



"A liar then is as like the devil as ever he can look: as unlike to God as ever he can be."

—Richard Capel

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## **The Lack of Love in Lying**

A vein of dishonesty runs at the heart of the world's recent troubles. We can easily spot this malignancy in modern journalism, which no longer reports news but publishes opinion pieces disguised as news to push a particular political ideology. Former President Donald Trump drew attention to the "fake news" undermining his administration. Too many journalists, especially those who work for megamedia corporations, spit out political talking points rather than facts because the facts frequently do not support their cherished liberal causes.

The advertising industry presents us with the same problem. Its claims about the products marketed on billboards, television, the Internet, and in magazines often reach an absurd height of hyperbole, assuring us that our problems will be solved if we would just buy this item. From cars to cat food, from pharmaceuticals to face creams, we can have the very best product on the market in its category if we swallow their cunningly written sales pitch and fork over exorbitant amounts of our hard-earned cash.

Once upon a time, we thought we could trust science to give us verifiable facts about climate, health, energy, and many other concerns. But public

confidence in scientific rigor has plunged after several falsified scientific studies came to light. To push the radical climate-change agenda, scientists fabricated data to say the earth is warming far faster than we can handle unless the nations take drastic measures to cut carbon emissions to the bone. During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers and officials have routinely misrepresented the dangers of viruses and the effectiveness of drugs, vaccines, natural or inexpensive cures, and masks and other PPE. Similar accusations could be raised against the energy sector in its drive to implement expensive, non-fossil fuel sources of electricity like solar and wind power.

Falsehood is everywhere. It seems that no one speaks the truth anymore. We hear either lies or half-truths or "facts" shoehorned to fit a political purpose. If we naïvely believe what we read or hear, we are likely to be misled and pay the price that often follows. If we are skeptical, the atmosphere of deception pushes our skepticism to the limits, and we believe nothing anymore, feeling as if we have nowhere to turn to find the truth.

Thirty-five hundred years ago, [God](#) thundered from Mount Sinai, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" ([Exodus 20:16](#); [Deuteronomy 5:20](#)). God employs the language of Israelite court proceedings in this ninth commandment, specifically the act of testifying. However, the language functions to illustrate the [wisdom](#) of speaking the truth in all circumstances, implying the terrible consequences falsehoods cause. A false witness at a trial could crush an innocent defendant with dishonor, financial ruin, or death—or let a guilty one walk free! Both outcomes are injustices.

God's indictment of Israel in [Hosea 4:2](#) lists the sixth through ninth commandments, and its language suggests that Israelites understood this ninth commandment to cover all untruths: "By swearing [falsely] and lying, killing and stealing and committing [adultery](#), they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed." The Hebrew word for "lying" here is *kaš* (*Strong's* #3584), which means "to deceive, lie, fail, be untrue, deny, dissemble, deal falsely." This wide breadth of meanings covers the gamut of ways people have found to deceive others. Coupling it with "swearing [falsely]," God includes both legal and commonplace lying in His censure.

The *Theological Wordbook of the [Old Testament](#)* comments on *kaš*: "The Hebrew usage seems to stress the relational aspect of the word, emphasizing the undependable nature of a person or thing in a given relationship." Feeding this emphasis back into the ninth commandment—the only one in the Decalogue that includes the phrase "against your neighbor"—God's intent in prohibiting lying is to enhance trust within a community. Those who lie or swear falsely or deceive in any way prove themselves unreliable or untrustworthy and begin to undermine relationships. Eventually, if lying becomes pervasive, the entire community—and the larger society beyond it—breaks down.

The book of Proverbs says a great deal about deception undercutting and ruining relationships:

- "The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor." ([Proverbs 11:9](#))
- "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit." ([Proverbs 15:4](#))
- "An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire. A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends." ([Proverbs 16:27-28](#))
- "A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow." ([Proverbs 25:18](#))
- "Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, 'I was only joking!'" ([Proverbs 26:18-19](#))
- "A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin." ([Proverbs 26:28](#))

In the [Sermon on the Mount](#), Jesus' comments on the ninth commandment focus on making oaths, which He forbids: "Do not swear at all . . . But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" ([Matthew 5:34](#), 37; see [James 5:12](#)). In essence, His

teaching is that God's people must speak the truth and be known for speaking it so that their simple "Yes" or "No" is confirmation enough. Christ's disciples should be so reliable that they need no oath to guarantee their words are true.

The apostle Paul's instructions about lying in [Ephesians 4:25](#) center on the harm it does to relationships, particularly in the church: "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' [[Zechariah 8:16](#)] for we are members of one another." When we lie to each other, we are only hurting ourselves because, as Christ's disciples, we are all of one body (see [Romans 12:5](#); [I Corinthians 10:17](#); [12:12](#), 25-27). As he explains in [Romans 13:9-10](#), the final six of the Ten Commandments "are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall [love](#) your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Christians should not lie to anyone, of course, but to lie to the brethren not only breaks the second great commandment, but it is also self-destructive.

Humanity reeks of deception and falsehood, a situation that shows no signs of improvement. If we want to affect change in this area, each of us must resolve to speak and represent the truth at all times. Only by doing so can we restore a small measure of trust to this world.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [The Ninth Commandment](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

The breaking of God's Commandments has destroyed trust within the national and local communities of modern Israel. The guilelessness, attributed to Nathaniel, apparently was a rarity in Israel, while deceitfulness was something passed through the genes from father Jacob. Israel's national shame derives from its proclivity for deceit and hypocrisy. In stark contrast to Israel's faithlessness, our God is a God of truth, faithfulness and light. It is the responsibility of the preacher to safeguard the morals of the community.

Our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, put truth into a visible concrete form, leaving us an example to follow. Unfortunately, most of modern Israel has rejected this example. Jesus desires that God the Father would sanctify the Israel of God into His truth or reality. In our preparation to become Kings and Priests, we must embody truth as had our Jesus Christ, absolutely refusing to bear false witness in our words, our behavior, and our cumulative reputation. We dare not resist the truth, succumbing to self-deception, or blaming others for our shortcomings, trying to cover up our inadequacies. When we lie, we are vainly attempting to control (or spin) something, producing an escalation of harmful falsehoods, digging a pit into which we will ultimately fall. The heart is deceitful, faithless, insincere, tricky, cunning, double-dealing, treacherous, incurable, and desperately wicked, hopelessly addicted to lying, tuned into the prince and power of the air. We must steadfastly choose to speak the truth, even if it will hurt us in the short run, realizing that truthfulness will enable us to enter into God's presence.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Lying to the Holy Spirit](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

How do we lie to the Holy Spirit? Does this mean that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Godhead? Richard Ritenbaugh explains Acts 5:3 from the perspective of the whole Bible.

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