

Connect 360: Speaking the Truth in Love

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- *Lesson 10 in the BaptistWay Press Connect 360 unit “Pillars” focuses on Exodus 20:16.*

Before you send that email or tweet your opinions, ask yourself this question, “Do these remarks edify or destroy?” Since we will be accountable for every word we communicate, speak blessings instead of lies. As believers, we must be intentional about telling the truth. We can become sensitive to the times when our tongues assume control of our better judgment. The Holy Spirit lives within us to do what we cannot do for ourselves.

In the Exodus version, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,” the idea is lying or untruth. In Deuteronomy, the word is replaced by one that means nothingness, emptiness, worthlessness or something vain. Even though the context suggests the setting is a court of law, the Deuteronomy passage indicates a much broader application. There was even the teaching that one who withheld testimony was also guilty of lying.

Destructive power of deception

Lying is destructive. It destroys the one telling the lies and the innocent ones affected by the lies. Dishonesty undermines trust, which results in broken relationships. The circle of victims expands as false stories spread. God is slandered when those who claim to be his followers bear false witness.

Words are like arrows; once spoken, they cannot be unspoken. When launched, an arrow leaves the bow, but it doesn't cease to exist. The shaft is still an entity that may find lodging in a target, wild game, a tree, or even the ground. When a word is spoken, it finds lodging in the ear of another, and that word may spread to others as well. Even when a person asks for forgiveness and retracts a statement, it never can be unspoken.

Societal norms vs. biblical values

Our society rewards deception. Hidden clauses and double negatives are buried in written contracts. Journalists and even preachers embellish stories. Politicians create "facts." Children conceal their bad behavior from their parents by making up cover stories. Cheating is rampant in schools. Employers lie to employees, and employees deceive employers. Taxpayers cheat and feel justified. Spouses break marriage vows, and church members fail to fulfill pledges to the church.

The Holy Spirit lives within us to do what we cannot do for ourselves. A life of integrity begins with knowing the One who is the truth. Only Christ can create a new nature in us that desires honesty. Then it is through the word of God that we gain the discernment between what is true and what is not. When we hide God's word in our hearts, we can see beyond the lies of the Evil One, just as Jesus did during his temptations (Matthew 4:1-11).

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