



The ninth commandment states: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16). This commandment protects the *name* of your neighbor. The 6th commandment, “You shall not murder,” protects your neighbor’s *life*. The 7th commandment, “You shall not commit adultery,” protects your neighbor’s *marriage*. The 8th commandment, “You shall not steal,” protects your neighbor’s *property*.

Like the other commandments, this one is based on the very character of God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). God’s greatest enemy, on the other hand, is known as the father of lies (John 8:44). Consequently, there is reward for truth-telling (Proverbs 24:4-5) and judgment against false-witnesses (Proverbs 19:5).

To bear false witness is to lie, a moral failure that compromises and damages one’s personal integrity and their relationship with their neighbor and, most significantly, with God. Note that at the trial of Jesus, his conviction and execution was based on the false testimony of two witnesses (Matthew 26:59-61). Perhaps the most profound question posed in the Bible was Pilate’s question to Jesus, “*What is truth?*” (John 18:38).

1. What are the implications of the following words in this command: neighbor, witness, false?
2. In Exodus 20, false means *lying* or *untrue*. Deuteronomy 5:20, uses a different Hebrew word that means *insincere*, *empty* or *worthless*. How does this change your interpretation?
3. True and reliable testimony was a high value for the Hebrew community. (Exodus 23:1-9; Leviticus 5:1; Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15-21; Psalm 101:5) Why was this so important?
4. Why do people lie? (Matthew 15:18-20; John 8:38-45)?
5. Why should we tell the truth? (Zechariah 8:14-17; John 8:32, 14:6; Ephesians 4:15, 25)
6. Is it ever right to lie?
7. What is the proper response to those who lie about God? (1 Timothy 4:1-8; 2 John 7-11)

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Ephesians 4:29

Ex20¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. NIV
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. NASB
No lies about your neighbor. MESS
¹⁶Do not tell lies about others. ContEng