

Command 9 - Do Not Lie

July 22, 2018

He stole \$64.8 billion dollars from the pockets of almost 5,000 people. That is a lot of money. He pulled off the largest financial fraud in U.S. history and the largest Ponzi scheme in the history of the world. Do you know his name?

Bernie Madoff.

Bernie was a former chairman of the NASDAQ Stock Market. He convinced all kinds of people to invest money with him because he could provide an abnormally high rate of return. How did he do it? It was a classic scheme of robbing from Peter to pay Paul. He was taking money from new investors and using it to artificially increase the rate of return for other investors. After he began this scheme, he continued it for 10 years until his books claimed he had billions of dollars that weren't in existence.

Bernie was sentenced to 150 years in prison. When he was asked about his crime, his famous words were, "It was all a lie. It was one big lie." His Ponzi scheme began as a lie, that led to another lie, which continued to snowball until he, and almost 5,000 others, were in trouble beyond repair.

Let's just say, I hope he wasn't managing your money.

As a church, we are studying the Ten Commandments. We are getting close to the end of the commandments. Today, we are studying the ninth commandment, which is about lying. Next Sunday, we combine campuses to have the all-church picnic and baptism at Gull Point. Unfortunately, I have an obligation that will take me out of town that weekend. Pastor Jordan and Pastor Stephen will lead that Sunday. The following week, we will return to regular

worship and will finish our study in the Ten Commandments. After that, we will be in a short four-week study in the book of Habakkuk. Then, in the fall we will begin our study of the Gospel of Mark. That is the truth. I am not lying.

Let's get back to the ninth commandment and see what God tells us about lying in this commandment.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Exodus 20:16 (ESV)

Like the other commands, we will learn: What does this commandment mean? Why did God give it? How do we violate it?

What does this commandment mean?

This commandment primarily refers to a court of law. In the ancient world, they didn't have forensic evidence. They didn't have DNA and CSI. Truth and justice hung in the balance based on the testimony of witnesses. Witnesses need to be truthful or justice was derailed.

For many courts in the nations surrounding Israel, justice was abused because of false witnesses. In many ancient legal systems, people were not presumed innocent until proven guilty. They were presumed guilty until proven innocent. There were few standards for the presentation of evidence. Sometimes the accused were not even allowed to make their defense. People could be convicted of a capital offense based on the testimony of one witness. If someone had a grudge against you, he or she could cause a lot of trouble if he or she wanted to be a false witness.

Thankfully, the legal system in ancient Israel was different. First, trials were done by a jury of elders. In addition, there had to be more than one witness of a crime (Deut. 19:15). When someone was sentenced to die, the accuser was

the one to throw the first stone (Deut. 17:17). It is one thing to accuse someone of a crime. It is another thing to take his or her life. That cut down on false witnesses. If an accuser was proven to be a liar, the punishment they were seeking for the accused was the punishment they endured for being a false witness (Deut. 19:18-19).

I say this to let you know that in the ancient world, the truth of a witness was very important. That is why Israel's legal system provided many protections from lying witnesses because they could do so much damage.

A great example of the damage a lying witness can cause was seen in the trial of Jesus. He was condemned to death based on the testimony of false witnesses.

This commandment clearly applies to lying under oath in a court situation, the worst form of lying.

As we learned with other commandments, while the Ten Commandments forbid the worst form of a particular sin, by implication, they also forbid all the lesser forms of a particular sin. For example, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said, "You have heard it is wrong to murder, but I tell you that if you hate your brother, you are a murderer in your heart." Tolerating hatred in the heart, which is what gives birth to murder, is also a violation of the sixth commandment. Jesus also reminded us of the seventh commandment, which tells us to not commit adultery. Then he said that it is also a violation of that command when a man looks at a woman with lustful intent in his heart. The seventh commandment doesn't just cover hand adultery. It covers heart adultery.

In a similar way, while the ninth command expressly forbids lying in a court of law while under oath, by extension it also forbids lesser lies, such as the ones that take place when we are talking to our neighbors over the backyard fence on a Saturday afternoon. By extension, this commandment tells us God doesn't want us to lie in any form.

This week, when I was studying, I ran across a verse that tells us of seven things the Lord hates. They are like fingernails on the chalkboard for God. He just can't stand them. Interestingly three of those seven things all pertain to lying, to dishonesty. God is very pro-truth. He is can't stand lies.

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. Proverbs 6:16–19 (ESV)

Why is it wrong to lie?

Today, lying is expected. It is an everyday occurrence. To get you thinking about lies, all I need is to mention a few stories in the news. Take the entire Hillary Clinton e-mail scandal. We have lots of lying. Take the Uranium One scandal. We have more lying. Think about Russian collusion. Nobody knows where to find the truth on that one. Every place we look, the world is filled with lies and there is a desperate search for truth.

Think about politics. We used to talk about lying politicians. Today, we don't even need two words. We only need one word. Lying and politicians are synonymous.

Lying is also pervasive in the media. The news also spreads lies and false information. Reporters shape information to conform it to their particular agenda. No place was this more apparent than in our last election.

Lying is standard for business. Some people say the best salesmen are the best liars. They will promise delivery on Friday when they know they won't be able to ship until Monday, but they lie to get the sale.

Advertising is also filled with lying. Rarely can a product deliver all an advertiser claims it can accomplish. It is hard to find someone completely honest in his or her advertising. Lying permeates the world. You wonder why everyone does it all the time.

The reason lying is pervasive is because the devil is in charge of the world. All those who are not walking with Christ are ultimately walking with Satan. He is the original liar. All who walk in his steps will lie just like him.

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 he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44 (ESV)

Whenever we lie, when we distort the truth, when we don't tell the truth, we are walking in the footprints of the devil instead of Jesus. Lying is what the devil does. It is his native language. Those who are following him will be known for lying like him.

God the Father and Jesus the Son are the exact opposite. They cannot lie. It is not in their nature. They are the truth.

...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began... Titus 1:2 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6 (ESV)

As God’s people, we should be notably different in this world. In a world of darkness because of lying, we are to stand out like a bright light of truth.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices. Colossians 3:9 (ESV)

Even when Jesus was before Pilate, he told us one of the reasons he came is to show us the truth because this world is filled with so much spin and lying about life.

Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” John 18:37 (ESV)

Not only are God Father and Jesus the Son the only source of truth in this world but God’s Word, our Bible, is also truth because God gave us his Word. Since God cannot lie, his Word is what guides us into truth. This is why we keep our fingers in the text at CrossWinds.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)

How do we lie?

Let’s talk about ways we violate this command by not being honest with our words. Of course, we all instinctively know that bold-face lies are wrong. Let’s look at other ways we lie that are not as obvious.

Flattery

Flattery is saying nice things to people that aren't true. You lie to them to compliment them. Flattery looks like, "You are so smart. I am sure you were the top of your class," or "Did you lost weight?" or "No, those jeans don't make you look fat." Flattery is speaking a compliment to someone's face that you wouldn't say behind his or her back. Flattering is a form of lying.

Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. Psalm 12:2 (ESV)

Incidentally, there is a difference between flattery and the gift of encouragement. Flattery is saying nice things to people that aren't true. The gift of encouragement is saying nice things to people that are true. The gift of encouragement is a great gift. I don't know about you, but I think we could all use a little encouragement. Just make sure that when we encourage people, we don't lie to do it or we are violating this commandment.

Exaggeration

This is a favorite sin of most fishermen, but it has also affected the rest of us. One of our favorite places to exaggerate is when we tell stories about ourselves. We like to come across smarter, more athletic and more popular to other people than we actually are. We exaggerate. As one person said, "The older I get, the better I was." This is just another form of lying.

In December 2001, George O'Leary was named the head football coach at the University of Notre Dame. It was a dream job. Two days after being named head coach, a reporter tried to interview some of the college football players that in New Hampshire that would have played with O'Leary when he claimed to be

on the team. They couldn't find any. It turned out that while O'Leary claimed to play football in New Hampshire, he hadn't actually played football. He had mono one year. He had a knee injury another year. He didn't letter in college football for three years, as his resume claimed. He stretched the truth. He lost his job at the University of Notre Dame before he even began his job because he lied by stretching the truth.

Stretching the truth is super common. Think about your week. You probably lied this way multiple times. When you were running late, did you exaggerate the amount of traffic that was at the bridge in Arnolds Park to cover for your poor planning? That is a lie. It is exaggerating and not being honest.

Another way we commonly stretch the truth is when someone hurts us as we are looking for sympathy. We exaggerate how much someone hurt us. We exaggerate what people did to us to get sympathy from others. That is just a fancy form of lying.

Another way we exaggerate is about our enemies. When we disagree with someone. It is easy to write them off completely and dislike them in all things, rather than disagree with them on some things. We lie by exaggerating our differences so we don't have to put in the effort of working through our differences. We see this in politics all the time. Rather than working together, Democrats and Republicans tend to stonewall one another and refuse to work together in any area rather than work together in the areas where they can work together to get things done. They lie and exaggerate their differences.

Remember this doesn't just happen in politics. It happens in us. It is easy to lie about people's faults and write them off in all areas. To do that is a lie.

Gossip, Slander and Libel

Gossip is passing on news about other people in a way that harms their reputation. When it is done verbally, it is called slander. When it is done in writing, it is called libel.

Most of the evening news is not news. It is slander and libel. It is making statements about people intended to damage their reputations. You find the most gossip when people are not working hard enough. When they have nothing to do in their own lives, they start gossiping about other people's lives. This is why they show soap operas to people who have nothing better to do than watch television in the daytime when they should be working.

Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. 1 Timothy 5:13 (ESV)

The best way to stop this kind of gossip is get a job. Get busy taking care of your own life and you will be too busy to gossip about somebody else's life.

Gossip and slander should not be part of a Christian's life.

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 1 Peter 2:1 (ESV)

For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. 2 Corinthians 12:20 (ESV)

In the 9th century, King Alfred, King of Wessex and England had severe penalties for those that gossiped and slandered. He had their tongues cut out. He wasn't as bad as he appears. He did give those guilt of the crime of slanderous

gossip the option to redeem their tongues by payment. The payment was a portion of the ransom price for a man's life. The amount of money depended on the value of the man you slandered. Either way, it was a lot of money. Why did he allow you to buy back your tongue for the price of a man's life? It was because through the slander of your tongue you could destroy a man's life. That is why this payment was so high.

In the court of public opinion, people are guilty because they have been accused. They are not guilty because they committed a crime. The paper always writes a big headline when someone is accused of a crime but there is only a small retraction in the back of the paper when someone is vindicated of that crime.

One example of how gossip can destroy someone's reputation comes from the life of Charles Spurgeon. Many years ago in England, he grew a church to 10,000 people. I believe it was the largest church on the planet at the time. He began pastoring the church as a younger, single man. As you would expect, many young ladies admired him. A newspaper accused him of inappropriate relationships with young women. None of it was true but that is what they believed. That news spread from newspapers in England to newspapers in America. For the rest of his life, when he traveled to speak, a dark cloud of suspicion hung over him because of the untrue slanderous accusations leveled against him early in his career. That is the danger of gossip.

As King Alfred said in the ninth century, gossip can destroy someone's life. It doesn't matter if it is true or false. Just to gossip about people can destroy people.

The Bible tells us a good reputation is extremely valuable.

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1 (ESV)

If you had to make a choice of a good reputation or a million dollars, it would be wise to choose the good reputation instead of the million dollars because someone's reputation is that valuable. As Christians, we are not to be people that take down other people's reputations for slander and gossip, especially if it isn't true. Even if it is true, it may be truth that does not need to be repeated.

Today, in the world of the Internet, we can gossip faster and with greater levels of destruction than we ever could in the past. People can slander one another on the Internet anonymously, permanently, instantly and globally.

One example I found sad but amusing is a restaurant owner was complaining to Yelp about the reviews about his restaurant. There were a number of one-star reviews where people complained about the food. The problem is the restaurant wasn't even open! Apparently his competitors were using social media to spread slander and libel about his reputation and drive down his business.

Remember that the Bible tells us a good reputation is worth more than a million dollars. It is priceless. As Christians, we need to be very careful what we say on the Internet. Let us not be men and women who destroy people's

reputations on social media. If you have a problem with someone, talk to that person personally, not to him or her and the world through the Internet globally.

We all must admit that gossip is hard to resist. One of the reasons gossip is hard to resist is because we love to listen to it.

The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. Proverbs 18:8 (ESV)

Since gossip is so deadly, yet it is hard to stop, let me give you three practical helps to stop gossip in your life.

How can I stop the spread of gossip?

1. **Tell someone to stop talking.** If you are listening to someone that is gossiping , simply tell them to stop talking. You are not interested in listening. Ask him if he has talked to the person with whom he has the problem. If he hasn't, tell him that Matthew 18 tells you to help him and go with him to that person to talk about the issue. When you refuse to listen to a gossip and when you offer to take him to the person he is gossiping about, that shuts him down in a hurry. Most gossips don't want a solution. They want a problem so they have something to gossip about.
2. **Tell someone to extend the judgment of charity.** The judgment of charity means assuming the best in someone rather than the worst. If somebody said a word or acted in a mean or vindictive way, especially if that person is a Christian, assume she had the right intentions but something is hurting her below the surface that you can't see. That is why she lashed out at you. Assume she was trying to do the right thing but just did it in the wrong way. An example of that happened to me a few years ago. I had a situation where I

was working in my yard and a neighbor came over and just blasted me. He just tore into me and cussed me out. I never saw it coming. I soon realized that as a neighbor, I was being mildly offensive but that attack seemed way out of proportion to the offense. It was a great opportunity to gossip. Cindy and I talked about it. Later, I found out the rest of the story. It turns out that neighbor was dealing with cancer and was forced to take a demotion and pay cut in his job. Now I can understand why he was a little edgy that day. Rather than gossip about him, he needed me to help him, not hurt him with gossiping words. Many times, when people, especially Christian brothers and sisters, do irrational things that lend themselves to gossip, it is because they are carrying a hurt that is leaking into life. Give people the benefit of the doubt. Help them; don't gossip about them.

3. Tell a gossip to apply the golden rule.

So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Matthew 7:12 (ESV)

Treat other people the way you would like to be treated when it comes to gossip. If you wouldn't want people speaking about you in a slanderous way, don't speak about others in a slanderous way. It is that simple. The golden rule for gossip simplifies what we should and shouldn't say.

Shaping, Holding and Rearranging Facts

Sometimes it is tempting to rearrange truth to make it look one way when it is actually another way. When we know the truth, it is our responsibility to accurately convey the truth, not to shape it to give a false impression. When I was younger, I was guilty of fact shaping.

Like many kids growing up, I went to a summer camp. I grew up attending a Christian boys camp in the Adirondack Mountains. The year before I was a full-fledged counselor, I was a counselor in training for the summer. The CIT program was filled with leadership training, camping training and learning how to handle crisis situations. On our first night, they sprung on a training exercise to find a lost camper in the woods. We were told the camper wasn't a real person but he was short, round, had a flat top and would be OK while we were looking for him because he had plenty to drink. We were paired up and told to find the lost camper in the wilderness. We just needed to be back before nightfall. I wasn't looking forward to combing through the mosquito-infested woods looking for some kind of mysterious camper. Shortly after the search began, as my partner and I were crossing an old wooden bridge over a mountain stream as we headed out of camp, we happened to look under the bridge to see a large, round metal pot with a flat cover submerged in the mountain stream below the bridge. We crawled down to the stream under the bridge, took the pot out of the water, and opened the lid to see it filled with soda. Then it clicked. We were looking for a short, round camper with a flat top and plenty to drink. We found him under the bridge. We carried it back to the cabin, grabbed a soda and relaxed on our beds while the rest of the group combed the woods for a few hours looking for what we found.

When the search groups returned, I was gloating over my find because I never win at that kind of stuff so I wanted to drag out my victory as far as

possible. I pulled a Peter Strzok and refused to fully and completely answer people's questions. They asked questions like:

Where did you get the soda? I found it in the woods.

Can I have some soda? As soon as you find the lost camper.

While I wasn't lying, I was being evasive and not forthcoming with the truth. That is ultimately a violation of this command because it is a fancy form of rearranging and distorting the facts to lie. The Bible tells us what our speech should be like.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)
The lie of silence.

Is it ever permissible to lie?

While it is never right to lie, there are very rare times when lying is the preferable sin to a greater sin. For example, in Exodus 1, Pharaoh instructed the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah, who were to help Hebrew women give birth, that if the baby that was born was a male, they were to kill it. If it was a female, they were to let it live. Their option was to kill babies or lie to Pharaoh. Which one do you think they chose?

So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." Exodus 1:18–19 (ESV)

There were three notable parts to this situation. First, it was lie or babies died. Second, these mid-wives stood to gain nothing from this lie. They were risking their lives to save the lives of children. Third, it was ultimately a test of where their true allegiance could be found. Was their allegiance to God or to

Pharaoh?. Since their allegiance was to God, they were forced to lie to Pharaoh.

In a similar way, in Joshua 2, we find Rahab the prostitute hid two Hebrew spies. When soldiers from Jericho asked her to bring out the men that came to her house, she lied and said they left town, when in reality, she hid them.

It was a situation very similar to the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1. Just like the mid-wives it was, first, lie or people would have died. Second, Rahab didn't gain anything from the lie. She risked her own life to lie. Third, it was ultimately a question of her allegiance. Was she loyal to the false gods of Jericho or the true God of the Israelites?

My point is there are very rare situations in life where lying is the lesser of two evils. It is lying to save someone's life. It is lying to risk your life to save that life. It is lying because your allegiance to God comes before your allegiance to a sinful earthly power.

My point is that unless you are lying to save someone's life, you will not run into this situation. People realize there are these rare exceptions and attempt to use them to lie for their own convenience, for their own comfort and for promote their own lives. That is a misuse of this exception clause.

Conclusion

There are a lot of liars in the Bible. One of the most famous lying couples was Ananias and Sapphira. They were members of the early church in Jerusalem. As members of the early church, it was an exciting time to be a Christian. Jesus had risen. The Holy Spirit was poured out. People were turning to Christ by the thousands. There were miracles and healings. I can't imagine the excitement of being part of those early days in the church.

The early church was also filled with poor Christians. From time to time, people would sell some of their resources. They would give the profit to the apostles, who would be in charge of distributing those resources to people in need. One of the people who did this was a man named Joseph from Cyprus. He sold a field and brought the profits to the apostles' feet. The offering was so generous, the apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means son of encouragement.

Ananias and Sapphira saw how Barnabas' donation enhanced his reputation in the church. They wanted that kind of notoriety, so they decided to make a major donation to the poor in the church through the apostles. They sold a field but they kept a portion of the profit for themselves. That was OK to keep some of the profit from the field. They had a right to do this. The problem was they claimed they donated the full price of the field to the church. They lied. They wanted to appear more generous than they actually were.

When Ananias gave his gift, Peter questioned him to see if he gave the full amount of the sale to the church, and Ananias chose to lie. Peter told him that Satan had filled his heart to lie not just to man but to God. Ananias dropped over dead. More than an hour later his wife, Sapphira, came in. When Peter asked her if the money given from the sale of the field was the full price, she also lied and then dropped over dead.

When we read this, it seems like their punishment was too severe. They gave a major donation to the poor in the church. They just lied about the size of the donation. At least they gave a donation. Why was God so upset? God was so

upset because lying is the devil's language. God detests when his people lie to one another in his church.

There is one particular lie that God hates maybe more than any other. It is when his people like to pretend we are better than we actually are, just like Ananias and Sapphira did on that fateful day.

The problem is that for each of us at church, that is a lie we often tell. We come to church and pretend we have our acts together. We pretend we don't struggle with sin. We pretend our marriages are healthy and that we don't struggle with secret sins. We come to church, and just like Ananias and Sapphira, we lie to God and to one another to appear better than we actually are.

The reason why that kind of lie is so dangerous is because until we are honest with ourselves and with one another about our struggles with sin, our struggles with anger and our struggles in all areas of life, we won't see our desperate need for Jesus.

You see it is only when we stop lying to ourselves and others that we can turn to Jesus and his amazing grace that we so desperately need.

This morning, if you are hear lying to God and to others pretending like you have your act together when you know it is falling apart, I challenge you to start telling the truth to God and to one another and flee to the undeserved grace of God that is ours through Jesus. Jesus is our only hope when we are finally honest about our sin.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at www.Christ2RCulture.com (www.c2rc.com)