



Formative Parenting

Cultivating Character in Children

A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR – COMMANDMENTS 7, 8, 10

Scripture hit the nail on the head with the teaching: “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates a brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? (1 John 4:20) Via the “new commandment of love” Jesus connected love for God with loving your neighbor as your own self. Commandments 7, 8 and 10 express loving ways to maintain *right relations* with our neighbors.

What does love of neighbor look like? Through the teaching and example of parents, children first learn how to transfer this abstract word “love” into practical, observable actions. It is in the home that children first experience love and are reared to respect the rights of others. With parental guidance children grow in the ways of nurturing, maintaining and restoring “right relations” with family members and, in time, with other members of society.

Love for neighbor includes being honest with others, respecting their rights and boundaries, and preserving their good reputation. Commandments 7 and 10 are companion-commandments; both focus on respecting ownership of physical property (possessions) or intellectual property (ideas, abilities...). The seventh commandment, “*You shall not steal,*” is an action-commandment while the tenth commandment, “*You shall not covet your neighbor's goods,*” refers to thoughts, desires and attitudes that lead to denying other persons their rights. The eighth commandment, “*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,*” is a stand-alone commandment. It highlights that truth is the foundation of any right-relationship. Neighbors have a right to the truth and they have a right to determine their reputation.

Seventh and Tenth Commandments

Another way of expressing these commandments is: Respect the property of others. Be satisfied with your own circumstances or work to improve your situation. Respect others by considering their possessions as representations of their person. Do not take from them or misuse what rightfully belongs to them. Maintain a proper balance and respect for material things.

Explain to children how the following behaviors or attitudes break or strain “right relations” with people:

- stealing (taking or unjust keeping of what belongs to others), shoplifting, damaging the property or possessions of others, or gambling rashly
- cheating (defraud or swindle), plagiarism (to represent as your own the ideas and language of someone else), or copying the academic work of another student

- envy (sadness when someone has what we want), greed/avarice (excessive desire to possess material things) or stinginess
- wasting time at work, unjust strikes, breaking a contract, conning others, or embezzlement
- wasting food or environmental resources or polluting the earth

Help children to understand that love for neighbor creates a responsibility:

- to keep promises and contracts
- to work for justice and to make reparation for injustice
- to make restitution for stolen or damaged goods, and to compensate for property loss

Eighth Commandment

Betray a confidence

A personal code for being a good neighbor might sound like this: I will speak the truth in all things, and especially in what concerns the good name and honor of another. I will not lie nor will I betray a confidence. I will not tell the truth about a person's private business to people who have no reason to know it. I will safeguard the reputation of others.

Explain to children how the following behaviors or attitudes break trust and, therefore, interfere with "right relations" between people. The practices are listed in alphabetical order:

backbiting/slandering (false and mean-spirited remarks to damage somebody's reputation)

boasting/bragging/exaggerating

calumny (lying about someone to cause others to judge him falsely)

detraction (telling someone's faults and failings)

gossip (spreading rumors; talking about people behind their backs)

hypocrisy (pretending to have publicly approved attitudes or qualities that you do not really possess)

lying and false flattery (to speak or act falsely with the intention of deceiving)

rash-judgment (assuming something negative about a person without sufficient evidence)

sarcasm (sharp, cutting remarks intended to hurt or make fun of a person)

tattling (telling someone's secret, personal or private information), and breaking a promise

A final thought to ponder . . . "Hearts have been broken by harsh words spoken that sorrow can never set right!"

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