



Family Study Guides

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

9. "YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS"

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Family Study Guide

9. "You shall not bear false witness."

[We suggest that as you use this Family Study Guide, select and focus on a main portion or two that you feel will help your family's study into the commandment. You do not need to cover every aspect, discussion or scripture presented in this guide. Select the aspects or principles most relevant or helpful to your family.]

Objectives:

- Help your family explain what it means to bear false witness.
- Determine whether bearing false witness includes other forms of lying.
- Compare and contrast two or more biblical examples of lying and the consequences involved.
- Explain the harmful effects of lying, including additional problems that it causes.

Memory Verse:

Exodus 20:16 *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor [NKJV]
You must not lie. [The Living Bible]*

While the wording of this commandment—"do not bear false witness"—involves malicious lies against another person, God speaks against all forms of lying.

- **Proverbs 6:16-19** (ESV) *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*

The scriptures show that lying violates the principles of God's commandments.

- **1 John 3:4** ... sin is the transgression of the law.
- **Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death...*
- **Revelation 21:8** ...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.
- **1 John 2:3-4** *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Lying is the opposite of God.

- **Titus 1:2** (ESV) *God, who never lies...*
- **Hebrews 6:18** ... *it is impossible for God to lie.*
- **John 16:13** *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth [the very essence of God's power is truth].*
- **John 8:44** ...*the devil... is a liar and the father of it.*

UCG President Victor Kubik wrote about "The Sin of Lying" (*Beyond Today Magazine* 12/15/17; <https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-magazine/the-sin-of-lying>). The article identifies how pervasive the sin of lying is:

"No one is immune from lying. It makes no difference whether one is a scientist, a journalist, a business professional, a college student, a spouse, a city worker or even, yes, a Christian. Almost everyone lies, sometimes several times a day."

Why do people lie?

What do people lie about? Below is a summary of the research from the “Why We Lie” *National Geographic* article that was mentioned in the *Beyond Today* article:

- 22 percent of people lie to cover up a personal transgression.
- About 16 percent use lying and deception to gain financial benefits or an economic advantage.
- Another 15 percent of all lies are told for personal advantage more generally—to create benefits beyond money.
- About 14 percent of lying is centered on avoidance or getting out of something.
- About 8 percent of lies are told to bolster a positive image of ourselves.
- The remainder of lying is split up between three ways:
 - making people laugh (telling tall tales)
 - trying to hurt people
 - trying to simply be polite and not hurt someone’s feelings

While it may seem small and innocent at the time, lying brings terrible costs to society and life. It hurts people. Lying and deception destroy trust, the social glue that makes things work better in human society. Lying annihilates relationships. Lying costs billions of dollars in business, government and organizational life. And when one starts lying to oneself, even more terrible things can happen.

The Sin of Lying—Old Testament Example: 2 Kings 5:1-27

This family Guide will discuss a story about someone who did not tell the truth. Listen and see if you know what he did wrong. The story can be found in **2 Kings 5:1-27**. Read a paraphrased version or the summary story below.

Naaman was a soldier in Syria who had leprosy. [Explain briefly that leprosy was a horrible skin disease.] A girl from Israel said that she knew someone in Israel who could cure him. Naaman asked his king to write a letter to the king in Israel to see if he could cure him.

The king of Israel couldn’t cure him, but Elisha the prophet said he could help. Elisha told Naaman to go and dip himself in the Jordan River seven times. At first Naaman didn’t believe he would be cured but he did it anyway and was cured! Naaman was happy and wanted to pay Elisha for curing him. Elisha didn’t want to be paid, so Naaman started back to his home.

Elisha’s servant Gehazi thought that Elisha should have taken the money that Naaman offered, so Gehazi went looking for Naaman. Gehazi told Naaman that Elisha changed his mind and that he needed some money and clothes to help some visitors that had come to stay with him.

Naaman gave Gehazi more money than he asked for and some clothes. Gehazi took the money and clothes and put them in his own house.

When Elisha asked Gehazi where he had been he said, “*I haven’t been anywhere.*” Elisha was a man of God and knew what Gehazi had done, so he told him that he would be punished.

His punishment would be getting the same disease that Naaman had—leprosy!

- ✓ What did Gehazi do that was wrong? [He lied and took money that didn't belong to him.]
- ✓ What did he lie about?
- ✓ What do you think Gehazi's motive was for lying?
- ✓ What other commandments were broken by this act? [Putting the god of money ahead of God, coveting, stealing, his parents probably taught him better—so dishonored parents].

Not only did Gehazi lie, but he stole too. Notice how lying is usually connected to other sins.

Sin of Lying - New Testament Example: Acts 5:1-11

Ananias and Sapphira were living in Jerusalem after the death of Jesus Christ and were among some of the first to become Christians. In those first exciting days they were part of the new fellowship of the beginning church.

Acts 2:44-45 (GNT) *All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed.*

Acts 5:1-11 (Good News Translation) *But there was a man named Ananias, who with his wife Sapphira sold some property that belonged to them. But with his wife's agreement he kept part of the money for himself and turned the rest over to the apostles. Peter said to him, "Ananias, why did you let Satan take control of you and make you lie to the Holy Spirit by keeping part of the money you received for the property? Before you sold the property, it belonged to you; and after you sold it, the money was yours. Why, then, did you decide to do such a thing? You have not lied to men—you have lied to God!" As soon as Ananias heard this, he fell down dead; and all who heard about it were terrified. The young men came in, wrapped up his body, carried him out, and buried him. About three hours later his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. Peter asked her, "Tell me, was this the full amount you and your husband received for your property?" "Yes," she answered, "the full amount." So Peter said to her, "Why did you and your husband decide to put the Lord's Spirit to the test? The men who buried your husband are at the door right now, and they will carry you out too!" At once she fell down at his feet and died. The young men came in and saw that she was dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. The whole church and all the others who heard of this were terrified.*

- ✓ What do you think are the reasons Ananias and Sapphira lied?
- ✓ We all want people to think well of us. When we do something we shouldn't and don't want others to find out—we might consider lying to cover up what we have done. Have you ever done that?
- ✓ Were they even required to give all of the money from the sale of their land?
- ✓ What do you think Ananias and Sapphira should have done?
- ✓ While the punishment for lying was pretty harsh—why do think God did this here at the beginning of the New Testament church?
- ✓ Do you think they would have been punished with death if they had just admitted what they had done and repented?
- ✓ Have your parents ever told you that you will be punished worse for lying—than for the thing you are lying about?
- ✓ Discuss past instances in your family where lies were told—and what the consequences were.
- ✓ Discuss instance where you thought about lying, but told the truth. How did that feel?

This example reminds us that deception is not acceptable to God. We need to live an honest life, be truthful in all things, and not try to make people think we are something we are not.

Additional Family Discussion

The Bible says in **Exodus 20:16** “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

Exodus 20:16 (NCV) “You must not tell lies about your neighbor.”

Proverbs 19:9 (NLT) *A false witness will not go unpunished, and a liar will be destroyed.*

What if I told you something that wasn’t true? What if I said, “I am going to give everyone here a million dollars!” Do you think I am telling the truth?

You would probably not think so. Why don’t you believe me?

- Allow children to give reasons they don’t believe you.
- (Our family does not have millions of dollars to give away.)

I said those things to start our discussion about lying.

- What problems would there be in a relationship with a friend who often lies to you?
- Why does it upset your parents if you lie?
- Can you give reasons why you would trust or not trust someone who lies?
- In what ways would the world be a better place if everyone told the truth?

- ✓ What do these statements from Jesus Christ teach us about truth?
 - **Matthew 5:33-37**
 - **John 8:31-32**
 - **John 14:6**
 - **John 17:17**
- ✓ What do these scriptures about living and doing business honestly teach us about how God values truth and hates lies?
 - **Deuteronomy 25: 13-16**
 - **Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:10,14,17; 20:23; 21:6; 28:6**
 - **Micah 6:8-16**
 - **Colossians 4:1**
- ✓ The Bible says God cannot lie (**Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:17-18**). Since this is true, what are some of the promises of God can we believe in? What if this was not the case about God? How should God's example affect the way we live, speak, and act?

Additional Family Resources:

- UCG Resources on the Ninth Commandment: <https://www.ucg.org/tags/ninth-commandment>
<https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/beyond-today-magazine/the-sin-of-lying>
- UCG Teen Bible Study Guide: The Ninth Commandment <https://www.ucg.org/teen-bible-study/teen-bible-study-volume-3-ten-commandments/ninth-commandment-do-not-lie>
Gives several good discussion questions for teens.

Possible Class Activities:

1. **Discussion time.** Take turns asking “What would you do if...”
 - ⇒ ...you saw your best friend steal something? What would you say if a grownup asked you about it?
 - ⇒ ...you took a cupcake off the plate. Mom asks, “Who ate the cupcake? I was making these for the church potluck.”
 - ⇒ ...you were angry with a friend and stuck out your tongue at him. Your friend tells on you. What do you say?
 - ⇒ ...you were talking in class, and the teacher asks, “Who’s talking when I’m talking?”

These discussion topics show that lying is breaking God’s Ninth Commandment and leads to bad habits and more sinning. It hurts you and others, and brings unhappiness. Make up other “What would you do if...” questions.

2. Discuss the pagan holidays (Christmas, New Years, Halloween, Valentine’s Day, Easter) and how these are based on lies. Why would we want to participate and do things that are not true?
3. Discuss how hypocrisy (saying we follow Christ but living differently) is breaking the Ninth Commandment. How is it viewed by God? What can we do to avoid hypocrisy? What should we do when we see hypocrisy? Scriptures: **Matthew 15:7-9; 1 John 2:1-6; 1 John 4:20; Matthew 7:21-23; Titus 1:16; Luke 20:46-47; James 1:22-27.**
4. Case Studies: Study into specific examples of the Bible where the Ninth Commandment was observed or broken. What happened? What was the result of keeping or breaking the commandment? What was the difficult part about this situation that you can relate to in your own life? What lesson can we learn from this example? Satan, Adam, and Eve (**Genesis 3**); Abraham and Sarah (**Genesis 20:1-28**); The Effects of a Lying Prophet (**1 Kings 13:1-32**) Hananiah and Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 28**); Peter denies Christ (**Matthew 26:31-35; 69-75**); Christ's honesty before false witnesses (**Matthew 26:59-68; John 18:1-8; 19-24; 33-40**)
5. Is there ever a good reason to lie? Discuss the story of Rahab, who was honored in Hebrews and was part of the lineage of Christ, but lied as part of her way to hide the spies. Read the passages in detail and decide if her lie was justified. (**Joshua 2; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25**) Instructors: Note that Rahab's lie is never commended. Her other acts of bravery and turning toward God, however, are what is commendable. This shows God's mercy as we learn to obey Him.
6. Christian Living Application: Have students do a search in **Proverbs** of what is said about honesty and lies. If needed, provide them with the scriptures. (**Proverbs 10:9; Proverbs 13:11; Proverbs 20:14, 17; Proverbs 21:6; Proverbs 23:23; Proverbs 28:6; Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 11:1; Proverbs 12:17-22; Proverbs 13:5-6; Proverbs 19:5**).

7. Activity: Tell the Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth

Ahead of time, make up cards describing a situation in which someone lies or bears false witness. See examples below. Have the students discuss each situation. Decide whether the situation described is lying or bearing false witness. Also discuss whether it is right or wrong (i.e. if someone lies for your benefit, is it still wrong?) Talk about how each situation should be handled as a Christian.

Four girls are mad at the teacher, get together and decide to accuse him of making rude comments to them to get him in trouble.	Two brothers don't want to get into trouble for not cleaning their room, so they decide to tell their mom that they did clean it.	Two brothers don't want to get into trouble for not cleaning their room, so they tell their mom they did clean it, but then blame their little sister after their mom discovers it is still messy.
One of your dad's co-workers tells the boss that your Dad was the one who did all the work on the successful project. (It's a lie, even if the co-worker intends good.)	Your friend assumes that Bob was the one who took his basketball. You know Bob didn't do it, but you say nothing.	When Paul's mom asked who broke the vase in the living room, Paul blamed his baby brother for throwing a rattle. It had really been Paul when he was playing with his ball.
When Pete's mom asked who broke the mirror in the front hallway, Pete apologized. He explained he was playing with a ball and lost control.	There is a kid at school that always makes up untrue things about others and posts them on social media. Someone asks you about the postings.	Your friend at school celebrates the pagan Holidays. He is telling some younger kids that they are true and should be celebrated. You are there for the conversation.

8. Discussion for Older Children

Much of religion today is based upon many of man's ideas of worshiping God.

To prepare for the discussion—read:

- **1 John 2:3-4** *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*
- **Matt 15:3-9** (ESV) *(Jesus) answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"*

Identify several ways that people worship God with a "lie"—and why it is a lie. Contrast the lies with the truth of God's word, the Bible.

9. Read and /or have the children act out “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” story.

The lesson of the story is: Don’t lie. Lying is a bad habit and God says, “*You shall not bear false witness.*”

“The Boy Who Cried Wolf”

Read or summarize this story.

If you are using it in class the children can act out the various parts:

- One child will be the shepherd
- One child will be the wolf
- Several children may be sheep
- Have several children be townspeople and scatter to far corners of the room

As you tell the story, help the children to act out the story by adding dialog and sound effects.

Once upon a time long ago, there was a town full of people, who were happily working doing their jobs. [Have children pretend they are doing their jobs—street sweeping, washing clothes, storekeeper, blacksmith, builders, etc.]

High up on a hillside near the town there was a little shepherd boy [or girl] who loved to play jokes. He had many sheep to care for. [Encourage the children to baa!]

One day the shepherd boy was bored. He decided to play a joke on the people of the town. He stood on the top of the hill with his sheep and called out “Help! Help! The wolf is after my sheep!” [Have the shepherd boy repeat those words.]

The townspeople dropped what they were doing and rushed up the hill to help the shepherd boy. But when they got to the top of the hill, there was no wolf in sight.

The shepherd boy said “Ha! Ha! I was only joking!”

The townspeople didn’t like the boy’s joke. They went back to doing their jobs again.

A little while later the shepherd boy decided to play his joke on them again. He stood on the top of the hill with his sheep and called out. “Help! Help! The wolf is after my sheep!” [Have the shepherd boy repeat those words.]

The townspeople ran up the hill to help him again!

The shepherd boy said “Ha! Ha! I was only joking again! I can’t believe I fooled you!”

The townspeople didn’t like the boy’s joke. They became angry about his lies. They finally went back to doing their jobs again.

The shepherd boy stood on the top of the hill with his sheep. Suddenly a huge wolf appeared out of nowhere! The shepherd boy yelled, “Help! Help! The wolf is after my sheep!” [Have the shepherd boy repeat those words.] No one came to help. So he yelled again, “Help! Help! The wolf is after my sheep!” Yet no one came to help.

The townspeople were tired of the shepherd boy’s jokes. They said, “I’m not running to help that boy again.” “He’s lying!”

Meanwhile the wolf scared all of the sheep away! The shepherd boy cried, “Why won’t anyone believe me?” [Have the shepherd boy repeat those words.]

The townspeople told the shepherd boy that people who lie repeatedly cannot be trusted. He did not tell the truth at first so they assumed he was not telling the truth when it really mattered.

The shepherd boy learned his lesson and decided to change. He said, “I’ve learned my lesson. I’ll try to never lie again.”

The lesson of the story is: Don’t lie. Lying is a bad habit and God says, “You shall not bear false witness.”