



FOLLOW-THROUGH

Small Group Discussion around the Sunday Message
Exodus 20:16, The 8th Commandment
“If You Can’t Say Something Nice...”
November 6, 2005

Introduction

Lying seems to be a way of life for many people. We lie at the drop of a hat. The book *The Day American Told the Truth* says that 91 percent of those surveyed lie routinely about matters they consider trivial, and 36 percent lie about important matters; 86 percent lie regularly to parents, 75 percent to friends, 73 percent to siblings, and 69 percent to spouses.

Robert Thornton, a professor at Lehigh University, has a collection of "virtually litigation-proof" phrases called the *Lexicon of Intentionally Ambiguous Recommendations*, or *LIAR*. Here are some examples:

- To describe an inept person—"I enthusiastically recommend this candidate with no qualifications whatsoever."
 - To describe an ex-employee who had problems getting along with fellow workers—"I am pleased to say that this candidate is a former colleague of mine."
 - To describe an unproductive candidate—"I can assure you that no person would be better for the job."
 - To describe an applicant not worth consideration—"I would urge you to waste no time in making this candidate an offer of employment."
1. Read Exodus 20:16.
 - In the narrow sense this commandment forbids perjury in court. In the broad sense it forbids telling lies to or about another person. Share a time when you actually lied. What was the lie? What was the truth? Why do you think you decided to lie?
 2. Read Matthew 12:34-35.
 - What is the source of our lies, according to Jesus?
 - If you had to choose from this list of evil motivators for lying, which one is most to motivate you to lie? 1. Guilt 2. Fear 3. Pride 4. Malice 4. Approval of others
 - Read Psalm 12:1-4 for an indictment on lies and flattery and their frequent motivator, pride.
 3. Read James 3:7-12.
 - Sins of the tongue are powerful sins. What are some of the bitter consequences of sins like gossip or slander? What about the consequences of empty flattery?
 - Read Jeremiah 9:5-6 for the Lord's indictment on a society full of liars. What are some of the big lies being told in our society today? Who's telling them? And what are some of the dangerous consequences of these lies?
 - Psalm 15:4 talks about telling the truth "even when it hurts." How might telling the truth "hurt?"
 4. Carefully read John 18:33-40. Note especially verses 37-38.
 - How do you imagine Pilate said the words, "What is truth?" Was he actually wondering and seeking an answer? Was he being cynical, even satirical? Or was he writing truth off as a fiction? What do you think? Say it the way you think he said it.
 - Do you see the irony of Pilate's question, considering who is standing in front of him? See John 14:6.
 - Look at John 1:14. Why is it important that we see Jesus as "full of truth?"
 - How different would our lives be if we lived out Ephesians 4:15?
 - How is "speaking the truth in love" different from "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all?"
 5. Close with a prayer of praise for God's truthfulness and a plea for help to tell the truth.