

"Tell The Truth"
THE NINTH COMMANDMENT
Exodus 20:16; Ephesians 4:25
Mililani Community Church
Pastor Rick Bartosik
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By nature we are all liars. But God is a God of truth and He is interested in His children being people who tell the truth. *"The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful"* (Proverbs 12:22)

The researchers for the book The Day America Told The Truth concluded: "Americans lie. They lie more than we had ever thought possible before the study. But they told us the truth about how much they lie. JUST ABOUT EVERYONE LIES – 91 PERCENT OF US LIE REGULARLY. The majority of us find it hard to get through a week without lying. One in five can't make it through a single day – and we're talking about conscious, premeditated lies. In fact, the way some people talk about trying to do without lies, you would think that they were smokers trying to get through a day without a cigarette! When we refrain from lying, it's less often because we think it's wrong (only 45 percent) than for a variety of other reasons, among them the fear of being caught (17 percent).

We lie to just about everyone, and the better we know someone, the likelier we are to have told them a serious lie..." (pp. 45-46, The Day America Told The Truth)

Here are some of the startling conclusions made by the authors of this book:

- There are more serious liars right now (liars who do harm) than at any time in our nation's past.
- Lying has become a cultural trait in America. Lying is embedded in our national character. That hasn't really been understood around the world. Americans lie about everything – and usually for no good reason.
- The majority of Americans today (two out of every three) believe there is nothing wrong with telling a lie. Only 31 percent of us believe honesty is the best policy.

These conclusions are backed up by the events of this past year in America. You will remember the biggest stories in the news in 2002 had to do with some of the largest companies in America being brought down and collapsing because their top executives lied and abused their power.

Enron, once called America's most innovative company, went bankrupt last year. Their spectacular collapse resulted from the disclosure that for years their top financial officers had been disguising financial losses as profits. The managers who were responsible for bringing the company to ruin escaped with millions of dollars because they sold their stock before its price plummeted—all the while encouraging others to keep buying the stock. Thousands of average employees lost all their retirement savings (I am sure those employees would not agree with the majority of Americans that there is nothing wrong with telling a lie). WorldCom, another big company filed the largest bankruptcy in U.S. history last year after \$9 Billion dollars in falsified accounting was exposed.

So we can see that the words of the Ninth Commandment are very relevant to our world today... *"You shall not bear false witness..."* To bear false witness means to tell a lie.

I. GOD'S COMMANDMENT TO TELL THE TRUTH

Strictly speaking this Commandment was originally focused on PERJURY – that is telling a lie in a court of law. But the PRINCIPLE of holding the truth sacred goes beyond the law court and applies to all of life. Leviticus 19:11, which comments on the Ten Commandments, says simply, *"Do not lie. Do not deceive one another."*

The Bible is very clear that God hates lying in any form. Proverbs 12:22: "The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful." And the verse that our kids memorized this morning, "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies."

What does God hate lying so much? God hates falsehood so much because He is a God of truth. Hebrews 6:18 says it is "impossible for God to lie." Jesus said, "I am the ... truth." John 17:17 says, "Your word is truth." Lying contradicts and outrages the character of God.

Since God is a God of truth, He is very concerned that His people be people of truth. Satan is called "a liar and the father of lies" in John 8:44. When we tell lies we are falling in line with the character of Satan. God's Word is clear about the coming punishment for those who practice lying and deceit – Ps. 101:7

II. THE REASONS PEOPLE BREAK THIS COMMANDMENT

Some people tell lies in order to hurt or take advantage of others. We saw one of those kinds of lies this past week. A woman named Donna Walker contacted a family in Indiana and represented herself as their long-lost daughter – who had disappeared 17 years ago while playing hide-and-seek. It all turned out to be a cruel hoax. She was in jail last week with a \$100,000 bond.

Other people tell lies to protect their reputation or make themselves look good before others. There was a store manager who heard his clerk tell a customer, "No, ma'am, we haven't had any for a while, and it doesn't look as if we'll be getting any soon." Horrified, the manager came running over to the customer and said, "Of course we'll have some soon. We placed an order last week." Then the manager drew the clerk aside. "Never, never, never say we're out of anything – say we've got it on order and it's coming! Now, what was it she wanted." "She wanted RAIN," said the clerk.

Some people tell lies to hide embarrassing or incriminating actions. There were four High School boys who decided to skip morning classes and go to the beach. After lunch they showed up at school and reported to the teacher that their car had a flat tire. Much to their relief she smiled and said, "Well, you missed a quiz this morning, so take your seats and get out a pencil and paper." Still smiling, she waited as they settled down and got ready for her questions. Then she said, "First question – which tire was flat?"

III. THE WAYS WE BREAK THIS COMMANDMENT

- Slander
- Flattery
- Exaggeration
- Misleading statements
- Silence when something untrue is said about another person – I Samuel 19:4-5

IV. THE DESTRUCTIVENESS OF LYING

(See *Disciplines of Grace*, Kent Hughes)

- Character destruction
- Relationship destruction
- Church Destruction – Ananias and Sapphira
- Soul Destruction – Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15

Application: **Ask** God to watch over your mouth and to help you speak the truth. **Meditate** on the Bible verses found in the bulletin today. **Examine** your life. **Vow** that by God's grace you will be lovingly truthful in all your relationships with others.

Meditate on the following Scriptures

- "Keep me from deceitful ways" (Psalm 19:29)
- "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3)
- "Keep falsehood and lies far from me" (Proverbs 30:8)
- "He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool" (Proverbs 10:18)
- "With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape" (Proverbs 11:9)
- "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret" (Proverbs 11:13)
- "The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them" (Proverbs 12:6)
- "The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful" (Proverbs 12:22)
- "He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends" (Proverbs 17:9)
- "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts" (Proverbs 18:8)
- "Better a poor man whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse" (Proverbs 19:1)
- "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free" (Proverbs 19:5)
- "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity" (Proverbs 21:23)
- "An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips" (Proverbs 24: 26)
- "Like a coating of glaze over earthenware are fervent lips with an evil heart" (Proverbs 26:23)

The World Needs Men ... (and women)

Who cannot be bought;
Whose word is their bond;
Who put character above wealth;
Who possess opinions and a will;
Who are larger than their vocations;
Who do not hesitate to take chances;
Who will not lose their individuality in a crowd;
Who will be as honest in small things as in great things;
Who will make no compromise with wrong;
Whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires;
Who will not say they do it "because everybody else does it":

Who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;
Who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning and hardheadedness are the best qualities for winning success;
Who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular;
Who say "no" with emphasis, although the rest of the world says "yes."
- Ted Engstrom, The Making of a Christian Leader

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"
Exodus 20:16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(from Decision Magazine)

OBSERVE

1. What was the penalty for perjury in biblical law? (Deut. 19:15-21)
2. What will be the destiny of those who practice lies? (Rev. 21:8)
3. Why should believers not lie, according to the Apostle Paul? (Col. 3:8-10)

INTERPRET

1. In John 8:42-47 Jesus is speaking about unbelief and the "father of lies." What connection does Jesus draw between the two?
2. Read Psalm 12. In what specific ways does our culture reflect the conditions listed in this Psalm?
3. Ephesians 4:25 tells Christians not to lie but to speak truthfully to each other. Ephesians 4:15 tells us to speak the truth in love. Are there circumstances when speaking the truth may be wrong or unloving? Explain.

APPLY

Have you ever wronged someone by lies or deception? If so, ask God for forgiveness, and if possible ask forgiveness from the person or people that you hurt. Pray that God would make you a person of honesty and integrity.

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