

## Lying About Your Neighbor

### Exodus 20:16

#### The Ninth Command

*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

The Jews had 613 commands and Jesus reduced them to two: loving God and loving your neighbor.

The first tablet of the law teaches us how to love God and the second tablet teaches us how to love our neighbors.

Only by keeping the first tablet can we keep the second tablet. Only by loving God can we love others.

This command really challenges the status quo of our present world. We expect so little from people in this regard. We have been conditioned to expect every truth to be tainted with lies.

### First: Who is God's Neighbor?

a) God is God's first neighbor

God dwells in eternal Trinity, so his first neighbor is himself.

*John 3:35 – The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.*

*John 5:20 – For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.*

*John 17:24 – Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

*Luke 3:22 – ...the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*

*John 15:9 – As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

*John 15:10 – If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

b) We are God's second neighbor.

Look what we've done to the neighborhood, and yet...

Romans 5:8 - ...*God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

### **Second: Loving Our Neighbors**

a) The first 4 make the second 6 possible.

Only by keeping the first four commandments, can we keep the second six.

We can

- 1 – Honor our mothers and fathers
- 2 – Choose life
- 3 – Exercise marital fidelity
- 4 – Live contentedly
- 5 – Tell the truth about our neighbors
- 6 – Be happy for our neighbors

Because we

- 1 – Love God most
- 2 – Keep God first
- 3 – Respect God's name
- 4 – Rest in him

The first four are the model but also the means. It is God's love in us that enables us to love our neighbors.

b) Remembering God's image motivates us.

Everyone is made in God's image and that image bears inherent,

- 1 – Worth
- 2 – Dignity

We break the 2<sup>nd</sup> six because we fail to remember, thus respect, God's image.

We need to remember also that God is not only interested in us as individuals, but the world as well. These commandments generate personal and community health, both within and outside of the church.

As members of God's humanity, we should remember the effect we have on the community.

How you talk about your neighbors is an indication of your love for God and your love for your neighbor. This command forbids -

1 – Perjury – The original, formal context of Ex 20:16 was the court system.

But the informal setting, that of relationships, concerns itself with harming someone else's reputation.

2 – Slander

3 – Gossip

The latter two are often the respectable sins of the Christian community.

*Matthew 15:17-20 - Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? <sup>18</sup> But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. <sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."*

4- Withholding the truth

Israel didn't have forensic science and depended on witnesses to either acquit or convict people and a false witness was not only damaging but deadly.

- So, a false witness

1 – Injured another person

2 – Perverted justice

3 – Undermined public confidence in the judicial system

So, Israel's law required two witnesses so that one person alone could not substantiate a charge against someone else. There had to be corroboration.

- A false witness received the judgement intended for the accused.

### Third: The New Testament Interpretation

ILL – *“Mr. Spurgeon, Pray for me, I have a problem with exaggeration.”*  
*“Mam, until you see that as lying, and confess it as such, you will never have victory over it.”*

- a) God loves his neighbors.

1 John 3:11-12 - *For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. <sup>12</sup> We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother...*

1 John 3:16 - *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.*

IMP: We all have this Adamic imprint that wants to be “better than.”

- Adam and Eve wanted to be “better than” God made them and believed the devil’s lie.
- Cain’s sacrifice was rejected by God and Abel’s was accepted. That jealousy drove him to murder.
- On and on that blueprint for being “better than” was passed through human DNA until it got to us.
- Speaking ill of a neighbor is just an Adamic attempt to be “better than” someone else.

Truthfulness about ourselves and others demonstrates confidence in God. We believe that he created us and saves us. Our identity rests in him. We don’t have self-worth; we have cross-worth.

*Two wonders here that I confess  
 My worth and my unworthiness  
 My value fixed, my ransom paid  
 At the cross*

*And I rejoice in my redeemer  
 Greatest treasure  
 Wellspring of my soul  
 I will trust in him, no other  
 My soul is satisfied in him alone*

b) God forgives his lying neighbors and asks us to do the same.

*Matthew 5:43-48 - You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

If you've lived any length of time, someone has lied about you. In this passage, God calls us to love those who dislike and persecute us. This doesn't mean we are best-of-buddies but that we don't lie about them, and are interested in, and seek their wellbeing.

#### Fourth: Our Application

Proverbs 18:8 - *The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels...*

Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, whatever social media platform you use can easily open this door of false witnessing for you

a) Tell the truth about your neighbors.

Our testimonies should be truthful. We should not

1 - exercise favoritism or

2 - be intimidated by anyone.

b) Don't falsely accuse anyone of anything.

c) Don't remain silent when words are needed.

d) Be careful about details. (If you don't know, say you don't know).

1 Peter 4:8 - *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

e) Watch your conversations.

Dialogue that began out of concern for someone can degenerate into gossip and slander.

We should have charitable opinions of our neighbors, rejoice in their good reputations, should not be jealous of God's blessings on them, and sorrow at their troubles.

f) Don't twist someone's words.

g) Don't withhold what will help.

h) Don't share what will hurt.

i) Give people the benefit of the doubt until words/actions can be explained.

1 Corinthians 4:5 - *...do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*

We all understand this is an area where we have to be extra vigilant.

a) Will sharing this advantage my neighbor or me?

b) Will sharing this unnecessarily hurt my neighbor?

c) Is it necessary to say?

IMP: 1 - "Pastor, I don't know why people tell me these things." I do.

2 - If someone will tell the truth or a lie about you to others or if someone slants the truth about others to you, they will do it to you to others. That is not a healthy relationship.

Apply 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 to your neighbor – *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant<sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful,<sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.<sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Ephesians 4:29-32 - *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* <sup>30</sup> *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* <sup>31</sup> *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.* <sup>32</sup> *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

### **Fifth; Jesus's Fulfilment of this Command**

Remember that God is God's first neighbor, and we are God's second neighbor.

1 – God tells the truth about us to our good – “You are sinners.”

2 – Jesus is the Truth

John 14:6 – *I am the way, the truth and the life.*

John 19:4 – [Pilate about Jesus] - *...I find no guilt in him*

In his discussion with the churches of Revelation, John writes,

Revelation 3:14 – *And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness...'*

The truth is that our natures condemn us but Jesus saves us.

*My worth is not in what I own  
Not in the strength of flesh and bone  
But in the costly wounds of love  
At the cross*

### **Conclusion:**

The 9<sup>th</sup> command is more than about lying.

- It's about the condition of our hearts.
- It's about loving God to love others.
- It's about loving God as God loves others.
- It's about expressing God's love to others.
- It's about loving others as we want to be loved.

ILL – “A Man for All Seasons” is about the Lord High Chancellor, Thomas More’s refusal to endorse Henry VIII’s marriage. Then there’s a scene at the end of the movie, where a former friend of More’s by the name of Richard Rich appears as final false witness to More’s execution. He claims that he heard Thomas More speak against the king (when he hadn’t). As Richard leaves, Thomas notices this chain of office around his neck. It’s the red dragon of Wales. And then he says, in this famous line, “*Why Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world—but for Wales?*” No offense to any Welshmen here.

And what will you really gain, or sell your soul for, to lie against a neighbor?

### Community Groups

- 1 – Read the text
- 2 – Review each of the 9 commandments
- 3 – Which commandment has been most meaningful/transformational to you?
- 4 – Do you know someone who has been hurt by lying?
- 5 – How does the Trinity the basis for all human relationships?
- 6 – How does God treat his 2<sup>nd</sup> neighbor?
- 7 – What does this command forbid? (Perjury, slander, gossip & withholding the truth)
- 8 – How does love fit into this command?
- 9 – What motivates us to lie about our neighbor?
- 10 – What are the two categories of speech Jesus commends, and why?
- 11 – Work through some of the applications in Pont Four of the sermon.
- 12 – How does love cover a multitude of sins?
- 13 – How does Jesus fulfil this command?

### Daily Devotion

**Monday, Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>.** Read Ex 20:16 & John 3:35; 5:20; 15:9. The Trinity is the basis for all healthy human relationships. How does the Father love the Son and the Son love the Father? Which neighbor are you not loving like this? What can you do about that? Pray God will give you a love for them. Treat them like you love them (until you do). Share your lack of love with someone close to you and ask them to pray for you and hold you accountable to love.

**Tuesday, Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>.** Read Ex 20:16 & Matt 5:43-48. In the 9<sup>th</sup> command, God forbids perjury, slander, gossip and withholding the truth. Has anyone ever lied about you? How did that make you feel? What did it do to you personally, professionally, etc? How does Jesus teach us to love those who hurt us? Who is our model for this? How might this



text change the way you relate to someone who has lied about you? Consider memorizing Matt 5:43-48 and asking the Holy Spirit to live its truth in you.

**Wednesday, Oct 4<sup>th</sup>.** Read Ex 20:16, Prov 18:8 & 1 Cor 4:5. Are you lying to yourself or others about any of your neighbors? Have you remained silent when words could have helped your neighbor? Have you altered details of a conversation or action? Have you gossiped or slandered? Have you twisted someone else's words? Have you withheld anything that might help a neighbor? Have you shared what hurt? Have you given others the benefit of the doubt? Perhaps today is a good day for reflection, confession, repentance, and perhaps reconciliation.

**Thursday, Oct 5<sup>th</sup>.** Read Ex 20:16 & 1 Cor 13:4-7. Do the words in the 1 Cor passage describe the way you treat others, those who like you – in your marriage, family, or at work? Do those words describe how you treat those who don't like you? How will you change your attitudes and actions toward others? Perhaps you should memorize 1 Cor 13:4-7, meditating on it in your challenging relationships and asking the Holy Spirit to actualize it in those thoughts, moments when it is most needed.

**Friday, Oct 6<sup>th</sup>.** Read Ex 20:6, John 14:6, 19:4; Rev 3:14 & Eph 4:29-32. How does Jesus describe himself? What did Pilate say about him? How does John describe Jesus? Is there any relationship in which you are not living out Eph 4:20-32? Perhaps that passage would be good to memorize, asking Christ to live his truthfulness out in you.