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**Honest to God**  
**Exodus 20:16**

A wife asked her husband, "Why don't you ever play golf with Herb anymore? Her husband replied, "Well, would you want to play golf with a guy who lies about his score and spends the whole morning conversation spreading rumors about the other guys at work" His wife said, "Well, no I sure wouldn't". Her husband said, "Well, neither does Herb!"

Lies and slander and gossip can inflict some pretty major damage in our relationships with each other, and we hurt ourselves too. Lies divide and sever. That is why God is saying to us through the Perfect 10, the ten commandments. Please, please, please do not lie against each other you are hurting each other and you are hurting yourself. Please tell the truth. Support truth and integrity with all your strength as you do life with other people. If you commit to speaking truth and being real with the various kinds of people that come into your life, I can promise your relationships will be life giving and refreshing and enjoyable and long-lasting. It is truth that brings a refreshing freedom to your life. Don't' slander and gossip and lie and rip on other people, you are not only hurting others, you are hurting yourself.

There is a whole lot of lying that is going on in America isn't there? New York Times headlines on Jun 7, 1996 "What a tangled web we weave; we all practice to deceive." The article went on to say that 91% of Americans confess they regularly don't tell the truth. 20 percent of those surveyed said they can't get through a single day without telling conscious premeditated lies. (Mark Adams, Redlands Baptist)

We don't even call them "lies" anymore. We are simply putting a "spin" on the story. Giving an enhanced augmented reality. A strategic misrepresentation or terminological inexactitude. Isaiah 59:3-4 hit our

present culture right on the head when it says, “No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies.” Psalm 12:1 “Help O lord. For the godly are no more; the faithful have vanished from among men. Everyone lies to his neighbor; their flattering lips speak with deception.”

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Exodus. In our study of the 10 commandments, we have seen how the first four commands challenge us to make sure our relationship with God is right, the vertical part, and that ought to have a huge affect on all the other relationships we have with other people, our horizontal relationships. Unless we are loving our neighbors well, the people around us who we do life with. Unless we are loving the people in our life well, we are not loving God well. It is also true that we cannot say we are loving God well if there is not love for people. There is a reason why when a lawyer asked Jesus what is the greatest commandments Jesus replied, Love God with all that you have and love your neighbor as yourself. And then the kicker in Galatians 5:14 it goes even further to say “the whole law is fulfilled in one word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The entire law boiled down to a single sentence. ‘Love your neighbor’. Why is that? Because that is the way we practically demonstrate our love for God...by our love for our neighbor. They shall know we are Christians how? They shall know we love God how? By our love. That is why God in His perfect 10 commands for us is practically driving us to places where we can demonstrate our love for each other. That is why He is giving us all these areas where we need a heads up and might be tempted to do hurt and damage rather than do love and healing and building. God gave us these commands not to be a killjoy and steal all our fun. He gave them so that our relationships would grow and be refreshing and life-giving and long-term. God wants to provide for us and protect us. So we read the ninth command here in Exodus 20:16. Read with me (READ) “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”

What does that mean? Its stated in the negative. The original meaning carries a judicial feel do it. Don't commit perjury, don't lie on a witness stand in a court of law against your neighbor. Most of us would say, "I have never lied on the witness stand." But I think God intends for us to speak truth even in a more general sense.

It says we are not to bear false witness. I looked up the verb "to bear" in Websters dictionary. In addition to the furry animal and the stock market, there were a number of meanings for the word "bear". One is to endure or to bear up under a load. It means to carry or possess or tolerate. This is more then I can bear. To bear can mean to take a certain direction. "Go down to the intersection and when it wyes, bear right. One can take up arms, or bear arms against another. One can force something into place or bear down on someone. One can keep something in the front of your memory, or to bear in mind. It also means to transport and spread news. I come bearing bad news. That meaning starts to hit home here. We are not to be spreading slanderous gossip or carrying lies that would damage our neighbor. That is one load we are not take up and shoot our neighbors with.

Who is our neighbor? When the Bible speaks of neighbor it means far more then the person who is living next door to you, or the couple of homes on your street. Read Leviticus 19 and find at least five different kinds of neighbors; from the guy you work with, to family, to the stranger to the handicapped and outcast. A neighbor is anyone you come in contact with during the week. It could be the student sitting in the desk next to you at school. A neighbor is a person that you do life with whether you like it or not. God is saying; Please don't bear any false witness, don't tell damaging lies against people. It destroys relationships. A false witness is pretty clear. A witness is one who claims to have seen or heard truth and tells people about it. He is furnishing proof or evidence to back up the claim. But here we find out all that evidence is not right, its not real, its not true, its not honest or genuine. It is a false

witness. God is calling us not to bear false witness against our neighbor. Stop lying against your neighbor. Putting it in the positive sense. Speak the truth. Support truth and integrity with those you are doing life with. Stop lying and live the truth. Be honest to yourself. Be honest with other people and be honest to God.

What sort of lies do we tell? We lie to impress others and make us appear better than we really are. In the Acts 5 you can read about a couple named Annaias and Saphira decided they wanted to impress the church folks as to how generous and giving they were. They sold a piece of land and were going to give a portion of the proceeds to help the new church. Nothing wrong with that. The problem is they decided since they got such a good profit on it that they could keep some of the money for themselves and still tell everyone that they had given the entire sale price to God. They may have fooled some of the people for a while, but God wasn't fooled. And God wasn't impressed. They lied and they died.

We may stretch things on our resume' to impress the employer. When the Port Authority of New York ran a help wanted ad for electricians with expertise in using the Sontag connectors, it received 170 responses-even though there is no such thing as a Sontag connector. They ran the ad to find out how many applicants falsify résumés. We lie to impress others and make ourselves appear more special than we are. If we see a celebrity 10 yds away having a conversation, we may relay parts of what he said and imply that they were talking directly to you when they never even looked you in the eye. We do this to make ourselves look better than we are.

We also lie for convenience sake. We may not really want to go to the party or meeting but we want to sound like we are really interested. We really don't want to go on that date with Him, but we don't want to hurt his feelings. We don't really intend to pray for the person but its convenient to say, "I'll pray for you". We don't really need to go, but we are tired and done talking on the phone so we say, "I gotta go, see ya"

We lie to get out of a jam. When our backs are up against a wall and we are about to really look bad, we lie. Mom said to be in by 11pm and its now 12:30. The boss comes in looking for the report that was due at 2pm. The officer flashes the blue lights and pulls us over. You get a phone call from the IRS agent. We lie to escape punishment. Do you see how commandment 8 is closely connected to number 9. When we steal we often have to lie to try and escape. Peter in the courtyard at Jesus trial is a perfect example. The servant girl says; Hey you have an accent just like that Jesus guy. You must be from Galilee and you are one of those close friends of Jesus. Peter replies. Blankety, blank I don't' even know the guy. You got it all wrong. Lying to get out of a jam.

We exaggerate and often it is harmless. A lot of our humor is stating things in the extreme. I've heard plenty of fishing and hunting stories get stretched. But it can be deadly when always and never are used in marriage relationships. You never show me any love. You have never once given me the respect I need. You always put me down when we are around friends. Its tempting for churches to exaggerate the Christian life. When you come to Christ life will all turn into a bed of roses, filled with happiness and all your problems will go away. Is that true? Not in this lifetime. The Bible never says Christians will be insulated from the heartaches and problems and pains of life. We lose our integrity when we present Christian faith as a silver fix it all pill. The same goes for ministries that cry from the TV, "If you don't send in your donation today we will be forced to go off the air." And yet they have 2 million reserve in the bank. Or. I'm going to stay up in this prayer tower and unless you send in 5 million dollars God is going to take my life. As if God has taken him hostage? That sure must make God very sad. We cannot overstate or understate else we are guilty of lying and bearing a false witness to the entire world.

We may lie by flattery. Proverbs 26:28 says "a flattering mouth works ruin." This is giving praise that isn't sincere. In your mind you

think, “that outfit unfit for anyone to wear, how ugly.” But you say, “that’s so cute on you. I love what it does for you.” Or you might say to the pastor “That was a great sermon, just wonderful.” But you slept through most of it and what you did hear you ripped to shreds in the car on the way home. Ps 55:21 says “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart. His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.” We lie when we smile to the face and stab behind their backs.

We lie for revenge. We lie to hurt and get back at people who have hurt us. Potiphars wife is a perfect example. She told everyone, “Joseph was trying to rape me, not the other way around. See I have his coat he left here.” Revenge lying. I never saw her turn in that report. I was never told that he was going to be coming in late. I smelled something on them when they came in. Well this is what he told me.

There is the silent lie that can spread falsehood without even saying anything. It may be a shrug of the shoulder or raised eyebrow, a laugh or smirk. Anything designed to give a false impression. Even just by silently listening to slander and gossip and rumors that you know is not true or failing to speak up and come to the defense is bearing a false witness. By saying nothing we are validating a falsehood. All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. We are not called to sit on our hands in the face of evil. We need to speak for the truth.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was a little monk named Telemachus. One day on a trip to Rome he followed a crowd of people into the coliseum. As he looked into the arena gladiators came out and began fighting one another to the death. Telemachus thought to himself. This is not right. Even 400 years after Christ we are still killing each other for entertainment. This is not Christian! So he got up out of his seat and climbed over the wall and stood between the muscled sweaty gladiators. Putting up his hands he cried out. “In the name of Christ forbear, stop!”

The crowd laughed and jeered. One of the gladiators knocked him down with the flat of his blade. But he got again and stood between the two men. The crowd began to get angry that the monk was spoiling their fun so they yelled “run him through. One of the gladiators obeyed, and took his sword and ran him through the stomach. One last time Telemachus weakly got up and said, ‘In the name of Christ, forbear.’” He fell to the coliseum floor and died. The crowds grew silent and within minutes they silently left the stands. History records this as the last gladiatorial contest in the roman empire, thanks to a small monk who was willing to stand up for the truth. There are plenty of things in our world that need us to stand up for truth. What might God be leading you to stand up against in our day?

God wants us to stop lying, stop bearing false witness and speak the truth. What is truth? Pontius Pilot asked this question of Jesus, but he was not the last one to ask “what is truth.” Truth is not found deep within yourself, or in the stars or out in nature or in education. Jesus gives the answer when he says “I am the way the truth and the life” John 14:6. God is truth so He cannot tolerate falsehood. Imagine an accomplished singer with perfect pitch being asked to sing a duet with someone who frequently goes flat. Or a concert pianist asked to play on a piano that is terribly out of tune. Or a master framer asked to work with someone who could care less whether it was square and plumb. It would drive them crazy, be painful to the ears. They could not tolerate it any more then God could tolerate dishonesty. Because God is truth. In Proverbs 6 it talks about the seven things that God hates and two of the seven have to do with dishonesty. Just like it was important for us to recognize the different ways we steal, I think its important for us to recognize the ways we have been bearing falsehood.

So what drives us to lie? John 8:44 tells us that Satan is a liar and a thief and the Father of lies.” Our old self apart from God has been messed up and corrupted by the father of lies and our hearts have been

deceived about what is truly desirable and right and best for us. He will whisper lies that play on our fears. It's a lie from Satan that popularity, other peoples opinion of you is more important then speaking the truth. It's a lie playing to our fears that says we have to do some lying in order to survive. We have to do some lying because all the other guys out there are lying. That is how you have to make it in the business world. That is a lie. Its not fair that we play by different rules. It ought to make us angry, because God is angry too.

Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy truth and do not sell it." That tells me that truth is very valuable and it will cost me something to get it and keep it. I sell off truth when I run to my fears, I run to my greed, I run to my self hiding and protecting rather than my heart for a God and loving His truth. Lying looks like an easy way out when Satan whispers in our ear. "Pssst. I can get you out of hot water with your parents...don't really tell them what happened last night at your friends house." Pssst I can get you out of a jam. Afraid of passing that exam. Heres a little lie for you. Psssst Do you feel the need to impress your friends and look better than you really are. Try this little lie, stretch that story a bit more, but not too much. Stretch that truth on when you can really deliver that product or deliver on that project. We are tempted to sell off truth when a situation comes along that looks like a quicker better deal. God says to us this morning. Please, please, please, speak truth. Proverbs 12:19 "Truth even when its hard always wins in the long run. "Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue last just a moment."

When we lie we hurt ourselves because we will not enjoy the life that God has given for us. When we lie once the next one is easier and the next one even easier. When we lie we will become more suspicious of others because we will assume they are lying too and we will always wonder what really is true. When we lie we damage our relationships with other people. It affects more than just us. Ephesians 4:25 says, 'Put off all falsehood and speak truth to his neighbor, for we are all members

of one body.” It would make no sense for the eye to lie to the hand about the location of where your mouth is. That hand might jam the fork into the eye instead of the mouth. Why lie to each other, especially those who are in the body of Christ? We are members with each other. Speak truth. The worst part of our lying is that it separates us from God. He is truth. He hates lies. It grates terribly on His ears when our lies are out of tune with who He is.

So many of us lie. In various ways. How can we stop our lying and speak truth to each other? We know God’s heart is for us to speak truth. Certainly there will be times when it is not wise to tell all we know. Being a truth teller does not mean we always need to speak out all that we know. Love will conceal information at times. We are called to speak the truth, but do it in love. I am not talking about speaking truth that is cruel Proverbs 3:3 tells us to “bind kindness and truth around our necks.” I have heard people rationalize cruel words or slander saying, “But its true.” Ok. Is it kind? Is it helping build up anyone? On the flip side there are things we need to say to our friends that we fail to speak truth to them because we don’t want to lose their approval of us. Sometimes the most loving thing we can do for them is to speak truth exposing areas in their life where they really need to work on because they are hurting themselves. Prov.27:6 “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of the enemy.”

How can we stop lying and speak the truth to each other? First step is to admit it. Review your conversations this past week. Have I lied to impress? Have I stretched the truth? Exaggerated? Lied out of convenience? Lied to get revenge on someone? Slandered or gossiped? Lied in flattery? Or did I bear false witness simply by my silence? Ed Young calls us to install several lie detectors in our life. We need to find people who love us, know us well and ask them to hold us accountable. If you have children in your home you are blessed, because they are automatic lie detectors. They can tell and say, “I spy I lie” from a mile off

if you are stretching a story or hiding in escape. Third , we need to listen to the nudges from the Holy Spirit that God gives us. John 16:13 Says, "But when the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth." Listen to the Holy Spirit's still small voice inside of us drawing us to stop lying and speak truth. When we practice listening to the Holy Spirit of truth and ignoring the whispers of the father of lies, it will become more and more easy for us to hear truth. Perhaps even right now some of you are being prompted by the Holy Spirit about a lie that came from your lips this week. It may even seem to you like a little thing and tempted to discount and ignore. Don't do that. Begin now listening to the spirit of truth and do the hard maybe even embarrassing work of going to the person you have lied to and say, "I hate to admit this, but I lied to you." Every time the Holy Spirit convicts us about lying go right to that person and make it right. We are in a spiritual war here. We must declare all out war against the father of lies. After you have done this two or three times, guess what happens. You think long and hard before you tell another lie. Every time you are tempted to slide off into some shady ground the Spirit will prompt you with a thought, "Boy, I had best make sure this is right on true." II Corinthians 6:7 says "In truthful speech and the power of God. These are the weapons of righteousness..." Psalm 86:11 "Teach me your way O Lord and I will walk in your truth." John 8:32 "and you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free."

Do you know the truth? Do you know the ultimate truth? Four truths that we all need to know. Are 1) We are all moral failures. Romans 3:23 says that "All have sinned" No matter how "good" we may appear to others, we fall far short of God's perfection. Ultimate truth 2) We will all be accountable and stand before God . All our lies and masks and cover-ups will be exposed and the condition of our spiritual heart will be painfully obvious to all. What is the condition of your heart? Truth #3) people who have not repented will be doomed to spending eternity in hell. Not my idea and not real popular to talk about, but I speak this truth to

you in love. The Bible is very clear that sinner who have not repented are going to spend eternity in a nasty evil place. The 4<sup>th</sup> great truth is that those who admit their sin and ask Jesus to forgive them say yes to Jesus and make Him number one will escape the judgment and spend eternity in heaven. Now Satan doesn't want you to hear that truth and even now is whispering lies in your ears that say, You cant respond to that gift of grace. You are too bad, too far gone. Or he might be saying don't listen to that you are good enough, much better then a lot of these folks sitting here. All lies smooth sounding lies designed to keep you from the truth. Who are you going to listen to? The Bible says we have to admit the truth about ourselves that we are sinner. Repent of our sins and accept the gift of grace from Jesus the one who is the "way the truth and the life." Will you do that today? Have you ever done that... then respond this morning. For those of you who feel God prompting you to do that you might pray something like this. (PRAY) Go to piano and sing "Jesus is the answer"

You know, there is nothing I'd rather do than to have a personal conversation with each of you about your spiritual journey. I wish I could invite each of you out for some pie and have you tell me what's going on in your life. I can't do that today. So I ask you to do me a favor and participate in a personal survey. I'd like you to take the welcome card you filled out earlier in the service and, on the back of it, write either the letter A, B, C, or D based on what I now explain."

"If you have already committed your life to Christ prior to this service write down the letter "A." If today you are believing in Christ for the first time write down the letter "B." If you say, 'Norm, I haven't made that decision yet but I'm considering it, and I want you to know that I am considering it, write down the letter "C." If you feel you don't ever intend to commit your life to Christ, I'd appreciate your honesty by writing down the letter "D" on your card." Sing (Jesus is the answer) as they fill out the card.

