

Each week of 2019 we will take a brief look at one or more questions from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To read previous weeks' briefs go to oakhillpca.com/wsc

Q. 76. *Which is the ninth commandment?*

A. The ninth commandment is, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*

Q. 77. *What is required in the ninth commandment?*

A. The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness bearing.

Q. 78. *What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?*

A. The ninth commandment forbids whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own, or our neighbor's, good name.

As a reminder, the Ten Commandments serve more than one purpose for God's people. It helps us discover "the sinful pollutions of our nature, hearts, and lives," so that we would have "a clearer sight of the need we have of Christ" (WCF 19.6). The Commandments are designed to break and humble us, driving us to Christ. They also "inform us of the will of God, and our duty" (WCF 19.6). Our duty to keep the Commandments is not a means to earn God's favor, but an outcome of the "subduing and enabling" of the Spirit of Christ within us (WCF 19.7). The Spirit uses the Commandments to sanctify us in holiness.

The Ninth Commandment ought to drive us to our knees. We may not perceive ourselves to be liars, but we ultimately fall short of all that this command requires. In a nutshell, this command requires us to use our words for the positive building up of ourselves and others in truth and not tear down.

Once again, Paul expands on this command in his ethical teaches in Ephesians 4. He writes, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." (4:29). This goes way beyond merely avoiding telling lies.

The depth of God's disdain for "corrupting talk," often in the form of lies, is seen in many Proverbs. At least two of the "seven abominations" that the Lord hates are extensions of the ninth commandment (cf. Prov. 6:16-19). And lies are condemned in Proverbs 14:25, "A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful."

If we had the space here, I would direct us to the fuller explanation of the ninth commandment in the Larger Catechism, Questions 144 & 145. These Scriptural answers demonstrate that this command directs us to stand for the truth, hold charitable esteem for our neighbors, unwillingly admit an evil report, discourage tale-bearers, flatterers, and slanderers, keep lawful promises, not call evil good or good evil, not hold onto scornful contempt, etc.

Let us be broken over the shortcomings of our speech.