

WORD

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." **EXODUS 20:16**

God gave the ninth commandment to protect us from unjust punishment caused by false accusation or slander. Bearing false witness is lying about another person, usually for personal gain. It is an attack on another person's reputation and credibility, which can lead to his destruction and to the breakdown of law and order. Lying doesn't reflect the character of God who is truthful at all times and cannot lie. Telling the truth isn't always easy, but it is something God enables us to do. In this lesson, we will learn why God gave this command.

1 God hates lies.

¹⁶*There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood . . .* **PROVERBS 6:16,17**

God stands for the truth and hates lies. It is against His nature to lie (Numbers 23:19), because He is holy (Psalm 89:35). As a new creation in Christ, we are exhorted to reflect God's image and be truthful to one another (Colossians 3:9,10). What does the Lord hate, according to Proverbs 6:16,17?

2 God desires to uphold the truth among His people.

¹*"You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ²You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, ³nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit."*

EXODUS 23:1-3

The ninth commandment reflects the justice of God and is part of His guidelines for a just society. Gossip, malice, false accusations, and partiality or one-sidedness are ways in which we pervert God's justice and disregard His command to uphold the truth. According to Exodus 23:1, what should we not spread?

3 God commands us to speak the truth in love.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . .

EPHESIANS 4:15

Speaking the truth allows God's people to grow in Christlikeness and keeps us from being swayed by false doctrine and other falsehood (Ephesians 4:11-16). God's truth can be offensive, but when we speak it in love, we can protect and build up the church. How have you learned to speak the truth *in love*?
