



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V24 N35 August 28, 2022

TEN WORDS

“9/Hate Speech”

Exodus 20:16; 23:1-9

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Peace

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7



What does the ninth commandment prohibit?

Peace is the glue that holds couples, families, churches, communities, and countries together. When things aren't right between people, unity is the casualty. Conflict, on the other hand, is the bane of human existence. Couples who quarrel continually over finances, children who wrangle regularly over the care of aging parents, Christian congregations that take different sides in the culture wars, and communities that protest left and right over political issues run the risk of rupture and ruin. No wonder Paul warns Ephesians believers to: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:3).

The Torah reveals the inconspicuous relationship between *truth*, *justice*, and *peace*. The ninth commandment, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor,” recorded in Exodus 20:16, and its eight explicative “Do not . . .” commandments recorded in 23:1-9 make it clear that dishonest witnesses subvert justice and thereby undermine peace – hence the contemporary chant “no justice, no peace.” One commentator writes: “These laws expand slightly on the ninth commandment (Exod 20:16). The emphasis in these verses rests on the need for absolute honesty in speaking about others, from what one reports about others generally (the wording could even apply simply to gossip) to what one says in court when one is testifying as a witness in a criminal case” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 523).

Like dishonest witnesses, those who refuse to testify also subvert justice and undermine peace. Leviticus 5:1 reads: “If anyone sins because they do not speak up when they hear a public charge to testi-

fy regarding something they have seen or learned about, they will be held responsible.” In a nutshell, disputes must be resolved, and things must be made right between opposing parties in order for there to be peace. And telling the truth is indispensable to making that happen.

The same commentator remarks: “Because crimes and disputes do occur, it must be the case that they can be adjudicated and the criminal behavior or unfairness thereby stopped. If witnesses in a trial, whether civil or criminal, do not tell the truth, it is extremely difficult for judges to render proper decisions. In other words, the court system of a nation depends on the honesty of its people” (Stuart, 466).

The rest of the Old Testament takes the ninth commandment seriously. In Proverbs 6, wisdom lists giving false testimony as one of six things God hates:

- 16 *There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him:*
- 17 *haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,*
- 18 *a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil,*
- 19 *a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.*

And later declares false witnesses will not go unpunished in Proverbs 19:

- 5 *A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free.*
- 9 *A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will perish.*

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Exodus 20:16 and 23:1-9

16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

23:1-9

1 "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.

2 "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, 3 and do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit.

4 "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it. 5 If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it.

6 "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. 7 Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

8 "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent.

9 "Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "false testimony" in 20:16.
- Circle "neighbor" v. 16.
- Circle "false reports" in 23:1.
- Circle "lawsuit" vv. 2, 3, 6.
- Underline "show favoritism" in v. 3.
- Circle "poor" in vv. 3, 6.
- Box "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 7, 8.
- Underline "oppress a foreigner" in v. 9.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 9.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

Ex 20:16

1. Give the *legal* term used to refer to giving false testimony in court.
2. Define “neighbor” as used in this verse.
3. Do you think the ninth commandment forbids spreading gossip? Explain.

23:1-9

4. According to some, the “Do not . . .” commandments in verses 1-3 and in verses 6-9 are addressed to different participants in the judicial system. Identify them.
5. Verses 1-3 and verses 6-9 describe various ways in which justice can be perverted. List them.
6. “Swim upstream if it flows toward evil” is a maxim expressing the point of verse 2. Explain.
7. Summarize how the poor, mentioned twice (vv. 3, 6), are to be treated by Israel’s judicial system.
8. *Lawsuits* are the focus of verses 1-3 and 6-9. If neither *lawsuits* nor *animal welfare* is the focus of verses 4-5, what is?
9. Define “foreigner” and explain why they deserve special mention.
10. **Discussion:** While the laws in this passage have no *regulatory* value, they do have *revelatory* value. Talk about what they reveal.

Commentary On The Text

Exodus 20:16 contains the ninth commandment, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor,” which prohibits perjury in *particular*. But more than that, it prohibits all lying and deceitfulness in *general*. *The NET Bible* notes: “The prohibition is against perjury. While the precise reference would be to legal proceedings, the law probably had a broader application to lying about other people in general (see Lev 5:1; Hos 4:2)” (39tn on Ex 20:16). And linking the eighth and the ninth commandments, Leviticus 19:11-12 implies as much: “‘Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.’”

Not only does the ninth commandment forbid all lying, but it also forbids lying on the part of all people. The term “neighbor” can refer to a “fellow Israelite” (cf. Lev 19:16-18). However, in some contexts, it can refer to a “foreigner,” a non-Israelite living in the land (see v. 18; cf. v. 34), and in others, it can simply refer to another person. In verse 16, it is used in its broadest sense. One commentator explains: “This is the first commandment to employ the word *rēa’*, ‘neighbor,’ in its general juridical sense of ‘anyone else you happen to come in contact with’ rather than the more narrow sense of ‘someone living near you’ (cf. Exod 3:22; 11:2; 12:4). In laws and formal rules, neighbor has nothing to do with proximity or familiarity; your ‘neighbor’ connotes any other human being you may have dealings with, actually or potentially” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 466). Hence the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) and the commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18; cf. Lk 10:27).

Exodus 23:1-9 contains additional commandments—extrapolations from the ninth commandment and in the same *apodictic* form as the ninth commandment—all related to the judicial system. Sandwiched between the “Do not . . .” commandments in verses 1-3 and 6-9 are “If you . . .” commandments in verses 4-5, which at first glance appear out of place. A closer look, however, reveals that the rulings in them do not focus on the welfare of animals but rather on the welfare of their owners, be he an “enemy” (v. 4) or “one who hates you” (v. 5). In either case, it is the owner’s interests that are being protected, even as it is the litigants’ interests in legal cases that are being protected by

the laws against perverting justice in verses 1-3 and 6-9. All of these regulations are tied together by a common theme, treating all people honestly, justly, and lovingly.

The *apodictic* laws in this passage are evidently addressed to potential witnesses (vv. 1-3) and potential judges (vv. 6-9) in legal proceedings. The emphasis in these verses rests on the need for absolute honesty on the part of *witnesses* and absolute impartiality on the part of *judges* (on the distinction see: U. Cassuto, *Exodus*, 298-99; John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 3, *Exodus*, 331). The first group prohibits the spreading of false reports in general lest they become the grounds for future litigation (v. 1a), helping a guilty party go free by colluding to give false testimony (v. 1b), letting the majority influence one’s testimony (v. 2), and shaping one’s testimony to favor a poor person (v. 3). God is neither on the side of the poor nor on the side of the rich. He is on the side of justice! The second group prohibits judges from showing prejudice against a poor person when rendering a judgment (v. 6), hearing a case built on a bogus charge (v. 7) that might result in a death sentence, accepting a bribe that would inevitably pervert justice (v. 8), and discriminating against resident alien (v. 9). These laws make one thing entirely true. “Honesty must prevail throughout a legal system, or the system cannot function fairly. Neither a witness nor defendant nor a judge nor a jury may contribute to a false charge” (Stuart, 527).

Like the rest of the Law, the commandments in these passages, which belong to the Book of the Covenant, do not carry a *regulatory* force today—because their regulatory value is both *historically* and *theologically* conditioned. *Historically*, they were given to the nation of Israel as part of its covenant with Yahweh, and *theologically*, they are not binding on new covenant believers since the old covenant has been replaced. However, they do carry a *revelatory* force. They reveal what is true. For example, lying and deceit is wrong. Because it is a threat to the wellbeing of other people, all lying and deceit by all people in both legal and non-legal situations is prohibited.

Word Studies/Notes

20:16 *false testimony* “Does extrapolation from the paradigmatic principle of this law imply that dishonesty in general, not merely in court cases, is also forbidden? The answer must surely be yes, reasoning not merely from the general concept of paradigmatic law but from the way that stealing, false testimony, and dishonesty in general are linked together in Lev 19:11 – not precisely in parallel to the way the eighth and ninth commandments occur together here in the Ten Words but in such a manner as to suggest that the concepts of false testimony and dishonesty per se overlap, just as common sense would imply” (Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, NAC, 466).

v. 16 *neighbor* “Here, in the Decalogue, which is concerned with general principles and not with particular instances, the expression *your neighbor* is certainly used in a universal sense [i.e., all people]” (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 248).

23:1 *false reports* “You shall not utter a groundless report, that is, you shall not go about as a tale-bearer, spreading calumny and falsehood about your fellow. It follows, *a fortiori*, that you shall not bring untrue report before the court” (Cassuto, 296).

v. *lawsuit* “Most of the regulations in this section pertain to 20:16” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ex 23:1-9). “These admonitions which expand the ninth commandment (20:16), deal with the need for impartial justice in lawsuits. The Israelites were to bear a true witness in legal cases” (John D. Hannah, “Exodus,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 143).

v. 3 *show favoritism* Cf. Lev 19:15, “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.” “Even out of compassion for an indigent person, you are forbidden to pervert judgment: nor shall you favour a poor man in his suit. When you sit in the seat of judgment, and you have to adjudicate between a poor and rich man, needless to say you are forbidden to turn aside from the path of justice for the benefit of the rich man, but know that you are prohibited to deviate from the way of justice even in the interests of the poor man. Everywhere and at all times, ‘justice and only justice you shall follow’” (Cassuto, 296-97).

v. 3 *poor* The poor are more frequently the ones denied justice (cf. Ex 23:6; Ps 140:12; Pr 29:7; Eze 22:9; Am 5:2). “This law in v. 3, coordinated with what precedes, is cleverly worded. It might be thought that the usual temptation toward favoritism in a law case would be on behalf of a rich person, not a poor person (as the majority might do as envisioned in the previous verse). One might assume that testifying or returning a verdict on behalf of the rich might bring eventual reward or advantage to a witness or judge by reason of the rich person’s gratitude. But the law, in an efficiency of expression, covers both the more likely temptation and the less likely temptation by citing the latter, ‘and do not show favoritism to a poor man.’ It has the effect of saying, ‘Do not show favoritism to anyone in any testimony you ever give or judgment you ever make – neither out of fear of the powerful or hope for personal gain nor out of sympathy for the suffering of the lowly’” (Stuart, 525).

v. 8 *bribe* Cf. Dt 16:18-20, esp. v. 19, “Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent.” “Note here the general language of the command: it does not limit itself to court cases. Anyone who requires or accepts an extra, personal payment for his services in any area of society has been ‘bought’ and will not act with proper neutrality and consistency” (Stuart, 528).

v. 9 *oppress a foreigner* “The warning against oppressing the foreigner, which is repeated from chap. xxii. 20 . . . refers to the oppression of a stranger in judicial matters by the refusal of justice, or by harsh and unjust treatment in court (Deut. xxiv. 17, xxvii. 19). ‘For ye know the soul (*animus*, the soul as the seat of feeling) of the stranger,’ i.e. you know from your own experience in Egypt how a foreigner feels” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch*, 2:145).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

The ninth commandment, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor," prohibits all lying and deceit by all people in both legal and nonlegal situations.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

I remember a time when my friend “Judy” began to gossip about a new acquaintance, “Susan.” I didn’t know either person very well, and I’m embarrassed to say I fully bought into what Judy said about Susan. I began to distance myself from Susan and resisted her friendship. It was cancel culture before cancel culture was a thing. Fast forward 10 years, when I discovered Susan was actually a really wonderful person. Unfortunately, because I listened to gossip, I missed out on years of what could have been a fabulous friendship. What a disappointment! The ninth commandment is often said to be, “Do not lie.” And while that’s true, we shouldn’t speak falsely about our neighbors. It has so much more to do with how we can preserve the reputation of our neighbors for the sake of unity. As parents, we should pay careful attention to this commandment. After all, part of our charge in parenting is to help our kids understand the power of their words when it comes to speaking about others. We want them to know they should not speak falsely about others. We also want them to be aware so that when they see it in action, they know what to do. We can train them to go directly to the source and trust in a person’s known character before believing gossip. We can help our kids recognize when others are being maligned and teach them how to boldly stand up for truth with gentleness and humility. How? Let’s start by modeling uplifting and encouraging speech about others. Let’s invite accountability when we fail. Above all, let’s pray to honor God!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 20:16; 23:1-9

1. What is the ninth commandment?
2. What is “false testimony?”
3. Give an example of breaking this commandment.

What Do You Think?

Is a little white lie ok if you’re protecting a person’s feelings?

What Do You Do?

How often do you **THINK** before you speak? (*Is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind?*) Mark how many times you stop and THINK before you speak this week. Are you surprised by how many marks you make?

CORE COMPETENCY: Peace

I live without worry because things are good between God, myself and others.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Corinthians 5:17

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!”

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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