

Theology Simply Explained — WSC77 “Imaging God as Witnesses Who Maintain and Promote Truth”

Pastor walks his children through Westminster Shorter Catechism question 77—especially explaining and applying how, both as speakers and as hearers, we are to image the truth-telling, testifying God.

Q77. What is required in the ninth commandment? *The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness-bearing.*

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Shorter catechism this week is number 77. What is required in the 9th commandment? The answer is the 9th commandment require at the maintaining and promoting of truth. Between man and man, and of our own and our neighbors, good name.

Especially in witness bearing. Now, the especially in witness bearing reminds us that there are particular people. Who have a duty. Speak the truth. There are many times where it's not our place to speak the truth. The scripture tells us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. There many times where the truth is to be spoken by someone in authority.

Such as in the public worship. And there are times when someone who is in authority over you, Has a right to the truth from you or you, or you have a duty to give the truth to them but often One of the ways that we maintain or promote the truth between man, and man, is by not speaking at all.

Sometimes you'll hear people talk about something called the righteous lie, which of course, is a fiction invented by the devil. Because the Bible tells us that the devil is the father of lying. And that God cannot lie. Where is God does kill, doesn't he? So where we see not all killing is murder, but all lying is sin.

There is no right time to tell an untruth. But there are right times not to give an answer at all. And we have the Lord Jesus. As our great example of that. There are many times that those who are not an authority over him and do not have a right to retrieve the truth from him.

Ask him things and he remains silent. And then there are other times of those who are an authority over him asking and he answers But the maintaining and promoting of truth is something that God himself has. Ordained to do and he has given each of us our place in it.

One day, we hope each of you Will be a parent. Godly mother or godly father. And you will have a duty to tell the truth to your children. Well, in places where it is our duty to tell the truth. Even sometimes not when we're in authorities. For instance, if you see your brother trapped in a sin, Matthew 18, or Galatians 6:1.

You have a duty to your brother to tell him the truth about himself and his sin and what it is before God. But wherever it is our duty to tell the truth. We are to tell the truth. From the heart or to tell the truth sincerely, where to tell the truth?

Clearly. Where to tell the truth. Fully. There are times. Where you tell the truth to someone and their own falsehood and their heart and their false view of things. I will. Be what deceives them? And one. Bible instances of that, that comes to mind is Achan, who saying that he has a great sacrifice for Israel.

Trying to think of other instances in the Bible. There are several But I didn't note any before we started and now none of them are coming to mind.

Another example from church history is when the Nazis came in and they asked the 10 Jews, family where Where the Jews that they were hiding. And they actually had the Jews hiding. And a trapdoor under the table. And they could have just answered nothing. That's one of the places in which someone is illegitimately demanding information and you don't have to give it to them.

But they answered, they are under the table. And God gave them to be deceived by their pride in their arrogance and they laughed at them. In part because they were so much enjoying. Having wicked power. Over those who are before them. And so God gave them over To missing the truth.

That was spoken. Because of the pride in their own hearts. It is not our job to make someone able to believe the truth. And sometimes we may tell the truth. And the Lord may hide. The the truth that is in, what is spoken from someone by means of their sin by means of their dullness.

This of course, often happens in preaching where that which is accurate is spoken. And either it will be misunderstood or understood but not believed. By those who hear. And that is one of the dreadful. Consequences of sin, that it hardens the heart. And so, there are There are duties in the 9th commandment that relate to the telling of truth, and then there are duties in the 9th commandment that That relate to the hearing.

Of truth. And this especially is going to get us into the second part of our answer there. The 9th commandment required, the maintaining, and promoting of truth. Between man. And man and Maintaining and promoting of and of our own and our neighbors, good name. But we are to maintain and promote our own.

Good name, and our neighbors, good name. Now, there are many things about us that are not good. And whether it's with us or our neighbor, Having your right heart towards the infirmities. Well, the bad qualities of ourselves and our neighbors does help us in this because especially now thinking about our neighbor, If we sorrow for him.

Over the evil that is in him or the weakness that is in him and we sympathize with him and we desire for its removal. We desire also for the removal of the dishonor, that might come to him through it. And so we speak to God of it. And we have a sympathetic heart, but we don't speak to others.

We don't give an ill report. There will be times where as a matter of justice or a matter of just authority. Requiring it from us again. And witness bearing. We must tell the truth about them. But even scripture tells us to go speak to our neighbor, not to go speak to others about our neighbor, And so, there is both the reluctance to speak any ill of someone else.

And then, there is the unwillingness to hear. That, which is ill about them. This is something that we can practice, when we think about our conversations, both in the negative, the reluctance to receive a good, the reluctance to receive a bad report, the refusal to hear tail bearing or gossip or slander.

To refusal to listen to someone saying negative things about someone else. And even just saying, That's gossip and my lord doesn't allow me to listen to it. And what a rebukes that is to someone who was sharing their juicy bit of information. But we can also help ourselves by practicing positively and giving a good report

being quick to speak of the graces that others have and of the good qualities that they have had to give.

Thanks to God for the good that he has done too and in and through others and to be ready and eager to hear others, say good things. About our neighbor. So readiness to receive a good report about them and to have I know this is a Well, a buzzword and we don't like to use them but to have a culture.

Or an established and increasing habit with one another. I'm speaking well of one another and being glad to hear, It's good about one another. And so, there's The the duty for maintaining and promoting the truth. Which is very important. First of all, it honors, god, second of all. His truth is the means by which he brings people to fate.

Is truth, is the means by which he makes believers more holy his truth. Is the means by which it makes us wise and to salvation and that's all the truth of his word. But also The truth about his world is necessary. For a right view of him and of ourselves and so forth.

So there's that maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, that is required and that has got honoring and beneficial to us. And then the maintaining and promoting of our own and our neighbors, good name. Which is got honoring. And is beneficial to our neighbor and to us.

And then finally, This last part of the answer, especially in witness bearing now. God himself is the great witness. And all of his creating tells something about himself as creating man in his image, makes a particular picture of himself. He is the one who invented words to communicate to us and even used them first to create before we existed so that we might see and know the power of words and the privilege of being ones who use them.

But the great testimony that God has given of himself, is the Lord, Jesus Christ, the son, who is eternally begotten of the father that became a man. The word became fleshly beheld, his glory, as of the only begotten of the father. And so there's something about witness bearing. That is very, very precious and important and significant in how it connects to God himself, being the great witness and giving his son, as a witness of himself and a witness to his desire for and his carrying out the desire of salvation.

And the Lord Jesus in his speaking, especially testified, not only of himself, but of the father, and the spirit who not only carried men along to speak from God and to record in scripture, the very words of God, but who is also the one who attends all true? Speaking.

About godfather's son and holy spirit and all true. Speaking and explaining of God's word to give us a right view of the father, a right view of the son, a right view of himself, spirit a right view of creation, and a right view of ourselves and of sin, and of righteousness.

And so the holy Spirit, being a great witness And then, The Lord has given us the privilege of being in a situations where we have observed or we know and we have a duty in whatever situation it is to speak that which we have learned from God from his world and especially from his word And so witness bearing is a great duty is a sacred duty because it's one of the ways in which we honor God.

And that's not just witness bearing in judicial situations, although it is that as well. Now, when we are in witness bearing in a judicial situation, we're especially imitating the Lord Jesus. Because in the last day, there are not witnesses. And there are not lawyers and there are not judges plural and there is no jury.

Because the Lord Jesus is the one who is all of those things. And so, when we have a duty in a court situation, whether we are the one who is giving testimony or the one who is prosecuting, the case, or if the Lord should give any of our sons to become judges or any of us to sit on a jury, We are doing something in the giving and receiving of testimony.

That imitates, an office that ultimately belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. And so that is a place where the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man and the maintaining and promoting of our own and our neighbors. Good name is especially focused and especially important in witness bearing.

So what is required of the 9th commandment, the 9th commandment requireeth, the maintaining, and promoting of truth, between, man and man. And of our own and our neighbors, good name, especially And witness sparing.