

COMMANDMENT #9: TELLING THE TRUTH

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"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."Exodus 20:16



Perjury--lying under oath at a trial--sends innocent people to prison and gives guilty people freedom to do more harm. False testimony in court harms others and offends God. So does every other kind of lying and gossip.

A child acts friendly toward another kid but behind his back speaks of him as a loser. A businessman bamboozles someone into signing a contract even though the fine print is sure to cause problems. A doctor tells a dying cancer patient that she'll probably be okay, prompting her to endure painful, useless treatments and robbing her of the chance to face death honestly. A politician makes promises he can't keep. A preacher use traditional language but twists it into a different meaning. God hates all such lying.

But wouldn't it be a minor matter for a man and his wife to exaggerate a bit and make a generous gift sound even more generous? Where was the harm if people thought this couple's big donation was the whole price of the property they sold instead of only part? But for this "little" lie, God struck Ananias and Sapphira dead. God doesn't strike every liar dead on the spot, but as the church of Jesus was getting started, God wanted everyone to get a clear message: lying has no place among people who are adopted by the God of truth, saved by the One who said, "I am the truth" (John 14:6)," and directed by "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17).

PRAYER--Lord, it is impossible for you to lie. Your truth is the anchor for our souls, firm and secure. Forgive our lies and gossip, and help us always to speak the truth in love. Amen.