

The Ten Commandments

Commandment #9: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”

1. A general definition

- a. Of all the commandments, the 9th commandment was perhaps most shocking to me when I began to really dig into Bible study years ago
- b. The reason is simple... I expected to come across a commandment that I had heard for years, specifically I thought I would read “thou shalt not lie”
- c. Interestingly enough, those are not the words recorded in this 9th commandment
- d. Obviously, the Bible condemns dishonesty and this commandment actually does as well but, as we will see, there is a very important thrust to this commandment and I believe it is summarized very well by Kevin Deyoung who writes, “We often think of the ninth commandment as ‘do not lie’, and that is the gist of it, but it’s specifically put in the context of the courtroom. Witnesses were everything in the ancient world...If someone stood up to accuse a person of wrongdoing, and a second person stood up with the same accusation, the life of the accused could be in jeopardy.”

2. Some specific applications

a. Lying

- i. I don’t want to linger here... suffice it to say that anytime a believer says something that is patently false, it is sin
- ii. Nevertheless, there are types of lying that are a bit less “overt” in nature. Here are a few more:

b. Twisting words

- i. We live in a world in which context is rarely considered
- ii. The “sound bite” age thrives on taking and editing comments to represent something altogether different than the original intention
- iii. Many of us are aware of “fake news” and the risk that it poses but, unfortunately, we can also be purveyors of fake news in our own lives
- iv. It is possible to twist words by:
 1. Changing the tone in which they were uttered
 2. Removing qualifiers or statements that soften the given message
 3. Taking a message delivered in a specific circumstance and applying it more generally

c. Gossip

- i. Gossip is the act of passing along that which is implied or assumed as if it fact

ii. In small communities, this is a HUGE temptation

1. Sometimes we hear things and we are tempted to pass along what we hear as if we know it to be fact
2. This could be offered with the best of intentions
 - a. Years ago, there was an incident at the speedway in Dinwiddie
 - i. There was a concert there and shots were fired on the premises... these things are facts
 - ii. Nevertheless, there were posts made and shared on social media platforms and texts/phone calls made to residents that passed along other information that was not substantiated and turned out to be false
 1. This is gossip and it is deadly and prohibited
3. At other times, we offer gossip in an effort to harm others
 - a. “Juicy” details of hidden sins or specifics that we don’t know about a person’s trials are often given with little to no effort to validate the claims
 - b. This is harmful, it is irresponsible and, most importantly, it is sin

3. An admonition

- a. I learned years ago that I could rail on certain sins and be celebrated as a pastor who “preaches the Word”
 - i. In our context, if Robert and I stood up to bemoan the popularity and prevalence of homosexuality or if we condemned abortion, we would be largely celebrated within our body
 - ii. I don’t deny that we need to speak about these things, but I would remind you that sometimes we celebrate when “hard truths” are spoken that do not convict us!
 - iii. Gossip and slander and twisting the truth is, more than likely, a far bigger temptation to many of us than some other besetting sins
 - iv. This means that the topic can be ignored or minimized
 - v. Let us remember that our sharing of false, unverified or isolated truths is just as much prohibited in Scripture as other sins
 - vi. My prayer is that Smyrna would be full of people that are concerned about the truth, worried about their brother’s reputation and diligent in sharing the “whole truth” in all circumstances!