

LORD'S DAY 43

112. Q. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. I must not give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words not gossip or slander, nor condemn or join in condemning anyone rashly and unheard.¹
 Rather, I must avoid all lying and deceit as the devil's own works, under penalty of God's heavy wrath.²
 In court and everywhere else, I must love the truth,³ speak and confess it honestly, and do what I can to defend and promote my neighbour's honour and reputation⁴

1. **Psalm 15** LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? ² He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; ³ He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; ⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; ⁵ He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.
Proverbs 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape.
Proverbs 19:9 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies shall perish.
Proverbs 21:28 A false witness shall perish, but the man who hears him will speak endlessly.
Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that you be not judged.
Luke 6:37 Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
Romans 1:28-32 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.
2. **Leviticus 19:11-12** You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. ¹² And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.
Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.
Proverbs 13:5 A righteous man hates lying, But a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame.
John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.
Revelation 21:8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
3. **1 Corinthians 13:6** [love] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.
4. **1 Peter 3:8-9** Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.
1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

In the ninth commandment we are dealing with the sphere of **communication**. Communication is a fundamental element of every relationship. Without it relationships are impossible. God created communication so that man could live in a very close relationship with Him. Through it God could impart a knowledge of Himself to man, and man could express love and gratitude to God. God also created communication as a means that man might establish relationships with fellow man.

The word *communication* has in it the word *commune* which is familiar to us. We speak of the *communion* of saints which happens when Christians *share* their talents and gifts and their thoughts with the other members of the congregation. We are also familiar with the word *communism*, which ideally means the people of a nation possess or *share* all the material possessions. Communication also has that root idea of sharing. **Communication is the sharing of thoughts and ideas.**

There are **two aspects** to communication:

1. **transmission** - the relaying of thoughts and ideas into the minds of others. This is accomplished by means of the transmitting organs: our mouth and hands.
2. **reception** - the implantation of thoughts and ideas into our mind.

This is accomplished by means of the receiving organs: our eyes and ears.

The most serious transgression in the sphere of communication is bearing false witness. But false witness is not the only matter dealt with in this commandment as the illustration shows.

Other matters which are included in the sphere of communication are gossip, slander, misquotation (twisting someone's words), and lying. Also included are the books or magazines which we should or should not read, the videos or movies we may or may not watch, etc.

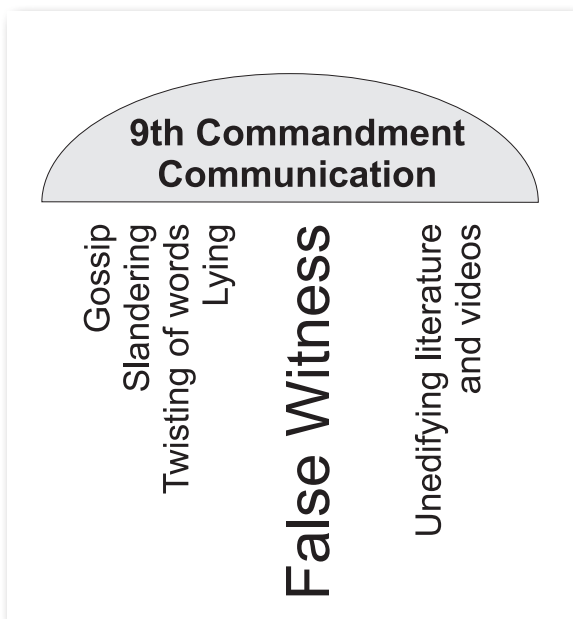
The Transmission of Ideas

This commandment is concerned with what we transmit, that is, with the ideas that we convey. Since thoughts and ideas are conveyed through the written or spoken word, God requires us to guard our mouth, lest we convey wrong ideas or unwholesome thoughts. Therefore the child of God prays: "*Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips*" (Psalm 141:3).

As we have seen with the other commandments, God has formulated this commandment in the negative, giving the worst expression of sin in this sphere to represent all other related sins. The commandment reads, "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour ...*" False witness refers to the testimony which is given in a court of law. Scripture says "*by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established*" (Deuteronomy 19:15).

A reading of 1 Kings 21 will make it quite apparent how serious and how destructive false witness can be. Naboth was found guilty of blasphemy and stoned to death on the basis of the false witness borne by two base fellows hired by wicked Queen Jezebel. Here we see the power of the spoken word. It can kill! False witness can lead to grave injustice being committed against innocent people.

In this commandment God forbids the lie. We are called to love the truth, to speak



and confess it uprightly. That leads us to ask, *What is truth?* We all have ideas about what truth is. We might think of truth as what is real, what is factual. But truth is more than this. Truth is also what is reliable, faithful, constant and dependable. Because it is faithful and dependable, you can build upon it and not be disappointed.

We sometimes speak about a true friend. A true friend is one who sticks with us through thick and thin. He doesn't desert us when we go through difficult times. He is dependable, faithful. You can build a wholesome relationship upon a true friend.

In construction, carpenters use a tool called a square (a 'L shaped piece of iron). If this square is "true" then it forms a perfect 90 degree angle. If the square is *true*, you can build well with it. Then the walls of the house will be at a 90 degree angle to the floor and ceiling. Then you will get a square room.

In this sense Scripture speaks about God's Word as being true, and about God Himself as being truth (cf. Psalm 86:11; Psalm 119:30). That God's commandments are *true* means they are faithful, reliable and constant. You can build your life upon them and you will never be disappointed. The same applies for God. God is truth. He is faithful and dependable. You can rely upon Him. You can entrust your life into His keeping and you will never be disappointed.

Conversely, you cannot build on the lie, for the lie is unreliable, unfaithful. You cannot build a relationship with a person who continually lies. You can't depend on him for he doesn't keep his word. You can't trust him because he's not dependable.

You cannot build a house well with a square which is *false*. If you do you will end up with a house like this one.

You cannot build a life upon lies. Think of what happened in Paradise. The serpent told a lie and Adam and Eve believed it. They were about to build their life on the lie, but the lie proved to be the source of death.

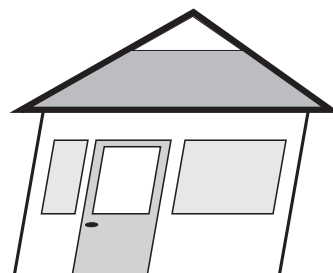
We conclude that ***the truth is a constructive power; and the lie is a destructive power.***

If we understand this, then we will also understand that we do not necessarily promote *the truth* when we only restrict ourselves to speaking what is factual. For example, if we were to broadcast the facts about some sin which our neighbour has committed, we would destroy our neighbour's reputation and standing in the community. We might try to defend ourselves by saying, "*I did not lie! He really did all those things I mentioned.*" We may have spoken the truth as far as facts are concerned, but we have used that truth to destroy, which is the purpose of the lie. We have abused the truth.

Another example of men using the truth in order to destroy is taken from World War II. The Nazis required people of occupied countries to disclose whether they were hiding any Jews, or whether they knew where any Jews were hiding. The Nazis would use these facts to destroy the Jews. Those who protected the Jews rightly withheld the truth, even using the lie to conceal the truth. In this they have acted correctly.

The truth is only to be used for edification, to build up; it must never be used to destroy. In Ephesians 4:25,29 Paul wrote: "*Therefore, **putting away lying**, let each one of you **speak truth** with his neighbour, for we are members of one another. ... Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary **edification**, that it may impart grace to the hearers*" (*edify* means *to build up*).

Another sin in the sphere of communication is the sin of misquoting someone, that is, twisting someone's words. When words or



statements are taken out of context they can mean something totally different than what they mean in the context in which they were spoken. We must be careful, then, not only to reproduce what a person literally says but also to reproduce what he means. We must not twist his words so that they say something different than what he intended to say.

Reception of Ideas

Earlier we mentioned that this commandment concerns not only the transmission but also the *reception* of thoughts and ideas. We must take heed to what we take in through our eyes and ears.

We must avoid all things which destroy the reputation of our neighbour. If we listen to gossip our opinion about another will be destroyed. If we pass on gossip we destroy our neighbour's opinion of another. The old saying is good: *If you cannot say something good about a person, don't say anything at all.* This is not an unqualified rule. When sin is involved and there is no repentance, Scripture requires that we are to *"tell it to the church"* (Matthew 18:17). But only after we have spoken to the person personally, or with witnesses (cf. Matthew 18:15,16). We must do our utmost to preserve the honour and reputation of our neighbour. If he continues to live in sin, however, we must set aside our concern for his reputation in order to save his life from everlasting ruin.

We must also avoid all forms of communication which impart sinful thoughts and ideas. Much of what is produced or published in the media conveys humanistic philosophies which are in conflict with the Scriptures. Much of what is produced or published is immoral. It portrays a perverted view of sexuality and encourages promiscuity.

We should also be aware that the power of communication is very great. Through communication an idea is implanted in the mind of the receiver. Once an idea is planted it is virtually impossible to remove. Once a thought or an idea is planted in our mind it must be weighed and tested, accepted or

rejected again and again. We might hear some gossip, for example, and immediately reject it as untrue. But you cannot erase that thought from your mind however hard you try. And so often we cannot prove or disprove the gossip which we hear. We automatically weigh and test every action which our neighbour does to see whether the gossip is true or false. And if we cannot disprove it, doubts and distrust form in our mind. Furthermore, if an idea is presented to our minds frequently enough, we begin to believe it.

The world knows the power of communication. Millions and millions of dollars are spent each year on advertising because it is a proven means of implanting thoughts and desires into the mind and heart of others.

The power of communication can be directed to good or to evil. We mentioned earlier that God created communication, and that He created it good. God continues to use it to propagate the truth. It is through the written Word that God communicates the truth to us in the Bible. It is also through the spoken word that this truth is proclaimed every Sunday. It is through the written word that wholesome thoughts are communicated to us through our Christian magazines and books.

There is a great need for wholesome communication. Through the implantation of good thoughts and ideas we build ourselves up in the most holy faith (cf. Jude vs 20). We fortify ourselves through the knowledge of the truth and are equipped by it to withstand the lies of the devil. Those who do not strengthen themselves by means of good communication leave themselves vulnerable to the evil one. It is because of a lack of knowledge that God's people are destroyed (cf. Hosea 4:6).

The devil is also aware of the great power of communication. It is the most powerful weapon in Satan's arsenal (Satan means deceiver). He is the liar and the father of lies (cf. John 8:44). He used corrupt communication in Paradise to implant a wrong idea into the mind and heart of Adam and Eve, and He continues to

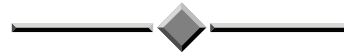
use corrupt communication to deceive man today. Knowing the great power of communication, and in order to propagate the lie, Satan largely dominates the various forms of media which exist. The destructive power which unwholesome communication has upon society life is astounding.

Christ came into this world in order to render that perfect obedience to this commandment which we could not render because of our depravity. He is the truth (cf. John 14:6). He also proclaimed the truth in this world deceived by the lie. All that issued forth from His mouth edified the hearer and imparted grace.

Because He spoke the truth and exposed the lie He was killed (cf. John 8:40). Though an unwholesome word never passed His lips, yet He was condemned for blasphemy (cf. Matthew 26:65), and those who judged him twisted the words which He had spoken (cf. Matthew 26:61). While He bore

God's wrath on the cross, those who passed by Him used God's gift of communication to injure the Christ. In all this Christ bore God's wrath against our sin against this commandment.

By His suffering and death Christ defeated the Deceiver and the Father of lies. By doing so, Christ obtained the right and the power to redeem His people who were enslaved to the power of sin and under the dominion of Satan. Through His death we have been set free from the lie and from falsehood. Insofar as Christ rules us by His Spirit, we believe the truth, love the truth and speak it uprightly.



Questions

1. What do we deal with in the ninth commandment? For what two-fold purpose did God create communication?
2. Define communication. Define the two aspects of communication.
3. What is the most serious transgression in the sphere of communication? What other matters are included under the umbrella of this commandment?
4. What is false witness? Give an example from Scripture which shows how serious and how destructive false witness can be.
5. Give a full definition of truth. (It is not only ____, but also ____).
6. What does Scripture mean when it says that God's commandments are true? What does it mean that God is truth?
7. What can you do with the truth that you cannot do with the lie? What can we conclude about the power of truth and the power of the lie?
8. May we freely broadcast all facts that we know are true? Why or why not? Give two examples.
9. Write out and memorise Ephesians 4:29.
10. What is meant by "twisting" someone's words? What must we be careful to do in this respect?
11. Concerning our neighbour, what must we be very careful not to destroy? When only may we tell others about the wrong that someone is doing or has done? Who must we tell? To whom must we speak first? Why?
12. Why is communication so powerful? How is it evident that the communication is so powerful?
13. God also uses communication. For what purpose?
14. Why is wholesome communication so important? What is written in Hosea 4:6 ?
15. What is Satan's most powerful weapon? What has Satan done to propagate the lie?
16. How has Christ fulfilled this commandment?
17. How has Christ made atonement for our sins against this commandment?
18. What else has Christ done for us?