As an expression of willing generosity.
 - ✓ Preferably with "God first" priorities. (They gave themselves to God *first*, before giving to the needy – 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.)
 - ✓ Not for attention; not with an attitude of superiority; not with hypocrisy and lying – Matthew 6:1; Acts 5:1-2.

Misc. Issues:

- **Hospitality ...** A concept found in both Old and New Testaments, which may apply in certain situations.
 - ✓ However, there are significant differences between their society and culture, and ours – and this may require us to find new ways to apply these principles.
- **Foreigners ...** are also to be helped, if needed. But they also have responsibilities. (They are also expected to follow the laws of the land, and not be given special privileges.)

26

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RECEIVER OF HELP.

- **Qualifications for receiving help:** Merely demanding help is not a sufficient reason for receiving it.
 - ✓ **YES!** Invalid or destitute people who qualify – help them! But the receiver must have at least a God-focus!
 - ✓ **FOR A WHILE!** Others: temporarily, if they qualify. They have the responsibility to get themselves out of their situation, as soon as possible.
 - ✓ **NO!** People who make a career out of it! People who don't qualify in other respects. (See the following pages for more examples.)

The big issue: Some people are "needy"; some are "greedy" (or lazy or wasteful, etc.).

Our goal should be: To help the needy... but not the greedy!

27

Some specific examples – Concerning people who receive money...

- ✓ **YES!** People with needs, either: ① with permanent needs (handicapped, disabled, dying, etc.); ② with temporary needs or emergencies.
 - (These people have an obligation to do what is necessary to get out of the bad situation they are in. Helping them may involve teaching/training, not necessarily handouts.)
- ✓ **NO!** People who want free stuff, ① so they can use the money they *already have* for something frivolous; ② so they won't have to work for it (laziness, etc.).
 - (Sometimes these people may claim to want work... but then refuse any work offered them. Or they may claim to be hungry, but want money, not food.)
- ✓ **NO!** People who have decided that they can make more money by pretending they are needy, or by "working the government's hand-out system" ... than by actually working.

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MORE EXAMPLES of help NOT being given:

- **Help was NOT given when other options existed.**
 - ✓ Example: When a person could earn a living (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 – laziness was often the issue).
 - ✓ Example: When there was family available to help, the church didn't do it (1 Timothy 5:4, 8).
- **Help was NOT given* by the church when the person was not qualified or not living in a way that honors God.**
 - ✓ Example of living in a way that honors God (1 Timothy 5:5-6; a description of an old widow who was qualified – 1 Timothy 5:9-10; compare to Anna – Luke 2:36-37). Contrasted to the temptations a younger widow might have. (1 Timothy 5:11-15 is a first-century example of temptations; today, the temptations might be different.)

* (Refers at least to *long-term* help.)

29

When Scripture tells us to NOT help someone
(by direct statement or by example),
there is a reason for it.

If we ignore God in this matter, we may be:

- Hindering God's accomplishment of something important in their (or our) lives.
- Showing that we don't trust what God says in this matter. (Do we *really* think that our judgments are better than his?)
- Sinning against the people we are "helping"; perhaps even encouraging them to sin.
- Encouraging them to *not* change.
- Sharing in their sin: If our blindly-given handouts are encouraging the person to sin, then *we* are guilty of *sharing* in that sin!

30

- **The lazy must repent and be willing to work.**

- ✓ It is sin to be a "sponge." People with a constant "give me" attitude are NOT following Jesus.
- ✓ If they aren't willing to work, Paul says that they should be allowed to starve.
- ✓ Even in the Old Testament: Farmers were to leave part of their crops unharvested, so that the poor could have it. *But the poor had to do their own harvesting.* If they were lazy, they wouldn't get any.

NOW THAT YOU'VE DONE ALL THAT FREE WORK FOR ME, I'VE GOT MORE MONEY TO SPEND ON MY VACATION!

Being willing to pay for work done is an expression of "love for neighbor"!

I CAN'T AFFORD A VACATION... I SPENT ALL MY TIME AND MONEY HELPING YOU...

... BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU COULDN'T AFFORD TO GET THE JOB DONE ON YOUR OWN!

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Conclusion? MISSION?

- ✦ **This issue can be quite complex.** It's related to so much of life!
- ✦ **As we grow in having a "renewed mind"** (Romans 12:2), we will grow in understanding God's will in such matters. We won't have to be spending as much time trying to determine a response.

Let's GROW together!

Learning how to interact with people who have needs:

- ✓ How we should help others.
- ✓ Restrictions in doing so.
- ✓ The obligations of those receiving help.

Based on what we are taught by:

- ✓ The eighth commandment (positive and negative principles).
- ✓ The various other commands, instructions and examples found throughout Scripture.

32

Scripture has so much to say about this issue!

- If you have a tendency to focus on one of the "extremes" – such as *constantly* giving/helping vs. *never* giving/helping – it might be best to focus for a while on Scripture passages that seem to promote the *opposite* of your view. But don't forget the truth of whatever passages you already know, because *both* sets of Scripture passages are true. Working together, they balance out each other, allow for a range of options, and keep us from going beyond what is good and beneficial.
- Sometimes, what we should do will be an obvious "yes" or "no." Sometimes, there will be freedom to decide from a wide range of options. Sometimes, we might *still* be uncertain, and will have to choose our response as best as possible, trust God to use it "somehow" (regardless of the immediate outcome, Romans 8:28), and try to learn from it.

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Credits

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