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9th Commandment



Ten Commandments - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the importance of the 9th Commandment in protecting our neighbor's good name and reputation. While the commandment specifically prohibits bearing false witness in court, it has a broader application in our everyday interactions. Gregg emphasizes the need for honesty and speaking the truth in love, while cautioning against gossip and deceitful speech. Ultimately, living out the principles of the 9th Commandment reflects our Christian character and points others towards the truth.

Transcript

It's true that sometimes we have gone a little bit late here at our meetings, but I don't think we will tonight, because we're getting a good early start on the Bible study, and we should get out at a civil hour, I would think. I'd like you to turn with me to Exodus chapter 20. Only two more times will we be doing this.

We've been going through the Ten Commandments. We're on the 9th Commandment tonight, and obviously we'll be on the 10th Commandment next week, so that we won't be turning to Exodus 20 anymore for a while after that. But in Exodus chapter 20, and verse 16, it says, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Now, last week we talked about the commandment just before that one, which is, Thou shalt not steal. And I think we can see immediately that both of these commandments have to do with integrity. They have to do with honesty.

It has to do with justice. Doing what's fair and just to your neighbor. Not stealing from him, and not bearing false witness.

The commandment not to steal is obviously made to be a hedge against taking advantage of your neighbor's property. It is a command to protect your neighbor's property. This command is intended to protect your neighbor's good name.

Your neighbor's reputation. In the book of Proverbs, we're told that a good name is more to be desired than property anyway. Proverbs 22, 1 says, A good name is more desirable than much riches.

And so, if it's important for us not to steal our neighbor's riches or our neighbor's property, then it's even more important that we not rip him off of his good name. And bearing false witness, of course, means to speak falsely about a person in such a way as will harm them. The specific case that is alluded to is in court.

Bearing false witness has to do, as we read through the rest of Exodus, with testifying in court against a person who is innocent. So it has to do with slandering and falsely accusing a person in a court of law. But obviously, only a very few of us will ever be called upon to ever give testimony in a court of law.

And if the commandment had no broader application than that, it would be a command for a very small minority of the human race. Because, as I said, unless we were called to bear witness in a court of law, and most of us won't be probably, this commandment would have no effect unless we make a broader application to it than just bearing false witness. In fact, there is intended a much broader application of it.

And we will study that out today, tonight. We will talk about the various ways in which this command embodies principles developed in other parts of the scripture, which are binding upon our lives. Looking at one other place in the Pentateuch about false witnesses, in Deuteronomy chapter 19, we have a passage that tells us what the penalty is for a person who is caught bearing a false witness against his brother in court.

And we can get a principle from this that demonstrates how God reacts to those who do so. And also, there are some spiritual things that we can see out of it also. But in Deuteronomy chapter 19, verses 15 through 20, it says, This means that a man cannot be condemned in court if there is only one witness to his crime.

There needed to be at least two. In the mouth of two or three witnesses, let every word be established. This scripture verse that we just read is actually quoted five times in the New Testament.

Five different books in the New Testament quote it. So it's obviously a principle that the Bible in the New Testament confirms as well. Then it says in verse 16, If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, then both the men between whom the controversy is shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges which shall be in those days, and the judges shall make diligent inquisition.

And behold, if the witness be a false witness and have testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done to his brother. So shalt thou put away the evil from among you, and those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. So you can see that if a man were caught giving a false testimony in a court of law against his brother, and it turned out that it was discovered that that's what he was doing, then the very penalty that he was hoping his brother would get would be given to him.

If he was hoping to have his brother find a financial penalty, then that would be what would be accrued to him. If it was a capital crime that he accused his brother of, then he himself would be put to death because that was what he was hoping to have done to his brother. You know, there's many cases in the Bible, and especially in the New Testament, where false witnesses rose up against Christians in court, or even against Jesus.

You remember that Jesus, when he was brought before the high priest in the 26th chapter of Matthew, of course he had done nothing wrong, so it was rather hard to make a case against him in court. And the high priest sought to, actually, it says that they suborned witnesses. Actually what they did was they hired people to tell lies about Jesus.

But even so, they couldn't get their witnesses to agree, and so forth, so they had a real hard time finding anything really that they could nail him with. And finally they got him for blasphemy because he claimed to be the son of God. But it's interesting that those witnesses, if the law of Moses was carried out in those days, should have been put to death themselves, because they were bearing false witness against Jesus with a mind to have him crucified.

So if Moses had been living at the time and had caught this situation, those witnesses themselves would have been crucified and Jesus would have been delivered. Not that that would have been in the plan of God, but I'm simply saying that was the penalty that was due them. And the interesting thing here is that the Bible, in Deuteronomy, says that it's the priests themselves who are supposed to make inquisition to find out if the person is a false witness.

But in the case of Jesus' trial, it was the priests who hired the false witnesses. So you can see how much justice was twisted in that situation. Later we find the same thing happened when Stephen was brought to trial in Acts chapter 6 and 7. False witnesses were hired to try to accuse him, and again they didn't agree very much with each other.

But again, and he was stoned to death, the right penalty for those witnesses would be that they would be stoned to death. If a man bore false witness against someone else, he would get the penalty that he was hoping his enemy would get, or his neighbor. Now there is an application here, I believe, to Satan, because Satan is called in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10, the accuser of the brethren.

And the title signifies one who is accusing falsely. Though of course Satan accuses us also and brings condemnation when we actually do sin, he is frequently accusing us of things of which we're not guilty. He is a false accuser.

He bears false witness against the brethren. And he, of course, was the one who stirred up the crowds against Jesus. And it's interesting that he hoped to put an end to Jesus thereby, but what really happened was that an end was put to Satan, so to speak, at the

cross, where he thought he'd get rid of Jesus.

Satan was the one who was dealt the death blow, and his authority was broken at that point. There are some parallels to it in the Old Testament, some stories that are kind of interesting. In Daniel chapter 6, there were some Persian officials who were jealous of Daniel and so they basically had him framed and had him cast to a den of lions.

Almost every Sunday school child knows the story of Daniel in the lion's den. Well, the lions, of course, didn't eat Daniel. The Lord sent an angel and shut the lion's mouth.

But the king of Persia, who happened to like Daniel, the next morning, finding that Daniel had not been killed by the lions, rescued Daniel from the den and threw in those people who had falsely accused him. So we see an illustration of how, though the Jews didn't obey their own law in prosecuting false witnesses, the Persians, who were Gentiles, did. Another case that happened in Persia, in the Bible, is in the book of Esther.

A man named Haman was very angry at a Jew named Mordecai and hoped to get him hanged and, in fact, built a gallows in a public place to hang him on. But while I can't go into all the details of the story, if you know the story, you recall how Haman himself had been hanged on those gallows that he had built to wrongly murder Mordecai. He failed to do so and he himself was hanged.

Very much a picture of what happened to Satan at the cross. Satan is the accuser. Satan is the original false witness.

In fact, Jesus said that Satan is a liar and the father of it. In John chapter 8, in verse 44, He said, when he speaks a lie, meaning Satan, he speaks of himself. He speaks perfectly in character because he is the originator of lying and of lies.

And that would follow then, if Satan is the originator of lies, that those who lie are imitating Satan or perhaps even operating under his spirit. It's the switch in the office, John, if you're trying to get those on. So you can see that lying is of the devil.

And that is really what this commandment is talking about. It's not just restricted to people who happen to be called to bear witness in court. It has to do with any opportunity where we have opportunity to speak truth or lies.

And obviously, this is a commandment that basically forbids lying. There is no commandment among the Ten Commandments that says outright, thou shalt not lie. But that is definitely the principle here.

The principle is, if you bear false witness against your brother, you're lying, then you've broken this commandment. And it applies to other situations as well as the one stated. And there are many situations where such lies are practiced in our society.

Many lies, of course, are taken for granted. In fact, it's become almost a cynical joke, really, that no one can be trusted anymore. A man is no longer as good as his word.

You wouldn't find anyone, I don't think, entering into a verbal contract without getting it in writing and a lot of times getting the guy's photograph too. We had to rent something from U-Haul today and they had to get my photograph and a photograph of my driver's license. And they said before long they're going to be getting fingerprints from people.

Because you can't trust anyone to do what they say they're going to do. Because lying is such a common thing. People have hardly any conscience about it.

There are people who would never have any conscience, who would never steal property from another man because they wouldn't style themselves a thief. Yet they will lie and slander and gossip about others. And in so doing, they violate the greater of the two commandments.

If either is greater. The reason I say that thou shalt not bear false witness is a greater commandment than thou shalt not steal is because, as I said, a good name is more to be desired than riches. Therefore, to rob a man of his good name is to rob him of something worse or something that he would rather keep than his riches.

Because after all, if you rob a man of his riches, you can always pay them back if you're repentant. But if you rob him of his good name and you gossip and you slander a person, even if you repent, you can never restore it. You can't go back and collect all the pieces of the gossip that you've let out.

Once you let gossip out, it spreads and you can never retrieve it. You can go back to the person you originally lied to and you can say, hey, I was wrong, that was a lie. But there's no way to be sure you'll ever catch up with those rumors.

One pastor I heard of had a woman in his congregation who was a gossip. And he went over to her house with a feather pillow and a baseball bat. He said, come out here in the front lawn.

She came out and he started mercilessly beating this pillow with a baseball bat until all the feathers were flying around and the wind was blowing them up into the trees and in the bushes and down the street. The woman was scratching her head, couldn't figure out what was going on. He said, now, I'd like to see if you can gather up all those feathers and put them back in the pillow.

And obviously she couldn't and didn't understand what the message was. But perhaps because of what I've already said, you know what the message was. Once you've gossiped, you may decide that you'd like to undo what you did.

But bad words spread so fast you can never retrieve them all. You have no idea where

they've all gone. And so false witnesses is so much more damaging than even theft.

Because as I said, you can make restitution if you've been a thief. You can go back and pay the person back fourfold even as the Old Testament required. But you cannot go back and change the fact that you've released gossip about a person, which is untrue.

And so that is one of the reasons it's really forbidden. And it's even said to be an abomination to God. In Proverbs chapter 12 and verse 22, it says, Lying lips are an abomination to God.

And the word abomination is a strong word that isn't used in the scripture of every sin necessarily. The word abomination actually means something that stinks. Something that's putrid, that's foul before God.

And I know people, and I have known people who are even Christians, who have had a habit, I suppose they brought it over with them from before they were Christians, of perpetually lying. It comes very naturally to children to lie. It may be the first sin that most children commit.

As soon as a child realizes that he's in trouble, it is his nature to try to deceive his parents to avoid getting in trouble. It's very natural. I mean, children even before they talk can lie.

I heard of one child, I don't know how old, but very young, under a year old, who knew that he was supposed to be sleeping in his crib. And when his parents went out of the room, he got up and held on to the edge of the crib and was shaking it and jumping around and stuff like that. And then when he heard his parents coming, he laid down again and pretended like he was asleep because he knew that's what he was supposed to be doing.

And he was too young even to talk, but he was trying to deceive. He was trying to lie. And it comes very naturally to people to lie because, of course, our nature is in league with Satan until we're converted.

And Satan is the father of lies. Jesus said to the Pharisees, You're of your father the devil. No wonder you lie.

It's very much human nature to do so. And some people get so adept at it that they do it almost as a sport. Even when there's nothing at stake.

Even when it won't hurt them to tell the truth or where they'll gain nothing by lying. Some people do it just to see if they can get away with it. And sometimes, I think, people become such liars that they come to the place where they're not even sure if they're telling the truth or not.

I have at least two friends, one who repented when he got saved and one who, as far as I know, never repented even after he called himself a Christian, who were habitual liars. One friend of mine who's now a pastor and an honest man was a con artist before he was a Christian. And he tells me that he used to just tell lies just to see if he could get people to believe him.

He'd meet people and he'd know he'd never see them again. It wouldn't matter what they thought of him. And he'd just tell them some total fabrication about what kind of business he was in.

And it wasn't even the kind of thing that would make him highly esteemed in their eyes. Just totally a made-up story. Just for the fun of lying.

Now, I hope none of you are like that. But there are people who are that way. And lying can get hold of a person's character so much that they don't even realize how much they lie.

And very often we will catch ourselves in the midst of a lie without having ever intended to lie, I believe. And we need to... I guess what we need to see there's a positive side of this command. The command is do not bear false witness.

But the positive implication is be truthful. And that is a very important lesson for Christians to learn. Because, first of all, lying lips are an abomination to God.

And the Bible says that there will be tremendous punishment to all who are liars. Let me show you two scriptures that talk about that. One is in Proverbs chapter 19.

And verse 5. It says, A false witness shall not be unpunished. And he that speaketh lies shall not escape. Now, there are people who spend their lives lying and cheating and conning other people.

And don't ever seem to get caught. They seem to go to their graves without ever getting caught or paying the penalty for their sin. And yet it says here they will not go unpunished.

He that speaks lies will not escape. They might escape out of this life without getting caught. But the Bible tells us just what that punishment is that they will endure.

And that's in Revelation chapter 21. And verse 6. No, verse 8. It says, But the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. All liars will have their place there.

They've got a spot reserved for them. They've reserved it. They didn't have to phone ahead.

All they had to do was be liars. And they got a spot waiting for them in the lake of fire. It's very evident that being a liar and being a Christian can't be things that are tolerated both.

You've got to be one or the other. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And if Jesus is the truth and we're committed to Christ, we must be, by definition, committed to the truth.

And sometimes the truth is unflattering and sometimes the truth hurts. And because of that, we sometimes either want to hide the truth or even lie about the truth. Now, you can be just as deceptive by not saying anything as by telling an outright lie.

There's times when information should be divulged, which you conceal because of the way it incriminates you or someone that you don't want to incriminate. And yet there is a time when silence can be actually deception. And deception is what we need to get out of.

We need to break all habits of deception. We need to be people who are people of the truth and whom people know they can trust. But if we say, yea, we mean yea.

And if we say, nay, we mean nay. And we don't have to swear an oath or sign on the dotted line or something like that. Now, if people require you to do that, that's fine, but I'm going to go ahead and do it.

But the point is, among Christians, there should be such an honesty and such a veracity that they are as good as their word. And there are very few people in this world today about whom that can be said. Now, veracity is a word we don't use very much in common English, but it simply means the strict observance of truth in all communications.

In all communicating, we make sure that we are strictly adhering to truth. That there's nothing we're saying that is shading the truth or trying to twist the truth. Now, I know there are times when it would even seem like telling a lie would be more Christian than telling the truth.

If someone walks up to you and says, what do you think of me? If it happens that you don't like them very much, you might think it would be more Christian to tell them a lie than to tell them the truth. There's times when the phone rings and you suspect that it's someone you don't really want to talk to. And you tell your wife or your husband, tell them I'm not here.

Well, you know that's a lie, of course, but you figure it's better to tell a lie like that than to tell them the truth. I don't want to talk to you. That seems more rude and more un-Christian.

And there are times when we would think that telling a lie would be more Christian. However, the Bible says all his ways are done in truth. In Psalm 33, I think verse 4. Concerning God, it says all his ways are done in truth.

Once we depart from the truth on any point and compromise the truth, even though we think it be for a good reason, we cease to be going in the ways of God because all his ways, all his works are done in truth. I have heard stories of Christians under persecution who, of course, have information which needs to be kept secret, like where the secret church meetings are going to be, which are the kind of information you don't want the secret police to know about. And one particular leader, a Christian leader in the underground church in one of the communist countries, in one of his books said that he had no qualms about lying to the KGB when he himself actually suffered some under them.

And when they were trying to get information from him about the whereabouts of the meetings and who was in them and who were the leaders, in other words, information that would be incriminating to other Christians, this brother said he had no qualms about telling them false information and put him off on a false sense. And he felt like that was the Christian thing to do. After all, it's the loving thing to do, he thought, because, you know, you don't want to betray your brother, therefore it's better to lie to these people.

And he justified it by saying, you know, obviously, you can't be Christian and betray your brothers, therefore, lying is the lesser of two evils in a case like that. And it is a hard situation. I suppose if we were in that position and you knew that there was a secret meeting of the church in your basement and the secret police came to your door and pushed you up against the wall and said, where is the meeting? I have a feeling if you had strong convictions against betraying your brothers, you'd be tempted to say it, you know, down the street and around the corner somewhere over there just to get them out of there.

But the fact is, as a Christian, it's never right to lie. Now, you might say, well, then is it right to betray your brothers and have them all arrested? Maybe killed? No, it's not right to do that either. You can always tell the truth.

In a case like that, I would hope that the truth I would tell is I know, but I won't tell. That'd be the truth. Now, you'd say, well, you'd like to get tortured.

Well, better to be tortured than lie. Better to die than sin. That's the attitude of all the great Christians anyone here admires.

It's not the attitude of very many modern Christians, I have to admit. Most Christians would rather sin than die. In fact, some would rather sin than be embarrassed.

But any Christian who ever made a mark in history and who ever lived up to the New

Testament standards, including Jesus and all of his apostles, would rather have died than sin. And that is the true heroic spirit of Christianity, that even when the truth might seem to be damaging, you could tell more than one truth in a case like that. You say that they're down in the basement, that'd be the truth.

Or you could say, I'm not going to tell you, that's the truth also. In one case you get your brothers in trouble, in the other case you get yourself in trouble. And you can guess which is the more Christian thing to do.

I heard a story, well, you probably heard it too, it's from Corrie ten Boom's book, *The Hiding Place*, how that in Germany, or not in Germany, but in Holland, where Corrie ten Boom and her father and sisters lived during World War II, which came under Nazi persecution, they were hiding Jews in their home. They were a Christian family and they were hiding Jews so that they could smuggle them out of the country and they wouldn't be sent off to concentration camps or death camps. And they had hidden places in their homes for this.

They had closets, they had false backs to hide them in. They had one particular place that was under the kitchen table. There was a piece of the floor that could be removed and they could hide a couple of people down there and cover it up and then they put the kitchen table with a long tablecloth that reached down to the floor over it.

A really ideal hiding place. Well, on one occasion, there were some Jewish people sitting around in the kitchen with this family and they got the alarm that the Gestapo was coming. And so, as they had drilled to do and had learned to do very quickly, the Jewish people got under the floor, under the table, and the piece of the floor was put back on there and everyone, all the Christian people, just stood around acting like nothing had happened and the Gestapo runs in and they said, Where are the Jews? And everyone was silent, of course, because everyone knew where the Jews were.

And if they would tell where the Jews were, the Jews would be arrested and dragged off to concentration camps. It was rather a hard situation. What made it especially hard was that there was a little girl in the family, about six years old, who was a Christian and had always been told to tell the truth.

Her parents had always told her never to lie. And the Gestapo agent looked over at this little girl and said, Where are the Jews? And it was a very tense moment, as you might imagine, because, well, they were on the horns of a dilemma. No one wanted the little girl to tell the truth in that case because they wanted the Jews to be safe, but they didn't want her to lie either and they'd always told her not to lie.

What would happen? Well, the little girl said, They're under the table, which was the truth. And so, as the agent got down on his knees and lifted up the tablecloth, the little girl started laughing uncontrollably and convulsively. And this officer thought that he was

being mocked and made fun of by this little girl, that she had put him on a false trail.

And so, he got up and stormed out of the house with his men and they went and looked somewhere else so that the Jews were spared. And someone would say, Well, that was sure a fortunate coincidence. That wasn't a coincidence.

And I don't believe that we need to rely on coincidences like that. I believe that we need to always do what's right. That little girl was right to tell the truth.

And by laughing, I don't think she was intending to deceive. I think there was an angel tickling her. But I think that it illustrates how God can supernaturally intervene in a situation to honor His children's conviction to do what's right under all circumstances.

And it can never be right to lie for a Christian because the devil is the father of all lies. And all liars are going to have their place in the lake of fire. And there's no way to justify it and say, Well, the end justifies the means.

It's the lesser of two evils. It's better to tell a little lie here than to offend this person or get these people in trouble or something. The fact of the matter is you can always truthfully say, I don't feel at liberty to talk about that.

If someone says, What do you think about me? You might say, Well, maybe we should talk about this some other time. I don't feel at liberty to talk about this right now. Now, that might be more offensive than telling the truth.

In fact, more often than we think, probably we should tell people the truth about what we think about them. A lot of times, out of what we call diplomacy, which is really dishonesty, we give people the impression that we're quite pleased with them when we really have some serious criticism of them, which perhaps they need to hear. But because we are cowardly and don't want a confrontation, we'd rather lie.

It's much easier to lie and say, Oh, I think you're a very nice person instead of really sitting down to a confrontation that may involve the loss of their friendship temporarily or something like that. But listen, the Bible says He that rebukes a man afterward findeth more favor than he that flattereth with the lips. And the fact is, you'll certainly find more favor with God and usually with the person himself if you tell him the truth, even if it's an unpleasant truth, than if you flatter them and don't tell them what you know they need to hear because you're afraid of the confrontation.

Eventually, they'll find out that they needed to hear it and they'll know that you didn't tell them. And the person who rebukes the person later will find more favor than the flatterer. So, let us never compromise on this matter of truth.

All God's works are done in truth. It says in Psalm 25, All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto them that fear Him. If we fear God and we're walking in His paths, we'll

find that all of His paths are mercy and truth.

That means if we're walking in His paths, we'll be operating consistently in mercy and in truth. in truth and in truth. Never in lies.

Jesus would never lie. And if He would never lie, then we can't ever feel at liberty to do so either. Now, it is true you can point to times in the Bible where people lied, like Rahab and others.

Rahab lied about the spies. And there are other cases in the Scripture where people lied. But the Bible doesn't say that we should imitate every person in the Bible or that every person whose story is recorded in the Bible is something that is commendable.

The Bible records many things that evil people did and many compromised things that good people did. And the only person that we're really supposed to emulate entirely is Jesus Christ. And we know that He never lied and never will lie.

And He even drew attention to that fact when He said, Which of you convinces me of sin? And yet if I speak the truth, why don't you believe me? He indicated that no one could accuse Him of lying. He always spoke the truth. Therefore, they must believe Him.

How weakened our position is if anyone we know has ever heard us tell a lie. And then we try to tell them some truth, especially something about the Lord. You know, I've told this before many times, but there are some new people here who haven't heard it.

I think it's very important, especially at this season because Christmas season is a time when many children are looking for Santa Claus. And I'm not one of those Christians who gets real upset about celebrating holidays. I think we all know that Christmas and Easter and a lot of those holidays have pagan origins.

And that many of the ways that we celebrate them are pagan in origin. I suppose that's common knowledge enough and it's not something that I ever get on a soapbox about. But there is something about Santa Claus that I think is very important for Christians to know.

And that is that there is no Santa Claus. And I think parents need to know that. And they need to know that if they tell their children there is a Santa Claus, they are lying.

Now, true, they always do it for what they think is a good reason. The children enjoy it so much. It's a delightful little fantasy.

It's harmless. They grow out of it. Eventually, we'll tell them it wasn't true.

It's a harmless lie. But it is a lie. And there's a story that's made a strong impression on me that's very close to home because it was my own father who had this experience.

But when he was a child, his parents, who were not Christians, told him there was Santa Claus, just like most American families, and many Christian families tell their children there is a Santa Claus. And he believed them because children, by nature, trust their parents. He believed them.

In fact, he believed them for a long time. And they forgot to ever correct him. In fact, he got to the point where he was in the fourth grade and he still believed there was a Santa Claus because his parents had never told him otherwise.

They had only told him when he was little that there was one and never ever corrected that. They assumed he'd grow out of it or learn or whatever. But when he was in the fourth grade, he got into an argument with one of his schoolmates about whether there was a Santa Claus or not.

And he was the only person his age who believed it. But he believed it because his parents had told him. And he trusted his parents.

And this argument between himself and one of his schoolmates became so heated that he said, Well, let's go back. We'll ask my parents. They certainly, they're the ones who told me.

They know. And so he and his friend went to his home and his mother was there cooking when he walked in. And he says, Mom, you know, George doesn't believe there's a Santa Claus.

There is a Santa Claus. It isn't there. And suddenly his mother realized that she'd never told him the truth about that.

And it was long overdue. And so she says, No, there isn't a Santa Claus. And he was not only humiliated in front of his friend, he was devastated about the whole trustworthiness of his parents altogether.

Now, fortunately, he learned about Christ from someone other than his parents, his grandfather, who never did lie to him. And he trusted his grandfather and found the Lord. But I don't think he ever trusted his parents very much after that.

Now, many of you could say, Well, my parents taught me about Santa Claus and it never hurt me. My relationship with my parents is fine. Well, maybe.

But let me ask you this. You whose parents told you that there was a Santa Claus, do you now believe that they would never ever under any circumstance ever lie to you? If you do believe that, then either your parents have repented or else you're deluded. Because a parent who will tell their child there is a Santa Claus is lying to their child for what they consider to be a good reason.

I mean, I'm not trying to say they've got bad motives. I'm just saying they consider it a decent reason. It's fun for the kids or whatever.

For your own good, I'll lie to you. And I'll tell you about it later. But the point is that just shows that they have no scruples about lying when they think the situation justifies it.

When they think there's a good enough reason to do it, they'll lie. Because everyone tells their kids there's a Santa Claus. Okay, well, when everyone starts lying about everything else too, then that'll be just as right to lie about everything else too.

The truth of the matter is if you ever tell your child anything that is not strictly the truth and they learn that you deliberately did it, you're going to lose something in their trust. You actually trample upon their trust, which God builds into them. Jesus talks about having faith like a little child because children have faith in their parents.

But you injure and bruise it by lying to them. And that's... I'm not saying that everyone has been devastated when they learn there wasn't a Santa Claus. It's true enough.

Usually people learn early enough that they don't think much about it. But think about this a moment. If the same person who taught them that there is a Santa Claus, later is the same person who teaches them that there is a Jesus Christ, and they have, in the meantime, learned that there isn't a Santa Claus, it was just a big joke, then what is to make them believe that there's really a Jesus Christ? When it gets down to it, there's a lot of similarities.

You never see Santa Claus, you never see Jesus Christ. You're told that they see every move you make and that they reward you if you do good and they don't reward you if you do bad. So many things in common.

These invisible characters, Santa Claus and Christ. Well, if you tell your child there's a Santa Claus, and he later learns you were not telling the truth, and you later tell him well, there's a Christ, a Jesus Christ, who's watching you, to whom you'll answer someday, why should they believe you? If they do, you're very fortunate. But you haven't earned their trust, that's for sure.

My father determined he would never, ever allow his children to falsely believe in Santa Claus. And so he always told us the truth. And you know what? We enjoyed Christmas just as much as the kids in the neighborhood who believed in Santa Claus.

In fact, maybe more. We got presents too. We didn't lose anything by it.

I don't think anyone was more excited when Christmas came around than I was and I knew there wasn't going to be a Santa Claus visiting our house. But you know what? I know for a fact my father will never lie to me about anything. My father doesn't know everything and he may tell me things that are wrong because he doesn't know that

they're wrong.

But my father has established between himself and me such a trust that I know he would never, under any circumstances, lie to me. And very few fathers have that kind of trust established with their children because of compromises in this area. And same thing between husbands and wives and, of course, relationships of all kinds.

If someone hears you lie about anything and later learns that you lied, what right do you have to expect them to believe you when you tell them other things that they can't verify like the things of Christ, the things of God? Funny thing happened. I determined I'd never let my kids believe in Santa Claus either. I told my daughter for years there wasn't a Santa Claus and she believed it anyway.

She wanted to, but now she knows better. At least I told her there wasn't one. She wanted to believe what her friends believed for a while there when she was very little.

But the fact is that we need to be truthful in all respects and never consider that any desired result will justify a violation of God's command. God's command is that we be like Christ, that we be uncompromising in being like Christ, that we be totally honest. I know that Jesus will never lie to me because He has established a perfect record of never having never lied to anyone.

God's faithfulness is such that I've never had occasion to doubt it. When my other wife was killed in an accident, many of our friends were shaken in their faith because she was a very godly woman and I was in the ministry and it seemed like an unjust sort of a calamity to come upon us. But I can tell you very honestly I never once doubted the faithfulness of God in a situation.

I never questioned His integrity or anything in the matter. A lot of people were quite shaken by it but I wasn't and the reason I wasn't is because I'd learned by a history of my relationship with God that He never lies, that He never does anything wrong or unjust, that He's totally reliable. If I didn't know that from having had relationship with Him and finding Him so, then in a crisis situation like that my faith in Him would have had grounds to be quite shaken.

And the same is true in human relationships. If you do not establish between you and all those that you have relationships with of any kind a precedent of absolute unbroken truthfulness, then in a crisis they will have the right to take your words with a grain of salt and to say, well, I'm sure these people mean well but who knows whether they're really telling the truth. Maybe they think that telling me this is just a nice thing to say.

And I think that we can see that lying for what seems to be a good cause is not a Christian practice. It's a worldly practice. It's a satanic practice.

The road to hell, someone has said, it's an old saying in fact, is paved with good

intentions. People may intend something good by it but if they're not obeying Christ, it's sin. And there's a place in the lake of fire for all liars.

So we need to repent if we have compromised in this area. I think probably a lot of us have in one way or another. This command, thou shalt not bear false witness, obviously regulates the tongue.

It involves self-control over our speech. We're told in James that the tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. It says, Therewith bless we God, even the Father, and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

In James chapter 1, in verse 26, it says, If a man seems to be religious and does not bridle his tongue, that man's religion is empty. Bridling the tongue is a very, very crucial thing. Because as I said, false rumors, gossip, slander, these kinds of damaging things that the tongue is capable of doing, they slip out so easily, but they're not very easy to regroup and regather and contain them again.

Once you've let it out, you can't gather it back up. If you say something to someone that they know is false, you can go back and say, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say that. That was a lie.

I'll now tell you the truth. But they'll still realize that you lied and that it is not beyond you to do so. Would to God that Christians had such a reputation because of their straightforward dealings that people knew that it was not their nature to lie and that it was beyond them to lie.

But of course, that isn't the case at this point, but we need to make that our goal. And we need to certainly control our tongue to avoid letting our tongue speak things which are convenient at the moment, but which later will look back and say, well, that wasn't entirely true. I can think of times where I was drawn in to a conversation that got me involved in gossip, and I'm not trying to disclaim responsibility for it.

It's my fault whenever I've gotten involved in gossip. But I can remember how subtly drawn into it I've sometimes been, so much so that it wasn't until later that I looked back and said, well, I was gossiping and realized that my tongue was not bridled, that I would, as they say, put my mouth in motion, or put my... What is the saying? Put your mouth in gear before your brain is engaged or something like that? There's times when our mouths go ahead of our brains. But what James is saying, if you don't bridle your tongue, meaning hold it back, make sure that it doesn't run ahead of your thoughts, make sure that you think things through before you say them, make sure that before you say something that it is entirely true.

Then, of course, we will be people who bridle our tongues in the proper manner. It says in Ephesians chapter 4 that we are to put on the new man. I'd like you to look there for a

moment because it gives some specific examples of how we put on the new man.

The new man, of course, is Christ whom we put on, meaning we take on ourselves his attributes and his characteristics morally and spiritually. But in Ephesians 4, one thing we looked at in this chapter, actually, last week, when we were talking about stealing, is in verse 28. It says, Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands, the thing which is good that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Now, what it says there about a person who once stole, and that was our subject last week, not this week, but a person who is a thief in the past needs to not only stop being a thief, he needs to now start doing some positive things in the opposite direction to break his habit. Instead of just stopping thieving, he now has to actually work hard because thievery comes from laziness and covetousness. So he's got to counter... At this point, the cassette tape was stopped and turned over to record on the second side.

He's got to counteract those things, laziness and covetousness, by working hard, laboring with his hands, to counteract his laziness, and to give generously to those who have need, which counteracts his covetousness. In other words, it's not just a matter of saying, okay, stealing was part of the old man, I'll put that off. Now I'm neutral.

No, you've got to put on the new man too. You put off the old and you put on the new. You put off stealing and you put on hard work and giving.

Whereas you were on the take before, you're now on the giving end. Okay. Now, with lying, Ephesians 4 also has something to say about that, but it is a parallel to it.

It's a little earlier in the chapter. In verse 25, Ephesians 4, 25, it says, Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Now, that immediately follows his exhortation to put off the old man and to put on the new man.

He says, put away lying. That lying is part of the old man. That's part of the way we lived in Adam.

But we have to put on the new man, and here's what we have to specifically do. Begin telling the truth. Now, that doesn't mean just stop lying, but it means actually discipline ourselves to tell the truth, even when we might rather not say anything at all.

But when really it's appropriate to tell the truth, to say it. I had one friend who always used to tell me to be brutally honest with him. And sometimes honesty seems rather brutal.

But of course, it says earlier in this chapter, in verse 15, that we're to be speaking the truth in love. We can be honest without being brutally honest. We don't have to bludgeon someone with the truth so that they limp away and wonder if they want to

commit suicide.

I'll tell you, there's times when a sharp word was spoken to me that made me feel like, well, it ruined my whole day. Made me wonder if I really wanted to go on to see another day. Maybe I'm just sensitive.

I don't really think I'm very sensitive. So probably everyone else has had similar experiences. It says in Proverbs, there is the one who speaks like the piercing of the sword, but the tongue of the wise is held.

That is, of course, that if you use your tongue properly, you can heal. But if you use it improperly, it's like a person flailing around with a sword cutting people up. Now, you can speak the truth in love, meaning that love has to be your motivation.

And if love is your motivation, that means, of course, you're going to do to your brother what you would want him to do to you. If you're in the wrong, you would want him to correct you, but you'd want him to do it in a certain manner. You wouldn't want him to come up and just, in a brutal and insensitive way, come and throw it in your face.

It says in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 1, Galatians 6, 1, it says, Brethren, if any of you be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves, lest ye also be tempted. That is, you see someone who needs the truth, someone who needs correction, someone who's gone off the wrong way, you go to him. You go and speak the truth, but you do it, as he says, in a spirit of meekness, or as here it says, speaking the truth in love.

Meekness means you don't go there in a judgmental way. You go there with an attitude of restoration. You want to give them the truth, but you want to give it to them as gently as necessary to make it possible for them to receive it.

You can turn people off to the truth, obviously, by the way you give it. And it's necessary for you to, as it says in another place, Paul says, let your speech be with grace. This is, I think, in Colossians 3. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.

We need to speak graciously and meekly and lovingly to people, but that doesn't mean diplomatic in the sense of lying when people really need to hear something. You actually take a risk sometimes of losing a person's friendship by telling them the truth. Paul did.

In Galatians, he said to the Galatians, Have you become my enemies because I spoke the truth unto you? That happens sometimes. That's the price you pay for following the Lord. Sometimes people don't like you when you follow the Lord.

And even though a person may cease to be your friend when you tell them the truth, even though the thing you're telling them has nothing to do directly with the Lord, the fact is you're doing it because you're serving the Lord. You're doing it because of your

loyalty to the Lord. It's something you'd rather not even do.

It'd be much more comfortable to walk away from the situation and never say a word. But because of your loyalty to Christ and your obligation to do what He did, that is, speak the truth in love, even when it's painful to the person, but to do it in a meek and kind way, you may lose something by it. You may suffer persecution for it.

It might cost you friendships. And a lot of times, you can cost yourself friendships by not being meek and not being loving in the way you speak to people. But the point is that you need to speak to people and you also need to do it in the right spirit.

You need to not only bear true witness, but you need to bear witness in a way that is intended to bring restoration and love. The way that you would want someone to confront you if you're in the wrong. Because after all, they will do it to you the way you did it to them.

That's what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7, Judge not lest ye be judged. And in the parallel in Luke 6, it says, Condemn not that you will not be condemned. You condemn others, they'll likely turn around and condemn you eventually.

They'll react to you. The measure that you meet will be measured to you again. If you go to someone lovingly, then it's likely that when you need corrected, they'll come to you lovingly.

If on the other hand, you gossip about a person, slander them and all, well, don't be surprised if it comes back on you. After all, remember, that's what happens to a false witness. He gets paid back to him the thing that he was dishing out to the other guy.

That was in the law. And God often supervises it to make sure that happens exactly. If you've been slandered, if people are speaking evil of you, before you complain, you might look at yourself and see whether you've done that to someone else.

Maybe that you're reaping what you've sown. Truthfulness then, as a Christian understands it, has got to be something that comes from inside too. It's not just a matter of speaking the truth.

It's a matter of wanting to speak the truth too. That is, it's got to be something in you that is by nature truthful. You don't speak the truth mechanically because you know that's the Christian thing to do.

But your nature is honest. You need honesty as a characteristic of your life because that was one of the characteristics of Christ. In the Psalms even, though that's Old Testament, even so, David understood that the truthfulness that God desires in His people is something more than just in their speaking.

It has to be more than skin deep. It has to be something that comes from an honest and a character that has integrity. And that's, for instance, demonstrated in Psalm 51, verse 6, where David said, Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me no wisdom.

David said to God, You desire truth in the inward parts. You don't just want me to be speaking the truth. You want me to have an honest heart before you and before myself too.

You want me to be a person who loves truth. And because I love truth, I speak the truth. But even if I didn't have opportunity to speak the truth, I'd still love it.

I'd still be an honest person. And when I speak the truth, I speak what's in my heart. Just like when the devil speaks a lie, he speaks of himself, Jesus said.

So when a Christian speaks the truth, he speaks out of his own character, his own nature, which is a truthfulness, a truthful person. The same principle is seen in Psalm 15, in verse 2. Verses 1 and 2 say, Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walks uprightly and works righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart, or from the heart. That is, when he speaks the truth, it's coming from his inner man.

It's something where he's just got an obsession for truth. He loves truth and he wants to speak the truth. And therefore he does.

The people of God are described in Isaiah 63, 8 as children who cannot lie or who will not lie. God speaks of his people there. Isaiah 63, maybe I'll just look at it real quick.

Isaiah 63, in verse 8, it said, For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie. So he was their Savior. He saved them, he said, because he considered that they were his people.

How did he know? How did he characterize his people? They were children who would not lie. That is, it was not their nature to lie. Jesus said to the Pharisees, You're of your father, the devil.

Therefore you lie because the devil is the father of lies. But these, God said, these are my people. They are children who will not lie.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if God could look at you and say, This is one of my people. He is a child who will not lie. And will not means, of course, it is against his will to lie.

It is against his nature. It goes against his grain to lie because he's truthful in his heart. God desires truth in the inward parts and that's what he's looking for.

Those who speak the truth from their hearts. And so, we might feel good reading the

ninth commandment in knowing that we've never, in a court of law, ever borne false testimony against a person. And yet, we might not be truthful people in our hearts.

In fact, you can even tell the truth in a way that's deceptive. You can tell a half-truth. When Abraham, twice, went out of Canaan to sojourn in foreign lands, once in Philistia and once in Egypt, he said that his wife was his sister because he was afraid if he acknowledged her as his wife that someone would kill him so that they could marry his wife.

So, he said, well, she's my sister. Now, later, it turned out he was telling the truth. She was his sister.

She was his half-sister. She had the same father but a different mother as Abraham had. So, it was a half-truth.

But, obviously, though the statement was true, it was calculated to deceive. Basically, he said she was my sister in order to convey the information she's not my wife, though she was that too. And so, you can tell the truth in a lying way.

If you are a person of integrity in your heart, you will tell the truth always in a way that will convey truth instead of a way that is intended to deceive. Deception or lies, I should say, always have three elements in them or else they're not lies. One is telling an untrue statement.

That's always part of a lie. It's an untrue statement. I should say, generally, it's part of a lie.

Secondly, it is done intentionally because, after all, if it's not intentional, it's not really a lie. You could tell someone something that you believe is true and you turn out to be wrong. You haven't lied.

You've just been mistaken. A lie is telling an untruth and doing it intentionally and, thirdly, doing it with a desire to deceive. Now, the reason I add that, you might think, well, that's understood.

If you tell an untruth on purpose, you're trying to deceive, but not always. Sometimes people just joke around a lot. Sometimes people sarcastically make remarks that are not true.

They know they're not true, but they don't really intend to deceive anyone by it. They don't really intend it to be understood as true. There are people who are... their personality is just that way.

They're always joking around and saying things sarcastically, which they don't mean to be understood literally, but sometimes they're so consistent that you wonder, are they

telling the truth? I mean, is this a sarcastic remark or do they really mean it? So many times there are people I've had to deal with where I said, really? Are you really mean it? They say, oh, no, I'm just kidding, you know. And there's a scripture about that, about people who do that. It's in Proverbs 26, verses 18 and 19.

Proverbs 26, verses 18 and 19. It says, as a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbor and saith, am I not in sport? The man who deceives his neighbor and then when he's found out his neighbor says, wait, that's not true. He says, oh, yeah, I was just kidding.

I was just in sport. There are people who do that as a habit. You know, you catch them in a lie and they say, well, I was just joking.

Well, you know what the Bible says about a person like that? It says he's like a madman who's casting around firebrands, arrows and death. He's a man who's criminally insane. He's not just a madman who thinks he's Napoleon and beats his head against the wall or something like that.

He's a man who's dangerous. Like a lunatic who's just throwing dangerous weapons around every which direction. A man who's out deceiving people and then later says, oh, I was just kidding.

I was in sport when I said that. He may not be intending to try to destroy anyone any more than a man who's criminally insane is trying to do anything wrong. But he's saying he's a very dangerous person anyway whether he intends to be or not.

And so it is possible for people to tell an untruth intentionally without intending to deceive, in which case they're not really lying in the strict sense of that word. But nonetheless, they're doing a very dangerous thing. And to joke around about things that are not true is obviously an insane thing to do because you have no idea who's going to think you are telling the truth.

Some people are very gullible, very trusting. And you'll say something jokingly that you expect everyone would know that's a joke. Later you'll find out someone who heard it took it very seriously and thought it was true because they're a very gullible and believing kind of a person.

And you'll realize that in essence without even wanting to you lied to them. You misled them. So even jokingly, while it may seem clever sometimes to jokingly do that kind of thing, it's dangerous.

Christians should persuade use of all that kind of deceptive humor and should just always seek to tell the truth plainly and seriously. Not that all humor is wrong, but obviously some kinds of humor it's difficult to know whether you're serious or not. Now I want to give you just as we close this study a few examples of how we might become

violators of this ninth commandment thou shalt not bear false witness.

The first case obviously is by bearing a false witness or slandering a person. That's the most obvious sense in which we violate it. That's actually in accordance with the wording of the command.

If you are in a position to tell something that is degrading about a person that's not true and you say it, then you've broken this commandment. Whether it's in a court of law or out of a court of law. Slander, gossip, all these things are in the same category.

If it's false, it shouldn't be told. In Titus chapter 3, in verse 2, it says speak evil of no man. When it says speak evil of no man, it doesn't mean don't criticize.

It means don't speak anything that is evil. And what is evil is lying about people. Slandering people, that's speaking evil of them.

After all, the Apostle Paul said some rather negative things about some people. But he wasn't speaking evil of them in the sense that he here tells us not to in Titus 3, in verse 2. He was telling the truth. He was warning people.

You know, you can tell the truth about someone and still be doing the wrong thing. Because gossip is sometimes true too. But if you're telling the truth to a person in a way that is intended to damage the person you're talking about, then you're not speaking the truth in love.

And that's why gossip is always sin. Gossip is always wrong. If you're talking to someone about a problem and that person you're talking to is not part of the problem or part of the solution, then what's the point of talking to them about it? You're obviously not doing it in love.

Now, on the other hand, if that person is part of the problem, if you're talking about a person about a problem that involves what they are doing, that's not gossip, clearly enough. Or if you're talking to someone who's part of the solution, if you're talking to their pastor and saying, listen, there's something going on in that person's life and I think you need to know. You need to go talk to these people.

You know, that's not gossip either. You can tell things about another person that are negative with a positive and godly motive for doing so. And it can be a desire to restore the person and so forth.

But, and also to warn other people about a person. Paul did that. He told Timothy and others to watch out for certain people that he named by name.

He said, they're dangerous. Now, he was speaking against them, but he wasn't violating his own command to speak evil of no man. He was speaking the truth and he was

speaking it in love because he loved the people that he was speaking to.

He wanted to warn them against danger. But then again, the majority of what we call gossip is not like that at all. It's not a warning.

It's not talking to the person who really needs to be addressed about it, either because they're part of the problem or going to be part of the solution. It's just plain fun to run someone else down behind their back. And of course, the reason people do that is because they themselves are insecure and they feel pretty low about themselves.

The lower your self-image, I suppose, the more you'll want to make other people look bad so that you look better by comparison or by contrast. And I think that a person who's always gossiping must have a very low image of themselves because they must always make everyone look bad so that they can feel like they look better by contrast. And that person needs to really repent and get their life right and get a proper biblical sense of identity and self-worth because the Bible indicates that we have worth.

And interestingly, the person that we're gossiping about has worth too and we owe it to them not to do what we're doing when we gossip. But slander and accusations falsely against people is obviously a violation. Now, at the same time, if you give a positive testimony against a criminal... Now, what I mean by that is if you know a person's done something wrong and you say they haven't, you might say, well, I'm not bearing false witness against them.

It's true my witness isn't true but it's not against them. It's not against my neighbor. It's in their favor.

It's a merciful thing to do, some would think. Now, I know that guy is wrong but I'm going to tell people that he isn't. I'm going to cover for him.

Some people might not see that in the same category as bearing false witness against your neighbor because they say, well, that's not against him. Well, maybe it's not against him but it's against your other neighbors. There's a criminal.

He's a menace to your society. If you're in a position in a court of law to speak the truth about him and see that justice is done to him and you instead lie, of course, you may be doing what he would want you to do but you're not doing the loving thing to your other neighbors who are going to become his next victim when he's released. And the same is true on a more social level that has nothing to do with court or criminal.

There are times when we recommend someone to someone else before we know that that person really can live up to that recommendation. There are people that I've been asked about. Can these people be trusted? And I didn't know the people very well but I just kind of gave them a positive recommendation just because I thought it was a nice thing to do and later found out that my recommendation was false.

I gave a positive word about someone who didn't deserve it. That's, in a sense, bearing false witness against my neighbor. Bearing false witness to the hurt of some of my neighbors by causing them to trust someone who's untrustworthy.

It says in the scripture, in Proverbs, and this is in Proverbs 17, 15, it says, He that justifies the wicked and he that condemns the just are equally both an abomination to the Lord. Not only the person who condemns the righteous man but also the person who releases the guilty man. He says both are abominations to the Lord.

Some famous figure in our history in America who was quoted to me when I was in high school and I don't remember the person's name or who it was but I remember the statement very clearly said, I'd rather see a thousand guilty men go free than one innocent man punished. Or something like that. Anyone ever hear a quote to that effect? It was a famous quote and I remember it well because it stuck in my mind.

I thought, well, that sounds really good and really noble and really true. Better to see a thousand guilty men go free than one innocent man punished. Then I ran across that scripture that says it's equally an abomination to justify the wicked as to condemn the just.

I said, no, it's not better to let a thousand wicked men go free than to condemn one person. Obviously, all false judgment is bad but we sometimes forget how bad it is really to not tell the truth that will incriminate a person when they should be incriminated. Truth will sometimes incriminate.

Jesus told truth that incriminated the Pharisees. He warned his disciples about him and he called the hypocrites their faith and said, well, you might have to do what they say to do but don't follow their example because they're hypocrites. He said incriminating things because they were true and they had to be said.

He could have been, we might think, more loving in his attitude toward the Pharisees but he was speaking the truth because of his love for his disciples and because he didn't want other people to be deceived by those Pharisees and that means that we need to tell truth, even negative truth, about people under some circumstances if the circumstance calls for it. Now, we don't need to go around and blab things to people who don't need to hear it. I'm simply saying that if we neglect to tell the truth even incriminating truth about someone then we are also violating the principle.

Another thing that is to bear false witness against your brother, you might not think of it at first that way, is flattery. When you flatter your brother, I said already the scripture says he that rebukes a man later will find more favor than he that flatters with his tongue. Another scripture in Proverbs 29.5 said he that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

Proverbs 29.5 He that flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. What does that mean? It means if you're flattering someone, which usually means of course you're speaking to them, complimenting them and so forth, beyond the point of truth. Flattering usually means that you're telling people that you like them or that they're nice or that they're pretty or something like that for reasons other than that it's a true statement.

It's because you want to appeal to their ego or get some favor from them. That's what flattery is. Well, he that flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet, meaning you're leading that person into a trap.

Now, you might say, well, I have flattered some people, but I haven't really been trying to manipulate them or anything. I just like to make people feel good. You're still leading them into a trap because you're not letting them be in touch with reality.

You're not telling the truth about themselves. People need to know the truth. And if you give them some kind of a false view of themselves, a flattered view, they'll flatter themselves too.

And it doesn't do anyone a favor to tell them that they're... to tell little boy he's a good boy if he's really not a good boy. I know a lot of psychologists who say that you should. But the fact of the matter is we need to tell people the truth.

We might say, well, we've got great hopes for you to be a better boy, which would be true, but you don't flatter people and give them some false image of themselves. You spread a trap for them. You're actually bearing false witness against them even though you think you're speaking positively, complimentary toward them.

It's to their hurt that you're doing it. Therefore, you're violating the command when you do that. Of course, another way that we can bear false witness is through false teaching.

Now, a lot of you aren't in the position to be teachers of Scripture and things like that, but a minister or someone can be a false teacher. And of course, he's hurting people that way by his lies. It says in 2 Peter 2, in the first verse, it says that there were false prophets also among them, even as there shall be false teachers among you who privileged shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

False teachers. It says concerning false teachers in 1 Timothy 4, 1 and 2, Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times many shall depart from the faith and give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron. There are people who bear false witness from a pulpit or door to door or various ways, teach false doctrines.

That can be the most damaging kind of line there is. Because, of course, a person's views of God and of spiritual reality are the most essential views about which to have the

right ones. And anyone who's teaching false views has a strict condemnation, it says in James chapter 3. It says concerning teachers, it says don't be many teachers because we have a stricter judgment.

And if a person teaches false doctrines, they are, of course, violating the ninth command in a way that is extremely, for which an extreme judgment is due them for it. And it should put fear in the mind of anyone who's in the position to teach the truth because to teach false doctrines is definitely something the Bible says they bring upon themselves swift destruction. They have their conscience seared with a hot iron.

One other way that I can think of offhand and we'll close with it, in which a person might be guilty of bearing false witness would be actually bearing false witness about oneself by hypocritically pretending to be something that they're not. Now, that's against your brother too. If you pretend to be something that you're not, you're obviously leading your brother astray for some reason or another.

He's going to have a false view of you and he's going to relate to you in a way not according to reality and truth which will ultimately hurt in some way or another. The Bible talks about that too in 2 Peter 2. It talks about false teachers there and it says that they are wells without water. This is 2 Peter 2.17. It says they're wells without water and they are clouds without rain.

What that means is that in that society, which was a desert society, when you saw a well, you'd say, oh, praise God, water. And then you'd go expecting to get something, getting nourishment, to get refreshed. But you'd get to that well and there was no water.

Or you'd see clouds come in and say, praise God, rain, finally. But then the clouds come and go and there was no rain. And it says that's what these false teachers are.

They're pretending to have something for you. They're pretending to have some spiritual thing to impart to you. But they're like a well without water.

They're like clouds without rain. They don't have anything to offer. They're hypocritically pretending to be something.

And therefore, they are bearing a false witness about themselves. Making false claims about themselves either verbally or else very subtly in some other way. Pretending to be something.

In Proverbs 25, 14, it says, He that boasts of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain. Same kind of figure we got in 2 Peter and also, by the way, in Jude. The clouds without rain are mentioned of false teachers.

But here in Proverbs, where probably the image came from originally, Proverbs 25, 14, it says, He that boasts of a false gift is like wind and clouds without rain. So obviously, a

person who pretends to have something spiritual to offer that he doesn't really have is also bearing a false witness. Well, all of these are ways in which which I felt Christians themselves may violate.

Most of us would not actually perjure ourselves in court, which is what bearing false witness against your brother literally refers to. It's going into court and perjuring yourself and lying. I think most Christians would know they can't do that.

But there are many ways in which we compromise on truth, which because everyone does it or because our conscience doesn't smite us at the time or because it's not verbally stated a direct prohibition against that specific thing, we feel like it's an okay thing. I feel that when we look at the commands of God, when we study the laws of God, we need to ask ourselves, are there any applications of this principle that I am violating? It is said of Ezra in Ezra chapter 7 and verse 10 that he was a ready scribe and the good hand of the Lord God was upon him. God was blessing Ezra because he says he had determined in his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

That means Ezra had it in his heart and he was going to, first of all, seek the law of the Lord. Firstly, so he could do it and secondly, so he could teach it to others. When we study the law of God, whether we're studying the Old Testament law or the New, of course, our approach to the Old Testament is different than our approach to the New and our relationship to it is different.

Nonetheless, when we study it, we realize that we are reading something where God has disclosed His own heart. While we might say, I'm not violating the letter of this command, we might, if we would reflect a little deeper, realize that in some points we do violate the spirit of the command. That's been what my desire has been tonight to share there are some ways that Christians may be guilty of violating this particular principle, this particular law in principle.

Therefore, I hope that we can be a little more clear in evaluating our own actions and our own speech and our own tendencies which are sometimes on the deceptive side.