

TEN COMMANDMENTS
(Part Nine)
Respect For Truthfulness

Text: Exodus 20.16 (in pew Bible p. 74 / in large print Bible p. 115)

Intro: -lying breaks the tissue of faith *that holds every human community together* (Lewis Smedes).

-Part Nine in our series on Ten Commandments.

- Part One = No Other Gods / *respect for God's authority.*
- Part Two = No Idols / *respect for God's uniqueness.*
- Part Three = Respect For God's Name / *God's essence & person.*
- Part Four = Respect For Rest / *sanctuary of time for enhancing relationship.*
- Part Five = Respect For Family / *cornerstone of society.*
- Part Six = Respect for Life / *"love and help others live."*
- Part Seven = Respect for Sexuality / *"authentic wholeness"*
- Part Eight = Respect for Property / *"caretakers of people & things"*
- Part Nine = Respect for Truth
 - **illust.** *Blurting Out Truth*

-Laura Schlessinger: crisis of ethical vacuum *in our world.*

- ethics provide direction, meaning, purpose and value to life.
- help us to fulfill our mandate *to represent God in this world* (Genesis 1.26, 27).

-pattern for the Ten Commandments:

- 4 God-ward = only one God, no idols, name not in vain, keep Sabbath holy.
- 6 man-ward = honour parents, respect life, moral fidelity, honesty, truthfulness, no coveting.

Take Home Point:

-Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth ... (Ephesians 6.14).

- Lewis Smedes: instead of "live and let live" – "love and help others live."

- transform prohibitions *into positive **directions.***

-so let us turn to the ninth commandment / ***direction:*** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour ... (Exodus 20.16):

- lying breaks the tissue of faith *that holds every human community together* (Lewis Smedes).
- truthfulness demands a lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies *above deception and falsehood.*

1. MEANING OF RESPECT FOR TRUTHFULNESS

-the wise pray for truthfulness.

- Remove far from me falsehood and lying (Proverbs 30.8).
- sanctity of truth in all areas of life.

-what is truthfulness?

- truthfulness is facing up to the truth that lies plain before the heart.
- deception is a fine art:
 - on one hand we know that something is true and on other hand we deny it.
 - one moment we know something and the next we deny that we knew it.
 - see truth just long enough to feel its threat and then close it off—refuse it.

-who is my neighbor?

- the person in need of your mercy (Luke 10.37) *and your truthfulness*.
- defend and promote the honour and reputation of my neighbour.
- defend people whose lives are hurt by gossip, innuendo, and rumour.
 - Like a war club, a sword, or a sharp arrow
is one who bears false witness against a neighbor (Proverbs 25.18).
 - When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and – though able to testify ... - do not speak up, you are subject to punishment (Leviticus 5.1).

-is falsehood ever justified?

- Abram & Sarai (Genesis 12.10 – 13) – save his life & secure a place in Egypt.
 - didn't trust God in move to Egypt & exposed Sarai to danger.
- Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1.17) – lied to save boy infants.
 - disobeyed an immoral law that undermined the sanctity of life.
- God & Samuel (1 Samuel 16.2) – save his own life from Saul's murderous rage.
 - prevented certain murder.
- Jonathan (1 Samuel 20.28) – spare David's life from Saul's murderous rage.
 - prevented certain murder & exposed himself to danger.

-Bible seems to permit falsehood when immoral laws directly undermine sanctity of life.

- must remember that the New Testament does not explicitly endorse this.
- to lie for anything less than preserving life in the face of certain death is not endorsed explicitly or implicitly in the Old Testament & New Testament.
- to avoid falsehood in order to avoid denying God, even though it costs my life, is endorsed explicitly or implicitly in the O.T & N.T. (e.g. Daniel's friends & Paul).

-the wise pray for truthfulness.

- Remove far from me falsehood and lying (Proverbs 30.8).
- Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth ... (Ephesians 6.14).

2. WHY WE MUST RESPECT TRUTHFULNESS

-the Bible condemns falsehood and lies.

- “credibility gap” will ruin relationship.
- Satan is the father of lies (John 8.44) *and he comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy* (John 10.10).

-lying can become second nature and ingrained *so that we have no sense of truth*.

- ... we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter (Isaiah 28.15b.).

-untrue & unkind gossip can injury our neighbours.

- breaks the tissue of faith *that holds human community together* (Lewis Smedes)
- **illust.** Spurgeon.

-lying leads to violence and *misgovernment*.

- They multiply falsehood and violence (Hosea 12.1).
- If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked (Proverbs 29.12).

-lying profanes God.

- The godless besmear me with lies (Psalm 119.69).

-the wise pray for truthfulness.

- Remove far from me falsehood and lying (Proverbs 30.8).
- Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth ... (Ephesians 6.14).
 - truthfulness demands a lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies above deception and falsehood.

3. HOW WE SHOULD RESPECT TRUTHFULNESS

-recognize the Reasons why we Lie

- **confess and repent** from all falsehood and lies.
- **covenant** with God to be truthful with your neighbor.
- **pray** for wisdom & integrity.
Surely you desire truth in the inner parts ;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place (Psalm 51.6).

-be sure of your facts before reaching a conclusion.

- O.T. attempted to guard against abuse of false witnessing by stipulating *that “no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness”* (Numbers 35.30).

-be sure you know how your neighbor understands what you say – *take time to listen and dialogue to ensure that our version of the truth is correctly understood*.

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.

-Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth ... (Ephesians 6.14).

-be truthful with God, your neighbour, and yourself.

- lying breaks the tissue of faith that holds every human community together (Lewis Smedes).
- truthfulness demands a lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies above deception and falsehood.

-liars will be punished with eternal separation from God.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters **and everyone who loves and practices falsehood** (Revelation 22.14, 15).

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-never be intentionally untruthful.

- exception clause = only to save life in face of immoral law & certain death.
- however truthfulness calls us to lay down life if we are being forced to deny God.

-pray for truthfulness in every sphere of your life:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way
everlasting (Psalm 139.23, 24).

-speak (1.) truth in (2.) love, thereby preserving and strengthening human community.

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church (Ephesians 4.15).

-truthfulness demands the lofty approach of a soaring eagle high in the skies above deception and falsehood.

- God brought Israel up out of Egypt on the wings of an eagle (Exodus 19.4).

3. Know that you will do it. - **Closing Hymn:** Wings Of An Eagle.

Blurting Out Truth

There is a “time to keep silence and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3.7). But is there a time for silence that tells a lie?

You are in a group when boring old Harry asks, “Is anyone driving to Pasadena?” and you keep your mouth shut even though you plan to take off to Pasadena in five minutes. Your silence is a bald-faced lie. Is it right? Or must we always speak out and say, “Yes, Harry, I’m driving, but I prefer to drive alone?”

We are not morally bound to tell a friend that my son has made Phi Beta Kappa when I know his son just dropped out of college. No mother needs to tell her daughter she is ugly. And no student is obligated to tell a retiring professor that his lectures were irrelevant. Silence can be golden.

We get into murky moral waters, however, when we ask whether we ever ought to tell silent lies to people who do have a normal right to our truthfulness. Relationships depend on open truthfulness; we make covenants that are kept alive by truth and broken by deceit (*Mere Morality* Lewis Smedes, p.p. 234 - 235).

Spurgeon

“Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people ... Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him” (Leviticus 19.16, 17).

Tale-bearing emits a threefold poison; for it injures the teller, the hearer, and the person concerning whom the tale is told. Whether the report be true or false, we are by this precept of God’s Word forbidden to spread it. The reputations of the Lord’s people should be very precious in our sight, and we should count it shame to help the devil to dishonor the Church and the name of the Lord. Some tongues need a bridle rather than a spur. Many glory in pulling down their brethren, as if thereby they raised themselves. Noah’s wise sons cast a mantle over their father, and he who exposed him earned a fearful curse. We may ourselves one of these dark days need forbearance and silence from our brethren; let us render it cheerfully to those who require it now. Be this our family rule, and our personal bond—SPEAK EVIL OF NO MAN (in *Morning & Evening* November 29).

Recognize the reasons why we lie

Human heart is “deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17.9).

Seduced into believing that we are lying for our neighbour's sake.

Some lies come from malice – malicious witness (Exodus 23.1).

Some lies come from fear – to escape the consequences of deed done – be sure your sins will find you out (Numbers 32.23).

- lie of fear will give birth to another lie – better to face the immediate ordeal than a long unhappy process.

Some lies come from carelessness – born from on-going practice of lying – chronic inaccuracy if not disciplined.

Some lies come from boasting – to cast themselves in a better light – one of the hardest kinds of truth is to tell the truth about ourselves.

Some lies come from desire for profit – false advertizing and propaganda.

Some lies come from silence – easiest way to avoid trouble (Exodus 23.1). By remaining silent we can indicate support for something which we know to be wrong. By remaining silent the martyrs could have avoided martyrdom.

Some lies come from half-truths – give a twist and a slant to suit ourselves – often more dangerous than an out-and-out falsehood. Often used by the Cults to mislead people away from the Gospel.

Some lies are to self – no harder thing than to be strictly honest with yourself – hard to see our motives.

Some lies are to God – trying to conceal & asking for conventionally correct things even when we do not really want them.