

END-TIMES ISSUES



#126

Commandment #8 – Obligations (1).

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

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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.

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.


OUR OBLIGATION IS TO **BUILD UP, NOT TO TEAR DOWN !**

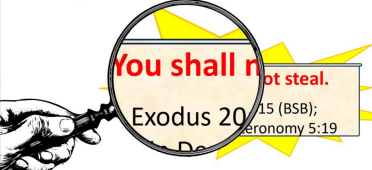
This is an expression of LOVE!

- We described the *Sixth Commandment* (about killing) in similar terms. And probably, several other commandments could be described this way.
 - ⇒ The issue is the *manner* in which the building/tearing is being done.
 - ✓ The Sixth Commandment focuses on what happens to the *person*.
 - ✓ The Eighth Commandment focuses on what happens to the *things* (or abilities, etc.) that belong to the person.
 - ✓ The Ninth Commandment (which we haven't yet looked at) focuses on how *words* build/destroy the person.
 - ⇒ In all these situations, the *right* response is an expression of *LOVE*.

LIKE MANY OTHER COMMANDMENTS...

- The "DO NOT" form of the command *defines the boundary* between LIFE and DEATH.
 - ✓ **Staying inside the boundary** is where you find the realm of LIFE.
 - ✓ **Crossing the boundary** is how you place yourself into the realm of DEATH.
- The *boundary* is GOOD! Our *response* to it *defines* us!
 - ✓ The **SAVED** want to be **INSIDE** the boundary – in the realm of LIFE. They don't want to cross over to the realm of DEATH (though their sinful natures want them to).
 - ✓ The **UNSAVED** prefer to spend their time **OUTSIDE** the boundary – in the realm of DEATH, unwilling to repent. (Only the power of God can change them.)





As we EXAMINE this Commandment:

⇒ Two considerations:

- ✓ **ALL the commandments are related.** Breaking one tends to result in breaking others.
 - » EXAMPLE: Our attitude toward *this* commandment (one that is related to *people*) also reflects our attitude toward *God*.
- ✓ **We need to watch our conduct regardless of what others do!**
 - » When someone else violates a commandment, don't use that as an excuse to "get even with them" and "pay them back" with *your own* violation of a commandment!

ABOUT USING CATECHISMS TO ORGANIZE OUR TOPIC:

- The **teachings of the church*** (i.e., *Scripture*) have been around longer than the church has existed.
- Approximately 500 years ago, there was a strong push to get Scripture and its teachings into the hands of people, so that *all* could know them. *This is why we have things like catechisms.*
- Since they were written in different countries, in different settings and with different goals, there are differences in what they emphasize; but if they support what they say with *Scripture* (rather than with the teachings of people), we can benefit greatly from them.
- We have focused mainly on **two** catechisms:
 - ✓ **The Westminster Catechism** – The "larger" catechism is elaborate and detailed. (Used occasionally.) A "shorter" version is available.
 - ✓ **The Heidelberg Catechism** – A good introduction; invites the person into the "experience" of following Jesus. (Used extensively.)

* (Not referring to the false teachings of apostates, which Scripture warns us about.)

BOTH OF THESE CATECHISMS HAVE VALUE. THEIR DIFFERENCES CAN BE ILLUSTRATED BY THE INITIAL QUESTIONS FOUND IN THEM.

- **Westminster Large Catechism:** (Quite in-depth; good for its logical structure; like saying, "Here are the facts" – which some may view as sounding "cold.")
 - ✓ **Q. 1. What is the main and highest purpose of mankind?**
 - ✓ **A.** Mankind's main and highest purpose is to glorify God, and to fully enjoy him forever.
 - ✓ (It then continues by teaching about God, Scripture, our duties, etc.)
- **Heidelberg Catechism:** (A more personal tone; like being shown how to respond in gratefulness for salvation; words like "I" and "we" bring the reader into the conversation. Shorter, but good for starting on one's "journey" of salvation. "What can I do to 'live-out' my salvation?")
 - ✓ **Q. 1. What is your only comfort in life and in death?**
 - ✓ **A.** That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. →

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This first answer is one of the longest in the catechism. But it sets the stage for everything else.

✓ (continued)

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.

He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

✓ **Q. 2. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?**

- ✓ **A.** Three things: first, how great my sin and misery are; second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery; third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

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HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THIS?

In all this, remember that **SCRIPTURE is our final authority!**

You shall not steal.

Exodus 20:15 (BSB);
also in Deuteronomy 5:19

- ⇒ **Most catechisms examine this commandment using TWO basic questions**, which focus on our "POSITIVE" obligations and the "NEGATIVE" prohibitions.
- ⇒ **However, catechisms often have different emphases.** In this case...
 - ✓ **The Westminster Catechism** lists the facts: first, what the commandment requires; and then, what it prohibits.
 - ✓ **The Heidelberg Catechism** presents the issue in the *opposite* order: first, what God prohibits; and then, what God requires – i.e., how we should *respond*.
 - » The response draws us in to participate: "What can I do...?" After all, if God has offered us such a wonderful salvation, and he is the source of our comfort and joy in life and death... how could we want to respond in any other way?

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- ⇒ **Today, we are going to focus on the NEGATIVE question – the prohibitions**, using the Heidelberg Catechism.

- ✓ The answer to this question tends to be *longer* than the answer to the POSITIVE question. Why? *Because people have invented so many ways to try to violate this commandment!*

PEOPLE JUST DON'T SEEM TO BE SATISFIED WITH THE WAYS THEY ALREADY KNOW ABOUT HOW TO SIN!

They **invent new ways** of sinning, ...
Romans 1:30b (NLT)

- ⇒ **This follows the "REPLACEMENT" pattern we observed at last time.**

- ✓ **"If you want to follow Jesus..."**
 - » **Sinful conduct must be STOPPED.** But this alone isn't enough. By itself, "stopping" leaves a "spiritual void."
 - » **Righteous conduct must be STARTED.** We **REPLACE** the sinful with the righteous. *A person who is saved will want to do this... and will be willing to pursue this!* (After all, it's the *only* option that Jesus gives us; and he embeds within us the willingness.)

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Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery, punishable by law. ...

- This includes violations of this commandment that are visible and obvious. Righteous governments will punish these sins.

↳ **What does Scripture say?**

- **Don't do it!** This prohibition can be found in both Old and New Testaments – not only for the obvious expressions of theft, but also for the less-obvious types.

You must not defraud your neighbor or **rob** him.
Leviticus 19:13a (BSB)

He who has been **stealing** must **steal no longer** ...
Ephesians 4:28a (BSB)

- **The law was designed to restrain such sin** – 1 Timothy 1:9.

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- **There must be full restitution.** Those who commit this sin must *pay back* not only what was stolen, but also must reimburse for all related losses (loss that was caused by the *absence* of what was stolen).
- ✓ Today, if government enforced this requirement, restitution might be in money. Back in Moses' day...

If a man **steals** an ox or a sheep and slaughters or sells it, **he must repay** five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.

Exodus 22:1 (BSB)

(Additional situations are described in other passages.)

- **Do not join a thief in his sin;** don't be an accomplice.
- ✓ That's something that *wicked* people do – Psalm 50:16a, 18.
- ✓ Doing so is self-destructive – Proverbs 29:24.

- **This type of conduct comes from an evil heart.**

For **out of the heart** come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, **theft**, false testimony, and slander.

Matthew 15:19 (BSB)

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- **WARNING: This type of person is NOT saved.** Don't pretend they are.

Do you not know that the wicked **will not inherit the kingdom of God?**
Do not be deceived: Neither [various types of wicked people] ... **nor thieves, ... will inherit the kingdom of God.**

1 Corinthians 6:9a, 10 (BSB)

- ✓ If they **claim** to be saved, **don't associate with them.**

But now I am writing you not to associate with **anyone who claims to be a brother** but is ... [examples of sinful conduct] ... or a **swindler**. With such a man do not even eat.

1 Corinthians 5:11 (BSB)

(Technically, "swindling" probably fits in the next section. But it's the *same type* of conduct as described in this section... just a little less visible. If we shouldn't associate with them when the *less-visible* conduct is involved, then we shouldn't associate with them when it's more obvious!)

Many of the verses that are in this section *also* fit in the next. It's the *same type* of conduct... it's just different in degree of visibility.

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, ...

- There are so many *sneaky* ways that people commit this sin. And new ways keep getting invented. The following verses are typical of what this category includes.
- *People* may view these types of conduct as *legal*. But they are *still* sin, and *God* condemns them.
- Reminder: Much of the focus here involves money and possessions; but this commandment covers *much more* – even intangible things, such as reputation. There are *many* ways to "tear down" a person.

↳ **What does Scripture say? Examples of what God condemns:**

- **Ill-gotten treasures.**

What shall I say about the homes of the wicked filled with **treasures gained by cheating?**

Micah 6:10a (NLT)

- **Taking things through various deceptive measures.**

- ✓ Fortunes obtained through lies.

Making a fortune by a lying tongue is a vanishing mist, a deadly pursuit. (See also the next verse.)

Proverbs 21:6 (BSB)

- ✓ Taking things by force (or by lies).

"Do not **take money by force or false accusation** ..."

Luke 3:14b (BSB)

- ✓ Taking unfair advantage of others – defrauding, exploiting, etc.

You must not **defraud** your neighbor ...

Leviticus 19:13a (BSB)

- ✓ Taking through extortion.

You **extort** unjust gain from your neighbors.

Ezekiel 22:12b (NIV)

- **Hoarding** – which creates scarcity and raises the prices of things.

The people will curse **the hoarder** of grain, but blessing will crown the one who sells it.

Proverbs 11:26 (BSB)

- **Withholding what you owe to someone else.**

- ✓ Wages.

Look, **the wages you withheld** from the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The **cries of the harvesters** have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts.

James 5:4 (BSB)

- ✓ Help that *family members* have a *right* to.

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)

- **Lawsuits** often belong in this category – especially against other Christians!

Instead, **one brother goes to law against another**, and this in front of unbelievers!

The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means that you are thoroughly defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, even against your own brothers!

1 Corinthians 6:6-8 (BSB)

- **Usury – high interest rates.** (The Old Testament *did* permit charging interest under certain circumstances... *but not from the poor*.)

You engage in **usury, take excess interest** ...

Ezekiel 22:12b (BSB)

- ✓ *Who* can stand in God's presence? One of the qualifications...

He **does not charge interest** when he lends his money.

Psalms 15:5a (NET)

- **Large-scale buying up (or taking over) land and houses**, preventing others from having ownership.

[The wicked] has **oppressed and forsaken the poor**; he has **seized houses** he did not build.

Job 20:19 (BSB)

Woe to you who **add house to house** and **join field to field** until **no place is left** and you live alone in the land.

Isaiah 5:8 (BSB)

(They squeeze out everyone else, until they own it all...)

They **covet fields and seize them**; they **take away houses**.

They **deprive a man of his home**, a fellow man of his inheritance.

Micah 2:2 (BSB)

... such as inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume; fraudulent merchandising; counterfeit money; excessive interest; or any other means forbidden by God.

- This is a subset of the previous section, focusing on some specific ways that fraud and cheating are often committed.
- Many of these things involve *deception*. Doing them is *lying* – and this means they are *also* connected to the Ninth Commandment. (This illustrates how commandments tend to be interrelated.)

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
Exodus 20:16 (BSB)

You must not steal. You must not lie or deceive one another.
Leviticus 19:11 (BSB)

Do not lie to each other ...
Colossians 3:9a (NIV)

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What does Scripture say? Here are some examples:

- Businesses that, in themselves, are actually sinful.** Example: Making a profit by selling idols – Acts 19:19, 24-25.
- Moving boundary markers** – this involves infringing on another's property.

Do not move an ancient boundary stone or **encroach** on the fields of the fatherless, ...
Proverbs 23:10 (BSB)

Also:
Deuteronomy 19:14.

- Dishonest weights and measures.**

You must **not use dishonest measures** of length, weight, or volume. You shall **maintain honest scales and weights**, ...
Leviticus 19:35-36a (BSB)

The LORD **hates false scales**, but he **loves accurate weights**.
Proverbs 11:1 (ERV)

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People may find it easy to lie and steal. BUT GOD STILL HATES IT!

Lying lips are detestable to the LORD, but those who **deal faithfully** are His delight.
Proverbs 12:22 (BSB)

... **skimping** on the measure, **boosting** the price and **cheating** with dishonest scales, ...
Amos 8:5b (NIV)

- A warning from God:**

For the Lord your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.
Deuteronomy 25:16 (NIV); see vs. 13-16.

HERE IS **ONE POUND** OF APPLES!



ACTUAL WEIGHT: **ONE-HALF POUND.**

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In addition God forbids all greed ...

- This is a strong desire to *have* something. This can be riches (especially when it seems that "less-deserving" people are getting them). But we could also include having a burning desire for *necessities*, when we place that desire above God.
- Many of the following verses focus on possessions and wealth; but as the catechism says, *all* greed is forbidden by God. This could include money, food, power, sexual desire, and much more.
- Greed involves a strong desire for something. As such, it is related to *covetousness* – which the Tenth Commandment warns us against:

"You shall not covet your neighbor's **house**. You shall not covet your neighbor's **wife**, or his male or female **servant**, his **ox or donkey**, or **anything** that belongs to your neighbor."
Exodus 20:17 (NIV)

22

What does Scripture say?

- Watch out and avoid it!** Having "things" is not what life is all about!

[Jesus] said to them, "Watch out! **Guard yourselves against every form of greed**, for **one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.**"
Luke 12:15 (BSB)

- It's a form of idolatry.** It's *wickedness*; and it will *exclude* you from the Kingdom of God. *You can be sure of this!*

For of this you can be sure: **No immoral, impure, or greedy person** (that is, an **idolater**), **has any inheritance in the kingdom** of Christ and of God.
Ephesians 5:5 (BSB)

Do you not know that **the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived: Neither [examples of wicked people listed here]... nor **the greedy** ... will inherit the kingdom of God.
1 Corinthians 6:9a, 10b (BSB)

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- Don't get jealous when the wicked prosper;** don't desire their riches.

- ✓ It's easy to do! (This person started to, but repented – see v. 16+.)

For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
Psalm 73:3 (BSB); see the rest of the chapter.

- ✓ Remember the future Day of Judgment. Justice is coming!

... **do not fret** when men prosper in their ways, when they carry out wicked schemes. ...
For the evildoers will be cut off, ...
Psalm 37:7b, 9a (BSB)

If your [stolen] riches increase, **do not set your heart upon them.** ... For **[God] will repay** each man according to his deeds.
Psalm 62:10b, 12b (BSB)

24

- **Warnings about greed and "religion."**

- ✓ People can fake loyalty to God, while harboring greed in their hearts. Jesus compared certain religious people to dirty cups and dishes, when he told them:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites!
You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but **inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.**

Blind Pharisee! **First clean the inside** of the cup and dish, so that the outside may become clean as well.

Matthew 23:25-26 (BSB)

- ✓ Fakes may try to use "religion" as a means of getting rich.

... people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and **who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.**

1 Timothy 6:5 (NIV)

25

- **Warnings about riches themselves:**

- ✓ They are easily lost.

Cast but a glance at **riches**, and they are **gone**, for they will surely **sprout wings** and **fly off** to the sky like an eagle.

Proverbs 23:5 (NIV)

- ✓ When you have them, they can be a source of stress.

The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, **their abundance permits them no sleep.**

Ecclesiastes 5:12 (NIV)

- **Even the basic necessities of life** can become a snare! *Don't* be preoccupied with them. Don't have a *greater* focus on *them*, than you have on *God!* (See Matthew 6:24-34.) You *cannot* serve both God and "things" – v. 24. (It's also evidence that you don't *trust* God enough to put him *first*, as in Matthew 6:33.)

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... and pointless squandering of his gifts.

- This shows that the issue is *much broader* than just *possessions*. It *includes everything that God has given you* – including your abilities, opportunities, situations, circumstances, and even your own body.
- There are *many* ways that people can destroy *themselves* – and all of these are violations of this Eighth Commandment principle: "Do not steal." After all, you're stealing – from *yourself* – something that God has given you... and ultimately, *something that belongs to God*.
- Moreover, when we look at the "positive" applications of this command, we will see that God gives us these things not only for *ourselves*, but also for the benefit of *other people*. We *owe* other people something; and a refusal to fulfil our obligation is a form of *theft*. It's not an expression of *love* for God and neighbor!
- Some of these verses describe *self-destructive* actions; *others* describe actions that hurt *others*, in one way or another.

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- ↳ **What does Scripture say?**

- **Laziness** comes in many forms – all sinful. Two examples:

- ✓ The contrast between chasing daydreams and being productive.

The one who works his land will be satisfied with food, but whoever **chases daydreams** will have his fill of **poverty**.

Proverbs 28:19 (NET)

- ✓ Being too lazy to do a good job when at work: Such conduct is *destructive*.

Someone who does **careless work** is as bad as **someone who destroys things**.

Proverbs 18:9 (ERV)

- **WARNING: This sin has eternal consequences!** If people can't be trusted with *small* matters, God won't entrust them with *great* matters – Luke 16:10-12.

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- **How can we deal with this sin?**

- ✓ TO THE LAZY PERSON: Do something productive! (Since laziness is an expression of the "theft" concept, this verse applies.)

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)

- ✓ TO THE OTHERS: Don't reward laziness! If they're unwilling to *work*, then *don't feed them!* (Make them *work* for their food.)

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this command: "If anyone is not willing to work, **neither should he eat.**"

For we hear that some among you are living an undisciplined life, not doing their own work but meddling in the work of others.

Now such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to **work** quietly and so **provide their own food to eat**.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 (NET)

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- **Various forms of wastefulness, prodigality** – all sinful, and destructive.

- ✓ Emphasis on consuming things, rather than on being productive.

The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools **gulp theirs down**.

Proverbs 21:20 (NIV)

- ✓ A constant focus on eating/drinking; going to parties; pleasure ...

Whoever **loves pleasure** will become poor; whoever **loves wine and olive oil** will **never be rich**.

Proverbs 21:17 (NIV)

Do not join those who **drink too much** wine or **gorge** themselves on meat.

For the **drunkard** and the **glutton** will come to poverty, and **drowsiness** will **clothe them in rags**.

Proverbs 23:20-21 (BSB)

- **WARNING: Don't choose to pursue the opposite sin** – being a "workaholic." It also yields a "dead end" life – Ecclesiastes 4:8; 6:2.

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- **Not using one's abilities to help others is *also* a sin.**

- ✓ It means that God's love is *not* in you.

If anyone with earthly possessions sees his brother in need, but **withholds his compassion** from him, **how can the love of God abide in him?**

Little children, let us **love** not in word and speech, but **in action and truth.**

1 John 3:17-18 (BSB)

- ✓ It means that your "faith" is *dead*.

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.

If one of you tells him, "Go in peace; stay warm and well fed," but **does not provide for his physical needs**, what good is that?

So too, **faith** by itself, if it **does not result in action**, is **dead**.

James 2:15-17 (BSB)

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Who's guilty of this sin?

- **It's EASY to see ...**

- ✓ The way these sins are committed by governments, institutions, major corporations... *even other people*.

- **It's HARD to see ...**

- ✓ *Our own* commission of these sins. But this is where it starts... and this is where we must **first** focus.
- ✓ After all, each of us will be judged *individually* – for our sins, as well as for the way our conduct affected others (including the larger entities that we may have been a part of).

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye?

You hypocrite, **first** take the plank out of your eye, and **then** you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Luke 6:41-42 (NIV)

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★ ★ OUR MISSION: ★ ★

THIS WEEK: It would be good to consider any "negative" issues we still need to deal with.

↳ Prepare to **replace** them with POSITIVE things!

★ **IF:** We believe the answers that the catechisms gave for their initial questions, regarding:

- ✓ Our #1 purpose for existence (= Westminster); and,
- ✓ The basis for our comfort in life and in death, and ✓ How we can live and die in the joy of this comfort (= Heidelberg) ...

★ **THEN:** We will be looking forward to understanding better the "POSITIVE" side of this commandment!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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The CATECHISMS (in modern English, accessed 9/16/25):

- Heidelberg – Text of questions #1 and #2: <https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/HeidelbergCatechism.pdf>.
- Westminster (larger) – Text of question #1: https://www.cityreformed.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/wlc_in_modern_english.pdf.

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Brick wall – GDJ / CC0; via [openclipart.org](https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture): <https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture>
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