

END-TIMES ISSUES



#140 Commandment #9 – To minimize lying; deception.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO **BE READY.**

A N D B E Y O N D I

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Exodus 20:16 (BSB); also in Deuteronomy 5:20.

This commandment applies on three levels:

- **Judicial proceedings / public testimony** – affecting justice or injustice through lying, partial truth that distorts perception, withholding truth, or failing to testify when one knows the truth.
 - **Social interactions in the public sphere** – speech that influences consumer behavior and public perception, either promoting truth or distorting it to manipulate people.
 - **Individual situations** – speech that builds others up or tears them down through derogatory comments, scapegoating, and similar conduct.
- At each level, the commandment can be expressed both negatively ("do not") and positively ("do").

How can we *minimize* the violation of this commandment?

People are, *by nature*, sinners. Violating this commandment is a natural action by people – NOT because they are "human," but because they are sinners.

I CAN'T HELP IT!
I LIE, BECAUSE
I'M HUMAN!

NO, YOU LIE
BECAUSE YOU'RE
A SINNER!

GOD CREATED
HUMANS,
NOT LIARS ...

AND SINLESS
HUMANS
DON'T LIE!

[Example: Jesus!]

- **In a court of law:** If the court is following Scripture's guidelines, lying by the witnesses will be minimized.
 - ✓ But we need to remember that *sinners* are involved in the judicial process. False witnesses *do* exist, as do corrupt judges. So in this present world of sin, attaining justice will not always be 100% successful.

What does God require in a court setting?

- **The Law provides specific instructions to minimize the violation of this commandment:**

- ✓ A minimum of **two witnesses** (testifying under oath) was necessary, before convicting a person – Deuteronomy 19:15.
- ✓ Judges would have to make a **careful and rigorous inquiry** into the matter (especially in difficult cases that require going to a higher court) – examples: Deuteronomy 13:14; 17:4, 9; 19:18.
- ✓ In making judgments, **no favoritism of any kind** is to be permitted – Exodus 23:2-3; Leviticus 19:15.
- ✓ A false witness would receive **the same punishment** that the accused person would have received – Deuteronomy 19:18-21. (Doing this will also have a restraining effect on the sins of others.)

★ **Some of these instructions may have application to other areas of life** – such as parents dealing with sinning children, etc. ★

What about the rest of life? What are we to do when someone distorts the truth, or attacks us with lies, slander, gossip, etc.?

Since the situations of life vary so greatly, potential responses and outcomes may vary greatly.

- **Be aware:** There might be *partial* truth in what they say. Learn from that, even if you have to oppose the rest of what is being said.

Focusing on injustice in what they say:
- **When we are wronged, justice is not guaranteed;** but sometimes there are ways we can pursue justice.
 - ✓ At times, the principle given in Matthew 18:15-17 may apply. (The context of this specific passage involves dealing with sin in the church.)
 - ✓ If the matter is serious enough, we might be able to resolve the matter in a court of law. Even then, since we live in a sinful world, justice is not 100% guaranteed. (Also: Consider whether or not the principle of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 applies to your situation.)

After all that we have tried, what if injustice *remains*?

- **Search the Scriptures to find ways to respond.**
 - ✓ Consider the examples of Jesus and the apostles.
 - ✓ Look for instructions that deal with such issues. A good place to start, when dealing with injustice, might be 1 Peter.
 - ✓ Don't respond with sin! Don't let *their* evil make *you* evil!
- **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Romans 12:21 (BSB)
- **Learn from others who have experienced similar situations,** and who attempted to respond in a way that honors God.
- **At the final Day of Justice, God will deal with *all* the injustice that exists** (including any injustice *we* have committed against others).

For [God] has set a day when **He will judge the world with justice** by the Man He has appointed [= Jesus]. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead.

Acts 17:31 (BSB); compare to Psalm 98:9.

Are there ways to prevent false statements or accusations from being made (or at least decrease the chance of it happening)?

• Three things to consider:

- ✓ Is there anything we can do to prevent it from happening?
- ✓ Are there ways to restrain the *person who is violating* this commandment?
- ✓ What responsibility do the *hearers* of false statements have?

1. What can WE do?

- ✓ If there are ways we need to change (conduct, sins, etc.), focus on dealing with them. Sometimes something we do is the "starting point" (= the "half-truth") that they use to begin their false statements/accusations (= the lie).
- ✓ Be aware that, if we are following Jesus, people who hate Jesus will hate us and attack us – verbally, and sometimes even physically.

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2. Deterrents that may restrain the person committing the sin.

- ✓ **Ultimately, the best deterrent is a changed heart.** A person who has become a follower of Jesus will be much less inclined to bear false witness. If it does happen, the Holy Spirit will convict the person... which will result in repentance, admission of guilt, restitution, etc. (This may be delayed if it involves an area of life where a significant amount of spiritual growth is still needed.)
- ✓ **A person who does not have a changed heart** (i.e., who is unsaved) **can often be externally restrained** from committing this sin.
 - » **Exposure to Scripture** can have a restraining and positive influence on people – even on unsaved people. (This is why the wicked try to remove exposure to Scripture from society.)
 - » **Conscience and an awareness of the Law's requirements:** God has embedded these in people's hearts; and these may restrain a person's sin – Romans 2:14-15.
 - » **God also uses** social norms and customs, and sometimes an awareness of potential consequences, to be a restraint.

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3. The responsibility of people to pursue truthfulness.

- **People (individuals and societies) have the responsibility** to learn and to recognize the ways that deception can occur.
 - ✓ Truthfulness is a reflection of God's nature. *Anything* else is of the evil one. Therefore, we must try to avoid it!
 - ✓ This includes understanding how people distort language and facts to sway public opinion.
- **Realize that ALL misrepresentations of truth fall short of God's standard** – his glorious and truthful nature. In this matter, *all of us are guilty*. All of us fail to meet the standard of absolute perfection that God *requires* of us.
 - ✓ WHY? Because we are *human*? NO!! It's because we are *sinners*!
 - ✓ THIS is our condition: ... but God offers us power to change.

... for all have sinned and fall short of **the glory of God**, ...
Romans 3:23 (BSB)

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of **God's glorious standard**.
Romans 3:23 (NLT)

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People tend to not like God's standard!

- **God's standard is based on himself.** He made us morally perfect and capable of living up to that standard.
 - ✓ The problem is that we – both as the human race, and as individuals – have sinned.
 - ✓ As a result, every human being is born a sinner, and lives in a world influenced by sin, and *chooses* to sin.
- **God's standard does not change**, just because we humans have changed. It *cannot* happen. (If it *could*, it would contradict God's nature, and would turn God into a sinner – which is impossible.)
 - ✓ This standard *remains* our obligation, regardless of whether or not we succeed in living by it – and as *sinners*, we don't want to.
- **For us who are saved, there is hope.** God is in the process of changing us. (He does *not* change the standard.)
 - ✓ God's people *desire* this change, and they *pursue* it. Even so, we will not fully escape sin's influence until Jesus returns and completes the change.

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What goal should people have?

The goal for a follower of Jesus:

- Our **long-term goal is to attain truthfulness in all matters.** Yet, we won't reach this point 100% until we are in Jesus' presence.
- Our **immediate (daily) goal is to pursue truthfulness in all matters.** Do we pursue it, or would we rather *not* follow Jesus?
 - ✓ We cannot choose to live in sin of *any* kind – whether it's a sin of action, of words, or of thoughts.
 - ✓ At the same time, we must realize that, in this present life, we do break this Ninth Commandment – even if it's in issues that we don't realize.

What about the unsaved?

We should encourage ALL people to pursue these goals. But realize that unsaved people can only partially succeed; for they do not have the "renewed mind" that is necessary for a full understanding the will of God (Romans 12:2), which *defines* truth.

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Not all lies and false statements are the same; neither are the consequences in this present life.

- **As far as eternal life is concerned**, any lie, no matter how "innocent" it seems to us, is enough to *earn* the wrath of God.
- **But as far as consequences in this present life are concerned**, they are not all equal – *even though they are all* misrepresentations of the truth.
 - ✓ There are different types of lies or "misrepresentations of the truth": Willful, accidental, done in ignorance, "mistakes," etc.
 - ✓ Some may hurt only a few people, or even just one person. Or they may look quite harmless.
 - ✓ Others may have a devastating effect on thousands or millions of people.

We may want to reserve the word "lie" for something that is deliberate; but even things we call "innocent mistakes" are *still* misrepresentations of the truth, though accidentally so. And they *still* fall short of God's glorious standard.

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DECEPTION IS SIN – not only for the *deceiver*, but (in many cases) also for the *deceived*.

- Scripture has much to say about: ① the *moral obligation* to pursue truth, wisdom and understanding, as well as: ② the *moral obligation* to *not be deceived*.
- ✓ Both of these *remain* obligations, regardless of whether or not we succeed in fulfilling them.

BUT I DIDN'T
KNOW IT!

HOW CAN IT BE A SIN
IF I DON'T KNOW IT?

ALL FALSE STATEMENTS
(AND BELIEFS) ARE
CONTRARY TO THE TRUTH.

BUT THE NATURE OF THOSE FALSE
STATEMENTS WILL DETERMINE
WHAT TYPE OF ACCOUNTABILITY
WE WILL HAVE FOR THEM.

FOR EXAMPLE:

BELIEVING SOMETHING FALSE
ABOUT GOD, OR A MORAL ISSUE,
IS A LOT MORE SERIOUS THAN ...

... BELIEVING
THAT COWS
CAN FLY!



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Things we may be deceived about fall into 3 main categories.

(Some may be more serious than others, though the actual effects may vary.)

- **God:** Our views about **God** and how we interact with him.
 - **People:** Interactions with **people**; our impressions of them, etc.
 - **Things:** Matters that pertain to "**everyday life**." (Examples: many of the issues that are dealt with in the book of Proverbs – houses, money, making plans, treatment of animals, values...)
- ☞ These are *all* moral issues, since Scripture makes direct statements about these matters. We will be held accountable for the way we obey them. Yet some may have more serious consequences than others.

It is difficult to separate thoughts from words – what we think and what we say. Our focus has been on truthfulness in what we SAY; but there is often a direct connection to what we BELIEVE – *though not always*.

- ❖ A person can believe the truth, and lie about it – knowing he is lying.
- ❖ A person can believe a lie, and repeat it – *not* knowing he is lying.

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When we are deceived, there are different types of GUILT.

Consider these three different situations:

WE MAY BE DECEIVED ABOUT SOMETHING, AND...

1. We *could have known* it was deception (something false). We had the opportunity to know, but ...
 - We didn't value finding out what Scripture says, or...
 - We didn't think it was important to learn, or...
 - We wasted-away our lives on frivolous things, instead of things that would build us up, enable us to think clearly, etc.
 - [There are so many ways that people *avoid* learning to distinguish between truth and error (including *self*-deception); but they all start with our attitude toward Scripture.]

☞ In this matter, both we (the deceived) and the deceiver are guilty of sin.

This is one of the reasons why it is so important to find out what Scripture says... and to submit to it!

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2. We *could NOT have known* it was deception (something false). We genuinely had NO ability to know – and it *wasn't* because we neglected the opportunity. ☞ [This is an important factor.]

★ But the person who did the deceiving *did* know it was deception.

☞ In this matter, the deceiver is guilty of sin.

☞ IF we (the deceived) *do* have guilt, the degree of guilt would be *much less*. (After all, the deceptive statement that we are believing *is* a falsehood – something incompatible with the nature of God. If there *is* guilt, it's *not* the guilt of *CHOOSING* to believe a lie.)

Scripture *does* mention "*sins* committed in *ignorance*." If there *is* guilt attached to these deceptions, the *degree of guilt* would be significantly different from *willful* sin – as illustrated in one of Jesus' parables:

That servant who **knows his master's will** but does not get ready or follow his instructions will be **beaten with many blows**.

But the one who **unknowingly does things** worthy of punishment will be **beaten with few blows**.

Luke 12:47-48 (BSB)

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3. *Nobody knows* it is deception (something false), even though there was a genuine attempt to learn the truth.

- There may be times when the genuine lack of information may result in a false conclusion... and this missing information may become available at a later time.

☞ In this matter, it's *probably more* the issue that we live in a world that is affected by the general curse of sin. This affects everything that happens in life.

☞ IF there is any degree of guilt, it would be *much less* than the guilt of *willful* sin. (Guilt may *increase*, if additional information *does* become available, and we close our eyes to it.)

This whole issue can be rather complex. But we who are followers of Jesus can be grateful that *Jesus deals with all of it!*

We don't have to preoccupy ourselves with deciding what "degree of guilt" we may have in a specific issue. Instead, we need to consider *all* falsehood and deception to be wrong (even if accepted in ignorance), and pursue truth in whatever way we can, and in all areas of life.

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CONCLUSION: TWO issues involved in the matter of deception:

- Scripture **CONDEMNS** deception – to deceive someone is **SIN**. The following verse represents a common theme found throughout Scripture. (We've looked at this issue before.)

You must not lie or **deceive** one another.

Leviticus 19:11b (BSB)

- Scripture also **COMMANDS** us to **NOT** be deceived – and to disobey this command is **SIN**. There are many examples in Scripture, where people are warned against being deceived.

✓ In "**spiritual**" matters. (These warnings can be found throughout Scripture.)

✓ In "**everyday life**" matters. (Many of these are found in the book of Proverbs, though they can be found elsewhere, as well.)

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- Some random examples of warnings against being deceived:

- ✓ Warnings about believing what false teachers say (= you might not recognize these UNLESS you know what Scripture says) – 1 John 4:1; Matthew 24:4-5; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Peter 2:1-3.
- ✓ Warnings about the spiritual forces behind false teachings – 1 Timothy 4:1.
- ✓ Examples of warnings related to specific issues – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 15:33; Galatians 6:7; Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 John 3:7.
- ✓ In everyday life: The book of Proverbs illustrates this, warning us about deceptive *talk* (flattery or persuasive words and smooth talk), *self-deception*, being led astray by associating with the wrong *people*, and *things* that are deceptive – Proverbs 5:3-6; 7:21-23; 12:15, 26; 20:1; 23:1-3; 26:24-26, 28; 28:26; 29:5. Also a warning about being gullible (believing anything you hear) – Proverbs 14:15. *These types of principles apply to many areas of life.*

★ Since these are WARNINGS, not obeying them is SIN. ★

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OUR MISSION!

①

CONSIDER these issues:

- The WORLD surrounds us with distortions of the truth.
- The WORLD attempts to deceive us with these distortions.
- WE – being *not* yet 100% without sin – can easily contribute to the problem.

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OUR MISSION!

②

PURSUE a godly response!

Do what you can to:

- (The "NEGATIVE") = **Oppose**: Attempt to reduce the violation of the Ninth Commandment (whether done by yourself or by others).
- (The "POSITIVE") = **Promote**: Build up others, instead of tearing them down with words.

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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