

## “Truth-Telling” Exodus 20:16

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*“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”*  
Exodus 20:16 (English Standard Version)

See Psalm 12:2; 15:2; 31:18; 101:7; Proverbs 12:22; 13:5; Ephesians 4:25; 6:14;  
Colossians 3:9-10; John 8:44; Revelation 21:8.

### **BELIEVERS ARE TO BE TRUTH-TELLERS.**

*Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*  
Colossians 3:9-10 (New International Version)

*Teach me your way, O LORD, that I walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*  
Psalm 86:11 (ESV)

*“Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”*  
Matthew 5:37 (ESV)

- **Definition of “lie”:** Speech that intentionally deceives a “neighbor” and causes some degree of harm. (Adapted from John Frame’s *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p. 835)

- Does a lie have to be intentional?

*Behold, the wicked man conceives evil, and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.*  
Psalm 7:14 (ESV)

- Does a lie have to be harmful?

See Exodus 20:16; 2 Kings 5; Acts 5:1-11; Matthew 22:36-40.

## THERE ARE MORAL EXCEPTIONS TO TRUTH-TELLING.

**Exception #1:** The protection of life in the face of evil.

- The principles of relationship, respect and covenant-loyalty undergird our commitment to truth-telling. (See Stassen's and Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics*, p. 377-388.)
- "Situations arise in a sinful and unjust world in which gross imbalances or misuses of power subvert and even destroy the implicit covenant that exists in communities." (From *Kingdom Ethics* by Glen Stassen and David Gushee)
- Not everyone we meet is a "neighbor", and to enemies, under some circumstances, a believer may not owe the truth.
- See Exodus 1:15-21; Joshua 2:4-7; 6:17, 25; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25; Joshua 8:3-8; Judges 4:18-21; 5:24-27; 1 Samuel 16:1-5; 19:12-17; 20:6; 21:13; 27:10; 2 Samuel 5:22-25; 15:34; 17:19-20; 2 Kings 6:14-20; Jeremiah 38:24-28.
- Believers have no covenant with evil authorities to tell them truth that will help them do evil. (See Stassen's and Gushee's *Kingdom Ethics*, p. 386.)

**Exception #2:** When love dictates silence.

*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law . . . <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*  
Romans 13:8, 10 (ESV)

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness . . . <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*  
Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV)