



December 8–9, 2012
Exodus 20
“Watch Your Mouth!”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

It doesn't matter whether you call them fibs, falsehoods, fish stories, tall tales, half-truths or whoppers; they are all lies. Sadly, lying is a common occurrence in our culture. Bella DePaulo, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, has spent two decades looking at how and why people lie. In a 2009 interview, Professor DePaulo told CBS *Sunday Morning* correspondent Tracy Smith: “In my studies people tell an average of two lies a day and those are the ones they'll admit to telling, so I think lying is an everyday behavior that probably everyone engages in.”¹

It's interesting to note that the 3rd Commandment deals with improper speech against God, and the 9th Commandment deals with improper speech against another person. And, in particular, God had in mind the just and fair treatment of others in a legal sense. It's not just about lying, although that's part of it; it's primarily about addressing the problem of perjury and/or ruining someone's reputation or character because of false testimony or false accusations against him or her.

Trying to get a right perspective on this commandment causes us to ask difficult questions, such as: When is it okay to tell a lie? Is it ever okay to tell a lie? If you're trying to be polite, is it okay to tell a lie so you won't hurt someone's feelings? What if it's a matter of life and death is it okay to tell a lie?

In the 9th Commandment, we learn that God values truthfulness, which should come as no surprise, because truth is a word that characterizes everything about God. The following Scriptures help us understand that everything about God is truth:

¹ http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445_162-2897896.html

² <http://www.meridianschools.org/EMS/Staff/LP/Lewis/AssignmentsInformation/Is%20it%20OK%20to%2>

Psalm 31:5 – The Lord is called, *“the God of truth.”*

Daniel 10:21 – God’s Word is *“the Book of Truth.”*

Zechariah 8:3 – Jerusalem is the *“City of Truth...”*

John 14:6 – Jesus said, *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”*

John 14:17 – The Holy Spirit is *“the Spirit of truth.”*

Numbers 23:19 – *“God is not a man that he should lie...”*

Hebrews 6:18 – *“... It is impossible for God to lie...”*

The 9th Commandment is a call to truthfulness. It forbids false accusations, lies or slander of any kind that would injure the reputation of another. Therefore, God wants Christians to walk in the truth!

The 9th Commandment Forbids False Accusations

1. The nations surrounding Israel had a simplistic way of condemning someone based on a single accusation.
2. God values the reputation and character of people, so he instructed the Israelites to make sure they did not give false testimony.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 5:20** – Do not *“give false testimony against your neighbor.”*
3. God standard to help ensure that a person’s character and reputation are respected requires at least two witnesses having the same testimony.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 19:15** – *“One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”*
 - b. **1 Timothy 5:19** – *“Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.”*
4. Even with this instruction in place, false witnesses could be introduced if someone was intent on destroying another person.
5. Jesus and false witnesses.
 - a. **Matthew 26:59-60** – *“The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.”*

6. Naboth and false witnesses.
 - a. [1 Kings 21:1-16](#) gives the account of evil King Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel, the daughter of a pagan king and priest, and their plot to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.
7. It is a serious thing to make false accusations against someone, because a person's life or career or reputation can be easily destroyed in the process.
8. [Proverbs 6:16-19](#) - *"There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers."*
9. In a broader sense, the 9th Commandment is against all forms of untruthfulness, including any misuse of our words that deceive, manipulate or malign another individual.

The 9th Commandment Forbids Lies

10. [Proverbs 12:22](#) - *"The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful."*
11. [Psalm 34:12-13](#) - *"Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies."*
12. Unfortunately, many psychologists think it's okay to tell "little white lies," and some even think it's necessary!
 - a. "Most of the time, being kind to someone is more important than telling the absolute truth." - Jane Frank, New York City, psychologist.²
 - b. Dr. Robi Ludwig, a *Today Show* contributor, suggests there are four occasions when it's okay to tell "little white lies."³
 - i. When the truth will hurt someone's feelings.
 - ii. When you don't want to dash the dreams and hopes of children.
 - iii. When someone asks you how you are doing and you aren't fine.
 - iv. When you over-compliment someone to make that person feel good.
 - c. Another so-called expert offers up the following advice.⁴

²<http://www.meridianschools.org/EMS/Staff/LP/Lewis/AssignmentsInformation/Is%20it%20OK%20to%20Lie%20Article.pdf>

³<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/21110828/ns/today-relationships/t/truth-be-told-when-its-ok-tell-white-lie/>

⁴<http://www.qualityhealth.com/relationships-expert-qa/when-it-okay-lie>

- i. Question: I've always been taught that lying is wrong. When is it okay, or even beneficial, to lie? Answer: When we were young, we were taught not to lie. Yet, as it turns out, there are benefits of lying – and sometimes it's even a necessity. The 'white lies' we tell to others serve as the social glue that allows us to sustain and enrich our relationships. For example, if your great aunt asks you how you like the fruitcake she gives you every year at the holidays, you don't tell her it is too sweet and gooey. Instead, you 'lie' and tell her how much you like it. This 'fib' is good lying. You don't need to be truthful because she is not really asking for the truth. She is asking for confirmation that she is valued and important..." (Emphasis added)
- d. These and others who advocate this type of thinking encourage people to play games with others by telling people what they want to hear.
- e. **Proverbs 26:28** – *"A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin."*
- f. **Ephesians 4:15** – *"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."*

The 9th Commandment Forbids Slander

- 13. The definition of slander is evil, malicious talk that's intended to damage or destroy another person.
- 14. **1 Peter 2:1** – *"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."*

The 9th Commandment Forbids Gossip

- 15. The definition of gossip is spreading rumors or a revelation of personal or sensational facts about others.
- 16. **Proverbs 20:19** – *"A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much."*

The 9th Commandment Forbids Flattery

- 17. The definition of flattery is insincere or excessive praise.

- a. If gossip is saying something behind a person's back that we would never say to their face; then flattery is saying to a person's face what we would never say behind their back.
18. **Psalm 12:3** - *"May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue."*

The 9th Commandment Forbids Deception

19. The definition of deception is the act of misleading or misinforming another person.
20. **Proverbs 24:28** - *"Do not testify against your neighbor without cause, or use your lips to deceive."*

The 9th Commandment - Rare Exceptions

21. There appears to be rare occasions recorded in the Bible in which God allowed lying in matters concerning life and death.
- a. Rahab - **Joshua 2**
 - i. Rahab lied when she hid the Israelite spies, and yet her name is found in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11, as well as the genealogy of Jesus in **Matthew 1:5**.
 - b. The Hebrew midwives - **Exodus 1:15-21**
 - i. They lied about the reason they didn't kill the Hebrew baby boys Pharaoh had ordered to be killed.
22. It is very important to recognize that these are descriptions, but not necessarily prescriptions for us to follow.

The 9th Commandment - Summary

23. Our goal should be to be truthful people who honor God and others with our word.
24. **Matthew 5:37** - *"Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."*
25. **John 8:44** - *"... [Satan has] no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

26. [Psalm 51:6](#), *“Surely you desire truth in the inner parts...”*

27. [Proverbs 13:3](#) - *“He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Exodus 20:16](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. How has your thinking changed concerning this commandment since you've come to faith in Christ?
4. Share examples of ways you've seen someone's reputation or career be damaged by false witnesses.
 - a. Review the Scriptures concerning false accusations and Jesus. (See #5 above)
 - b. Review the Scriptures concerning false accusations and Naboth. (See #6 above)
5. Read and discuss [Proverbs 12:22](#) and [Psalm 34:12](#).
6. Review the quotes and information Pastor Gary shared concerning “experts” who see no problem with situational lying. (See #12 above)
7. Read and briefly discuss the 9th Commandment and slander, gossip, flattery, and deception. (See #13 - #20 above)
8. Do you believe there are times when it's okay to tell a lie?
 - a. Provide an overview of the accounts of Rahab and the Hebrew midwives. (See #21 above)
9. How hard would it be for you to follow the counsel of [Matthew 5:37](#)? (See #24 above)
10. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: understand that there will be times when they should keep quiet and not say anything ([Proverbs 13:3](#)), and times when it's important to speak truthfully; purpose in their heart to honor the Lord by committing to being truthful in all situations.

- i. You shall have no other gods before me
- ii. You shall not make for yourself an idol
- iii. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God
- iv. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy
- v. Honor your father and mother
- vi. You shall not murder
- vii. You shall not commit adultery
- viii. You shall not steal
- ix. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor
- x. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).