



## [Exodus 20:16](#)

(16) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.  
*King James Version*

Speech is arguably man's greatest gift and at the same time his most dangerous ability. It is impossible to estimate the good it has done when great men and women have truthfully instructed and inspired others. By contrast, we cannot measure how much evil the tongue has perpetrated, for falsehoods disguised as [truth](#) have destroyed reputations and even nations.

[God](#) devotes two of the [Ten Commandments](#) to the evils of false witnessing, the third and the ninth. These seem to be broken with impunity—sometimes even by those who are aware of their application—because the drives that motivate people to break them are so powerful.

God commands, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor," but liars and lying abound. Everybody knows that marketers lie about what products can do. Books, magazines, and movies feature liars of many different stripes. The media and the public have caught prominent government figures from presidents on down lying about important issues.

According to an article by Jan Mendenhall in the June/July 1997 issue of *Aspire*, college kids lie to their moms in 50% of conversations. [Dating couples](#) lie to each other a third of the time, and spouses deceive each other in about 10% of major conversations. Twelve percent of four million Americans lost their jobs for "misrepresentation." A November 1997 survey conducted by the publishers of *Who's Who Among American High Schools Students* reveals that 76% of the students listed in their publication (supposedly the elite achievers) admit having cheated. Two-thirds of these believe it is "no big deal" to cheat to get a good test grade—and 65% of their parents agree!

We use a large number of euphemisms to soften the act of lying. Some are: duplicity,

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fabrication, evasion, stringing someone along, inaccuracy, exaggeration, fudging, rationalization, falsehood, "whopper," deception, misrepresentation, dishonesty, putting someone on, putting up a front, and fibbing.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

**To learn more, see:**

**[The Ninth Commandment \(1997\)](#)**

**Related Topics:**

[Duplicity](#)

[False Witness](#)

[Falsehood](#)

[Lying](#)

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