

“THE NINTH COMMANDMENT”

Text: Exodus 20:16

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INTRODUCTION:

1) Lying is as old as the human race: Many people, including those who don't know the Bible, know this saying: “Am I my brother's keeper?” This was the answer Cain gave to God when God asked him, “Where is your brother Abel?” (Genesis 4:9) Since then, lies of all kinds, for all reasons, have become part of human life everywhere, in every culture for every person. If we are truly honest, we need to admit that we all have lied in our lives. Lying comes from the inner being of human nature. Some of us are astonished to see little children lie naturally and wonder where and how lies came to them. But we shouldn't be surprised to see little children lie because they are human and all human beings lie.

2) Lying to hurt is the worst kind: God condones no lies, big or small. He is a righteous God and he demands we live our lives in honesty. In this Ninth Commandment, God specifically forbids people from lying to hurt someone else: giving false testimony against someone. Some may see this in a legal setting like lying in the court. Others may see it in everyday life: setting out to hurt someone in the family, at work, in the neighborhood or at school, someone you know but don't like. The phrase “false testimony” means things that are untrue, unfounded, without basis or outright lies. No one can keep count of all the false testimonies, accusations, and stories made by millions of human beings throughout history for the purpose of hurting others. Even we Chinese, proud of our 5,000-plus years of history and culture, know that lies and false accusations and testimonies happened every day of our history from the ancient time to modern-day society. Countless people suffered injustice and even total destruction of their lives by the hands of those who gave false testimonies in courts or in everyday life.

The Ninth Commandment: “You shall not give false testimony

against your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:16)

WHY DO WE LIE? While there are some common denominators why we lie, there is no way to list all the possible reasons or causes of lying. Here we list some more obvious reasons why people lie, or give false testimony.

1) We lie because it's our nature: All human beings are born with the nature to lie. All of us inherit a corrupt, depraved, evil nature from our ancestors, that rebellious nature against God and His holy nature. No one needs to teach a small child to lie. He will lie when he needs to. I say this not to relieve anyone from the responsibility of his lies, but to emphasize the nature of human beings and their ability to lie all the days of their human life. When Paul wrote that he couldn't do what was right, but did wrong instead (Romans 7:18-19), he wrote on behalf of all of us.

2) Those who lie as a habit: Some call them pathological liars. Although we all lie once in a while, there are people who can't help but lie most if not all of their lives. They just can't stop telling lies, as if lying is part of their way of life. To these people, lying is what they know and do in life, be it to family, at work, to friends. Even in things that don't matter much, they still can't get it to tell the truth. Some classify this as a spiritual problem, being controlled by the evil power of Satan on their souls. Others say this is due to their childhood, lying out of self defense or for survival. But these people will always lie or exaggerate things, stretch the truth, or twist facts for no reason.

3) Those who lie to cover up: Of course, to cover up his own sin or wrong was what Cain did. We see people do this everywhere in our daily lives, in the courtroom, in politics, at work places, and elsewhere. Many people tell lies to cover their wrongs, hoping to blind others from seeing them, so they don't have to pay the price for their sin or crime.

4) People who lie to hurt others: Some people lie to cause harm to those they hate or wish ill for. This includes creating and spreading

rumors for the purpose of hurting their enemies. By lying and beating down their enemies, they may gain benefits or favor for themselves. This is particularly true in the political arena. Many of those in high political positions are the best liars.

THE DEVASTATING HARM OF LYING: There are some similarities in the harm of lying and that of stealing, since they both are rooted in dishonesty.

1) Lying betrays your credibility: No liar may lie forever without facing the truth. One may lie a few times, but can't lie all the time, without facing the consequence of his lies. Pretty soon, people around will see what kind of person he is. It says in Prov. 11:3, "The integrity of the upright guides them, but the perversity of the treacherous destroys them." This is true in the end. When there isn't anyone who can trust you, you are done and over.

2) Lying is like boomeranging: The saying "You play with the sword, you will die by the sword" is so true for lying: You lie to others, you will be lied to by others. This is true because you aren't the only clever liar in this world. If you lie and others get hurt, they will do the same to hurt you later.

3) Lying costs us so much: Lying is a never-ending losing business: You tell one lie, you have to tell another lie to cover it, and it will snowball to the point you can't remember or can't handle all the lies you have to tell. It is certainly very stressful to cover your trails of lies. Can you see someone in the political arena who has to continue to lie to cover the trails of lies of the past? This kind of behavior can surely hurt your children since they learn from your lifestyle and the way you handle life. A liar can't sleep well at night because he worries that someone he has lied about may try to do him harm. And a liar can't trust others because he doesn't believe in anyone but himself. He is lonely, defensive, and always lives on high alert of harm from his adversaries. What a terrible way to live, as a liar.

4) Lying robs us of our blessings from God: A liar lives his life on his own. He can't expect God to bless his life and what he does. In

fact, God hates all liars. In 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.” To live our life on our own without God is a terrible way to live.

HOW CAN WE CURB THE SIN OF LYING? Too many possibilities to list. I use “to curb” to be realistic: No one can truly 100% eradicate the sin of lying. With the help of God, we need to do our best to control and minimize this sin.

1) Grow the new nature in us: When Paul says in 2 Cor 5:17, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come,” he was talking about a new life, a new nature that starts to grow in us. How much the old will be gone and how fast the new will come depends on how hard and diligently we allow the Holy Spirit to work on our inner selves. The fact that we see many young Christians grow so fast to be more like Jesus, while many pew warmers in the church for decades still live the same old me, is because of the different levels of effort they put into growing their new life in Christ. If we are serious about living our lives according to the Ten Commandments, we are to put lots of work into growing our new nature of Christ in us. The more we allow the Holy Spirit to grow that new nature, the less we do that violates the commands of God.

2) Believe in the blessings of honesty: Most people lie to gain benefits in their lives, at work, in relationships, in school or just to feel good. They need to know that, if any benefit is gained, it will be short-lived. The long and lasting benefits of truthfulness are always there and much more desirable in our life. In Proverbs 13:17, the Bible promises, “A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing.” “Honesty is the best policy” is a golden rule forever.

3) Allow love to control our words: Look at this Commandment again: “Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.” There is a central theme in this Commandment: Do not lie to hurt your

neighbor. It is about more than not lying, it is about not lying to HURT. Paul suggests to us a better way to curb the sin of lying and it is LOVE. When he says: “Speak the truth in love” in Ephesians 4:15, he talks about more than just speaking the truth; he also talks about the motivation in speaking: love. This is another way to help us curb the sin of lying: Filter our words through LOVE before we allow them to go through our lips. Checking the intention of our speech will help us not to lie and not to bring harm to others by lies. How can you lie to someone you love?

4) Remember that lies have consequences: I put this last because this may not be as honorable as the above reasons to curb our lying sin: Think of the risks we take to lie versus the benefit of honesty. The fear of being discovered in lies one had said can be devastating, plus the constant need to cover up lies the rest of one’s life is beyond imagining. If the lie has hurt someone, you have to be very alert to what that someone may do to you. There isn't such a thing as a free ride for lying and hurting others where you won't have to pay. Thinking of the possible consequences of lying may help us to consider it very carefully and avoid it.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO STOP THIS MADNESS?

1) Never forget who we are: God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites before they entered into the Promised Land as a GUIDE for life in that land, to help them be different from the locals. Today, we are called “witnesses” of Jesus Christ to bring the world back to God with the gospel message. We are and must be different from the people of the world, including not telling lies. The disciples of Jesus were seen as different from others: “When they (the high priest and the Pharisees) saw the courage of Peter and John, and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13) It wasn't by their education, it wasn't by their profession, and it wasn't by their wealth, but it was by their life with Jesus that Peter and John were recognized. So, spend more time with

Jesus.

2) Be determined to stop lying: Don't wait until the temptation to lie comes your way. Build a defensive line in advance to stop it. King David did just that: “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14) Make that determination not to lie, and ask God to help you keep it every day and every time when