##### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**Lesson 12 - The Ninth Commandment - Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor**

**Exodus 20:16**

**Introduction:** To begin with, some worthy quotes:

* “A lie has gone a mile, while truth is putting on its boots.”
* “The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh, but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones.”
* “She has a nice sense of *rumor*.”
* “When he (the devil) speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

Jesus said that these last five commandments fall under the heading of the second great commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Once again, we are reminded that we are to live by the law of love. We are not to look heartlessly and mechanically at a list of dos and don’ts, like following the instructions of assembling a tool, toy, furniture, etc. This is not like the dos and don’ts of planting a garden or a tree. The first five commandments are to be obeyed because we love God! This is first! The second five are to be obeyed because we love our neighbor. This is second! To live by the law of love means we do not kill, commit adultery, steal, lie, and covet; but we do not abstain because they are on the list, but because of the conduct of love.

Question: Will we commit these last five acts against one we love? The answer is No! If you find exception, it is because of a warped definition of love. The command is simple: “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” Add to this Jesus’ words of Matthew 7:12 and the matter becomes even more simple: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Love like this and we will not kill, adulterate, steal, lie, and covet!

# I. MATTHEW 12:34-37 OUR WORDS ARE A TESTIMONY OF OUR CHARACTER

## A. Matthew 12:33 Jesus makes the matter abundantly clear.

### 1. If for three or four seasons you come to a tree and all you get is bad fruit, you will soon come to the conclusion you have a bad tree.

### 2. If, on the other hand, the fruit is continually good, you may fairly conclude you have a good tree.

3. The point is that the quality of the fruit is directly related to the character of the tree.

## B. Jesus is primarily concerned about men and women, not horticulture.

### 1. Can we honestly believe that if a man or woman is given to being a liar, that it is of no significance because we can identify other good?

2. Matthew 15:10-20 It doesn’t matter how much shade comes from the tree with bad fruit nor how much oxygen it puts in the air; it remains a bad tree, being known by its fruit.

### 3. Ralph Waldo Emerson coined the popular phrase, “Your actions speak so loud I can’t hear a word you say.” Our words are as much or more a revelation of what we are (character) as any of our actions. In fact, our words are part of our actions.

4. Our country has drifted so far from God and His moral standard, the Ten Commandments, that often today, when a prominent person is shown to be corrupt, some still want to stand in their defense. They cringe at the idea of removing them from their position as unfit; a bad tree. The problem is they use that person as a mirror; they look at him or her and see themselves and therefore justify the conduct.

## C. To appreciate God’s condemnation of lying, observe its traveling companions.

## 1. The following list was suggested by William Barclay (and this is only a sampling):

1. Hosea 12:1 Falsehood and violence.
2. Nahum 3:1 Lies and plundering.
3. Proverbs 29:12 Lying and misgovernment.
4. Jeremiah 23:14 Committing adultery; walking in lies.

2. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things the Lord hates, and two of them are directly connected to the ninth Commandment: a lying tongue and a false witness that speaketh lies.

# ii. THE BROAD MEANING OF THE COMMANDMENT

**(Note:** Have you noticed? It seems most every commandment has a much more broad meaning and application than we would prefer. For example, the first two commandments are not just broken by jungle pagans in faraway lands. There are also sophisticated, cultured, and high-tech idolators. Just run through the whole list and in retrospect you recall that every commandment has its obvious and simple manner of being offended and also its more sophisticated manner of being offended.)

## A. Slander violates the commandment.

### 1. G. Campbell Morgan calls slander a worse sin than highway robbery or the bullet of an assassin. While one robs of property and the other of life, “the slanderer who invents a lie, and uses it, forms a weapon which takes away a reputation, and all the chances are against its ever being regained; and thus oftentimes causes untold and prolonged suffering to the innocent.”

### 2. To slander is to bear false witness.

## B. Talebearing violates the commandment.

### 1. Talebearing is to pass on a report to others with no regard for factual accuracy.

### 2. If we do not know something to be a fact, and we pass it on only to find it was a lie, we have participated in the lie.

3. In pious Jewish life, it was considered wrong to pass on certain matters that were 100% known to be true. How much worse to pass on matters, that could do damage, that are unproven?

## B. False impressions, innuendos, and insinuations are a violation of the commandment.

### 1. “Did you notice his wife had a black eye? Now I did not say he beats her. Oh no! I only asked if you noticed.” That is malice and not consistent with truth.

### 2. This can be applied to the positive slant as well as negative.

3. Insincere flattery would also fit here, as well as statements of exaggeration from impure motives.

4. There is no real point in going on with endless illustrations. We know when we are not truthful, and to not be truthful violates the commandment.

**Conclusion:** First, we should live mindful that lying offends the Holy God! Second, lying is not a private matter; others are affected. A false witness may destroy trust unjustly. On the other hand, a false witness may promote trust unjustly. Third, false witnessing and lying call for more false witness and lying until it is an awful way of life which produces hurt, confusion, malice, resentment, bitterness, and violence. You cannot bear false witness without it being againstGod and your neighbor.