**Ninth Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20**

**\* Sermon Overview**

At Fegenbush, Pastor Scott will emphasize that as God’s people we are called to be people of truth. His main application points will be: (1) Honest about sin; (2) Avoid gossip and slander; (3) Speak truth in love.

At East, Pastor Blake will emphasize this main point: lying and falsehood promote chaos and death, but Jesus brings truth and justice. In the sermon, he will show how Jesus and his grace leads us to be a people who live and proclaim truth.

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to cover all that is found within these questions in your community group. These questions will give you a grasp of what the text says and means so that we can think through how to apply the text to our lives.

**1. What is the context and meaning of the 9th Commandment?**

In the ninth commandment, since God is true, He instructs his people to be people of truth. He forbids lying and commends truth-telling. In the immediate context, it was important for Israel to be people of truth because it is only by telling truth that justice would prevail in the courtroom setting, demonstrating the righteousness and justice of God to Israel and to the surrounding nations. For extended application, the ninth commandment applies to truth telling in all of life and forbids slander, gossip, flattery, exaggeration, and lying. As the redeemed people of God, the church bears witness to the righteousness and justice of God through personal witness of the gospel and by corporate witness to the gospel.

For the ninth commandment, see the following passages: Genesis 3:1-7; 12:10-13; 39:1-23; Exodus 1:15-22; 23:1-3, 6-8; Leviticus 5:1; 19:11-18; Numbers 23:19; 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6-7; 19:15-21; 25:13-16; Joshua 2:1-7; 1 Samuel 15:29; 20:27-29; 1 Kings 21:1-24; Psalms 5:6; 15:1-5; 27:12; 31:18; 35:11-28; 58:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:69; 120:2; Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:17, 22; 14:5, 25; 16:28; 17:9, 15; 18:18, 21; 19:5, 9; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18; 29:24; 30:7-9; 31:8-9; Ecclesiastes 7:1; Isaiah 59:14-15; Hosea 4:2; 5:5; Amos 5:12, 15; Micah 6:3; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:33-37; 7:15; 23:27-28; 24:11, 24-27; 26:57-75; Mark 14:55-59; Luke 6:26; 10:25-37; John 8:44; Acts 5:1-11; 6:8-15; 24:5-6; 25:10; 1 Corinthians 15:15; 2 Corinthians 1:17-18; 12:20; Galatians 5:19-20; Ephesians 4:15, 25, 31; Colossians 3:9; Titus 1:2; James 1:26; 3:1-18; 5:12; 1 Peter 2:1, 9; 1 John 1:6, 8=9; 3 John 12; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

Philip Ryken writes, “In the case of the ninth commandment, the underlying principle is that God forbids every form of falsehood.”

ESV Study Bible: “Bearing ‘false witness’ is condemned in Scripture for its disastrous effects among people and its utter disregard for God’s character. The Lord’s righteousness and justice were to be reflected in Israel’s life as a nation, which was thus to exclude speaking falsely, especially for the sake of gaining something at the expense of another person and perverting justice.”

Mark Rooker writes, “At the heart of the matter in the ninth commandment is that false testimony and false accusation are not only a threat to an individual’s reputation and well-being but a threat to the whole structure of the justice system. The people’s faith in judicial proceedings had to be wedded to their conviction that all such proceedings are based on truthfulness and fairness. At stake was the whole notion of justice in the judicial system.”

Mark Rooker writes, “Dishonesty in general, not merely in court cases, is also forbidden. This statute generally protects a person’s name and forbids harming and defaming one’s neighbor through slander and unbridled defamation. Gossip, slander, and obsequious flattery are to be shunned.”

Albert Mohler writes, “The specific first reference of this text is to a court of law—to the law as lived out, as judgments were made in the courts.” He continues, “But secondly, truth telling is extended beyond that, even in our casual conversation, in our social interaction, in our e-mails, and in our preaching….We have an absolute moral obligation to speak the truth in all our private conversations and in every communication.”

Albert Mohler writes, “Lies subvert a fundamental requirement for civilization—trust.” He continues, “The contrast (in Scripture) is clear—lying kills, but truth delivers souls.”

**2. What does the 9th Commandment teach us about the character of God?**

In this commandment, we are taught two attributes of God:

1. God is truth (see Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; John 1:14; 14:6; 17:17; 18:37; Titus 1:2)—The Word of God teaches us that God never lies, that God always speaks truth because He is truth/true. Since God is true, He instructs us to be people of truth. By being people of truth, the watching world around us and the community of God in our midst is reminded that God is true and His gospel is true.

2. God is just—In the context of Israel’s day, when witnesses speak truth then justice prevails. When justice prevails, the order of the community is maintained because it is a community of trust, truth, justice—in sum, it is a demonstration of love of neighbor. As Israel obeys these commandments, they bear witness to their neighbors around them of the character of God. As we know from Scripture, God vigilantly guards His glory and His character.

Note the contrast between God who is truth and Satan who is a liar (see Genesis 3:4-5; John 8:44). How do we see Satan, the Father of lies, at work in our midst to stir up chaos, division, disorder, injustice, and much else? Why is it important for us to be people of truth and to fight for truth?

Philip Ryken writes, “The reason we are called to be people of the truth is because we serve a truth-telling God.”

Philip Ryken writes, “Whereas every truth comes from our Father in heaven, every lie comes from the devil himself.”

Albert Mohler writes, “Our need to speak the truth is rooted in God’s own character.” He continues, “God’s people are a people of the truth. We are to honor and tell the truth, to defend and discern the truth, to love the Bible as the Word of God that is truth without any mixture of error, and to stand for the truth. We are to uphold the truth, even if the whole world disbelieves, hates, and subverts the truth. We are the people of the truth for one single and irreducible reason—our God is true.”

**3. How does the 9th Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

We know from personal experience and from biblical witness that we are a people who are selfish, who look after our own interests more times than we look after the interests of others. Our sinful, selfish hearts lead us to bear false witness against our neighbors at times—conveniently leaving something out so that we look better to others, intentionally lying about an issue to cover up some other issue, or purposefully spreading rumors/gossip about another to tear them down. In these ways and many others, we have seen false witness ruin the peace of the community and dishonor God’s name. Yet, in his love, God did not leave us without hope of redemption. He sent His Son to redeem a people for Himself. He sends out His children to be His ambassadors who bear witness to the world about the truth of the gospel. He gathers His people into the body of Christ through whom He demonstrates the power of the gospel to the watching world through their love for one another. By his grace, God transforms our hearts so that we bear true witness to Him with our lips, our desires, our minds, and our actions.

As you think about this commandment, how have you seen false witness at work in your own life? Can you think of a story where your lying led to dishonoring God’s name and to a breach in the community? How have you seen false witness ruin community? How can God redeem and restore broken lives and broken communities?

Philip Ryken writes, “God has given us the capacity to speak so that we can use our words to praise him and to bless others. However, our speech is corrupted by our sin; so it has the power to do great damage.”

Philip Ryken writes, “If there is one thing God hates, it is the lies that Christians tell to make themselves look more righteous than they really are. Our testimony is that we are unrighteous, that there is no way we could ever be saved apart from the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The real truth about us is that we are so guilty that the very Son of God had to be crucified to pay for our sins. If that is true, then why would we ever pretend to be anything more than sinners saved by grace? To act like we have it spiritually together is a lie. But more than that, it is a denial of the grace of God, which alone has the power to save us.”

Albert Mohler writes, “Ultimately, speaking the truth is connected to our worship of God and our following Jesus—we show whether we love the truth and hate the lie.” He continues, “Telling the truth is first of all about God and His character. But secondly, it is also about our fellow human creatures. We owe truth to everyone—to every single fellow image bearer of God.”

To the question, “What prompts us to lie in these various ways?,” Alistair Begg writes, “We have already traced the origin to the wickedness of our hearts (see Luke 6:44-45), but what are the secondary causes? We tell lies about our achievements because we are jealous of another’s success and want to appear at least equal to them, if not better than them. We tell lies because we are angry and want to harm our opponents. We tell lies to cover up our mistakes and misdeeds. We tell lies because we are trying to impress someone and the facts alone are not enough, so we embellish them. We may tell likes out of a desire for revenge. In summary, there are essentially two things that underlie our breaking of the ninth commandment—pride and fear. The answer to both is in the cross.”

**4. How might the 9th Commandment apply to our lives today?**

As you think about this commandment, think through how we are to bear witness personally and corporately:

1- Personally—How do we bear witness to the truth in our personal lives? Is there any lies/gossip/slander/flattery/exaggeration/etc. we need to confess of? If so, how do we go about being reconciled with our neighbor who we have wronged? Is there someone around us who has been falsely accused of things in which we need to stand up for? As a witness of Christ, how do we bear witness to others of the hope of the gospel? As you think about James 3, how does our speech in every way reflect and redeemed and restored heart/tongue? Do we ever finding ourselves venting about other people online or in secret to others, leading us to say untrue things about them? Do our lives bear witness to the truth of the gospel?

2- Corporately—There are several ways that false witness shows up in our corporate lives: perjury (lying under oath), slander (lying in speech), libel (lying in print), rumor, flattery, exaggeration. What other ways do we see false witness impacting our community? When false witness happens in our church, how ought we to respond? Why is it important for truth to be evident in gospel community? What does it look like for us to speak truth in love to one another?

Read Ephesians 4:25. How ought the gospel transform and shape our hearts and our lips to be people of truth? Why is it important for us to be people of truth?

As you think about this commandment, think about these questions: How can we be people of the truth? Do we stand up for the truth when no one else is standing up for the truth? How do we bear witness to the truth in our lives? How does our community group bear witness to the truth?

Regarding the issue of gossip, Philip Ryken offers this counsel: “Gossip is such a common sin that we forget how ungodly it is, but before we open our mouths and start talking about someone else, we need to ask ourselves some hard questions: Is what I am about to say true? If so, does it really need to be said to this person in this conversation? Would I put it this way if the person I’m talking about were here to listen? If our words fail these simple tests, then it would be better for us to not speak at all.”

Thomas Watson writes, “He that raises a slander (gossip), carries the devil in his tongue; and he that receives it, carries the devil in his ear.”

Thomas Watson writes, “"The slanderer wounds three at once: he wounds him that is slandered; he wounds him to whom he reports the slander, by causing uncharitable thoughts to arise up in his mind against the party slandered; and he wounds his own soul, by reporting of another what is false. This is a great sin; and I wish I could say it is not common."

Thomas Watson writes, "To avoid these sins, get the fear of God."

Philip Ryken writes, “Telling the truth means thinking and saying the best about people….Telling the truth also means defending people when they are unfairly attacked.”

Philip Ryken writes, “There are many different ways to lie. Roget’s Thesaurus offers an impressive list of synonyms. A falsehood can be described as an invention, an equivocation, a falsification, a fabrication, or a prevarication. Dishonesty also comes in all different sizes. There are the big lies—the whoppers and the grand deceptions. Then there are all the little lies we tell—the half-truths, the flatteries, and the fibs. What we say may be true, as far as it goes, but we leave out the details that might put us at a disadvantage. Or we say something that is technically true, yet nevertheless intended to deceive. We overstate our accomplishments, putting ourselves in the best possible light. At the same time we exaggerate other people’s failings, thinking and saying the worst about others. We mislead, misquote, and misinterpret. We twist people’s words, taking things out of context. In these and many other ways, we exchange the truth for a lie.”

Mark Rooker writes, “Lies and falsehood are abhorred by the Lord and are in conflict with the values of righteous and holy living (see Psalms 5:6; 31:18; 40:4; 58:3; 62:4; 109:2; Proverbs 6:16-19; 10:18; 12:19, 22; 17:7; 19:5, 22; 21:6; 26:28).”

Mark Rooker writes, “A God of faithfulness, who does not deal deceitfully with His people, requires of His people the same transparency and honesty in personal relationships.”

J. I. Packer notes that “exaggerations, half-truths, and misleading silences can all in effect be lies.” He continues, “There is no godliness without truthfulness.”

J. I. Packer writes, “Lying insults not only your neighbor, whom you may manage to fool, but also God, who you can never fool.”

J. I. Packer writes, “What is forbidden is false witness against your neighbor—that is, as we said, prideful lying designed to do him down and exalt you at his expense. The positive command implicit in this negative is that we should seek our neighbor’s good and speak truth to him and about him to this end. When the love that seeks his good prompts us to withhold truth that, if spoken, would bring him harm, the spirit of the ninth commandment is being observed.”

Albert Mohler writes, “However, as the people of the truth, Christians have a twofold, God-assigned responsibility to speak what is true and also to speak on behalf of the truth itself.”

Albert Mohler writes, “It is a mark of the Christian to be truthful, for Christianity is established in God’s truth. God’s people, formed into local congregations, are like islands of truth in the midst of an ocean of lies. God’s people are to be the communities of truth—the people of truth.”

Albert Mohler writes, “To bear false witness against God is to commit adultery. To bear false witness against our neighbor is to do violence against him.”

Albert Mohler writes, “In telling the truth rather than bearing false witness, the love of God and love of neighbor are combined together in one commandment. The key to understanding this is that our neighbor is God’s creature.”

Alistair Begg writes, “One wrong word may spoil a character, smear a reputation, and mar the usefulness of a life. Part of what it means to love our neighbor is that we are absolutely truthful in what we say to and about them.”

Alistair Begg writes, “It is a good discipline to test our speech by asking of what we are about to say, especially when it concerns person, Is it kind? Is it true? Is it necessary?”

Alistair Begg writes, “If gossip is saying something behind a person’s back that we would never say to his face, then flattery is saying to a person’s face what we would never say behind his back. In other words, it is insincere and false speaking which is harmful to our neighbor.”

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions in your community group. Also, please feel freedom to adapt the question or to create a question that will best help your community group “be doers of the Word” (James 1:22), for you know the stage and situation of your group members.

1. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment? What is commended in the ninth commandment? Why is this so?

2. What does the ninth commandment teach us about God?

3. Why do we lie? Put another way, what are our heart’s motives when we lie?

4. Why is truthfulness important? Given the immediate context of the ninth commandment, why was it important for a witness to tell the truth in a courtroom/legal setting? In our day, why is it important for people to tell the truth?

5. Read Ephesians 4:25. What is the context of this passage? How does the gospel transform the way we live, think, act, and speak concerning the truth?

6. What are ways that we violate the ninth commandment? Put another way, how do the following violate the ninth commandment: hypocrisy, slander, gossip? How do these things lead to brokenness of community and disregard for the Lord?

7. How do/ought the following bear witness to God—his gospel, his love, his power: the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, your personal witness/testimony, the body of Christ?

8. At Fegenbush, Pastor Scott will challenge us to be people of the truth. In his sermon, he will address two ways that we are called to be people of the truth: (1) We’re called to bear witness of the true gospel; (2) Gospel community is built on truth. What was your response to hearing these addressed in the sermon? How do you intend to apply what you’ve heard in the sermon and seen in the Word this morning?

9. If you are struggling to facilitate conversation in your group or if you are looking to start conversation in your group, here are some questions to prompt conversation:

 A. Question of Impression—What stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Why did it stand out to you?

 B. Question of Application—How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

 C. Question of Clarity—If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

 D. Question of Reflection—How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week?

 E. Question of Mission—How will you pass on what you have heard, learned, and applied this week to another believer this week so that they may know and follow Jesus? How will what you heard, learned, and applied this week equip you to share Jesus with an unbeliever this week where you live, work, and play?

10. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions,* Matthew Harmon gives the following questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

 A. Understanding the Bible

 1. What do we learn about God?

 a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like)

 b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing)

 c. Look for God’s concerns (what thing/events/people he is concerned about)

 2. What do we learn about people?

 a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image

 b. Look for the fallen condition

 c. Look for how God’s people should live

 3. What do we learn about relating to God?

 a. Look for things to praise and thank God for

 b. Look for sin to confess and repent

 c. Look for promises and truths to believe

 4. What do we learn about relating to others?

 a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others

 b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others

 c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others

 B. Applying the Bible

 a. What does God want me to think/understand?

 b. What does God want me to believe?

 c. What does God want me to desire?

 d. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Since God is truth, we are called to be people of the truth.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—Matthew 25; Jeremiah 11

2. Tuesday—Matthew 26; Jeremiah 12

3. Wednesday—Matthew 27; Jeremiah 13

4. Thursday—Matthew 28; Jeremiah 14

5. Friday—Mark 1; Jeremiah 15

6. Saturday—Mark 2; Jeremiah 16

7. Sunday—Mark 3; Jeremiah 17

* **Ten Commandments Series**

1. August 12th—10th Commandment

* **Vision Series/Journey of Discipleship Series**

1. August 19th—Worship

2. August 26th—Community (Acts 2:42-47)

3. September 2nd—Discipleship (Matthew 4:19-20)

4. September 9th—Multiply (Matthew 28:16-20)

* **Gospel of Mark Series**

1. September 16th—Mark 1

2. September 23rd—Mark 2

3. September 30th—Mark 3

4. October 7th—Mark 4

5. October 14th—Mark 5

6. October 21st—Mark 6

7. October 28th—Mark 7

8. November 4th—Mark 8

9. November 11th—Mark 9

10. November 18th—Mark 10

11. November 25th—Mark 11

12. December 2nd—Mark 12

13. December 9th—Mark 13

14. December 16th—Mark 14

15. December 30th—Mark 15

16. January 6th—Mark 16

* **Stand Alone Sermons**

1. December 23rd—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

2. December 24th—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*; John Currid, *Exodus*;J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; John Currid, *Deuteronomy*; Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*; Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*; Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom*; Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*; J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments*; Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*; Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)