

**Exodus 20: 16 – The Ten Commandments, part 9: “Do not bear false witness.”<sup>1</sup>**



**Main point:** Always speak truth, and be free.

**Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.**

**Background:** The Ten Commandments are God’s laws of love. God saved his people from slavery in Egypt, and then God defines the relationship: I love you, and this is how you love me back.

Exodus 20:1-11

- The first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other God before me.” God says: You’re my number one, because I saved you from slavery and made you my special people. Therefore, make ME number one for you!
- The second commandment: Don’t make an image of me. Don’t try to create me in YOUR image, to do what YOU want. Trust me and follow me as I am.
- The third commandment: Don’t use my name in vain. Wear my name well, reflecting Me.
- The fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day. God provides!
- The fifth commandment: Honor your mother and father: made in God’s image; legacy of respect continues.
- The sixth commandment: Do not murder. Don’t be life takers, literally and figuratively.
- The seventh commandment: Do not be unfaithful. Keep your promises.
- The eighth commandment: Do not steal. Trust God, and build up treasures in heaven, things that cannot be destroyed.
- Now we’re up to number NINE!

**Study:** Exodus 20: 16: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

1. *So: What is the ninth commandment? What’s another way to say it?*
  - a. Don’t “bear false witness.”
  - b. Don’t lie.
2. *Who are all of the commandments about?*
  - a. The first four are about our relationship with God; vertical.
  - b. The rest are about how we treat others; horizontal. This one is about “your neighbor.”
3. *Where would a person normally bear false witness? Where are witnesses used?*
  - a. In court of law; lying under oath
4. *What happens when someone lies in court, or anywhere else, against someone else?*
  - a. an innocent person can be convicted
  - b. can permanently harm someone’s character and integrity
  - c. “character assassination” – it’s like murder
5. *What’s the larger principle here? Do you think “do not bear false witness” means only that we shouldn’t lie when we’re in court, but all other times it’s OK?*
6. *What happens when you or someone else lies about someone else? Feelings, effects?*
  - a. Guilty conscience
  - b. Tends to build; hard to keep up!

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<sup>1</sup> Some material gratefully borrowed from Fellowship Monrovia: <https://madeforfellowship.com/>

- c. Hard to take it back; it's out there in the world
7. *What does lying create between you and another person? What feelings, realities?*
    - a. Insecurity
    - b. Embarrassment
    - c. Guilt
    - d. Shame
    - e. Broken relationship
  8. *Let's look at something Jesus says about lying in John 8, speaking to the Jews:*

<sup>31</sup>So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ... "<sup>43</sup>Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. <sup>44</sup>You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When the devil lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."
  9. *So according to Jesus, where does lying come from?*
    - a. Satan. Lying is the language of evil.
  10. *Why is lying sometimes tempting?*
    - a. We think it will protect us; make things easy, comfortable; self-interest; "better him than me"
  11. *What is God's language?*
    - a. TRUTH.
  12. *And what does truth do for us?*
    - a. Freedom! We are free when we tell the truth and live in the truth, no matter what.

This commandment, as with all the others, is about LOVE. Don't use a language, lies, that ends up hurting God's children and even hurting yourself.

Summary of The Ten Commandments: A love letter! An invitation to *love*, not a burden of law. It's a beautiful invitation to relationship with God.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace

## The Ten Commandments

**Exodus 20: 1-17:** And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath ...

<sup>7</sup> “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain ....

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates....

<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.

<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

## **John 8: 31-44**

<sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. ...

“<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When the devil lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”