



Daily Verse and Comment

Exodus 20:16

(16) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

New King James Version

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" has very far-reaching spiritual applications. *Bear* means "to spread, carry, render, or give." At first glance, the commandment appears to involve only lying in a court of law, and this might be true if the words in the commandment were to be taken only at face value. [Jesus](#) clearly shows that there is a "spirit," an intent, to God's laws in addition to the letter that carries their application far beyond mere face-value judgments.

Many scriptures show that the commandment covers lying under *any* circumstance, including hypocrisy and self-deception. That is, it covers any wrongful word or example that would tend to injure. The ninth commandment is in a similar position in man's relationship to other men as the third commandment is in man's relationship to [God](#). This commandment directly involves [faithfulness](#) and loyalty in our speech and in our witness for God before men.

[Proverbs 22:1](#) says, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold." *The Soncino Commentary* remarks that a person's good reputation, his name, is his most valuable asset. Indeed, the Bible shows that God guards and protects *His* name very jealously. This is because His name represents what He is.

So it is with us. But why do so many lie, sowing the seeds for the destruction of their reputation? It is the desire for the approval of others that leads them to twist a story or to deliberately exaggerate or diminish their parts in it in the retelling.

When we hear a name, images of that person and what he or she is immediately spring to mind. What we are and how others perceive us has everything to do with what we believe and practice. So, is what we believe and practice true? If we want to have a good name (reputation) in the eyes of both God and man, we, too, have to recognize truth—wherever and whenever it arises in daily life—understand it, and submit to it. This process produces faithfulness.

This is where truth in a person's witness begins. If truth does not form the foundation of a person's life, he is already behind the eight-ball to some extent. The urge to lie must be met and overcome. At the base of this problem is a deceitful heart ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)) that continually lays traps to make lying an appealing course to follow. Besides lying before men, some of us keep lying to ourselves, and thus our name before God is not good. Faithlessness is the result. In order to have a good name, we, as God's children, must face up to our vanities and quit deceiving ourselves that God will just have to take us as we are.

We need to stop blaming our failures, problems, and shortcomings on others, which tendency provides us with justifications for what we are and what we do. Within the family, Mom and Dad are frequent targets of this. They are usually guilty to some extent, but God puts the pressure on *us* to change. Change will not occur in this way of life until we face up to the truth that we are responsible for what we are. We also bear much of the responsibility of becoming what we hope to be. Nobody can do this for us.

This is the day-to-day "stuff" on which trustworthiness and righteous reputations are formed. They are built on the witness of what we do before others. God wants our reputation before men to be built, first, on His truth and then on truth in general. Are we honestly doing this as well as we could be?

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[The Ninth Commandment](#)

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