

No.9: Sweet Little Lies

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 April 2023

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if you would turn with me to the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 20. The book of Exodus, page 73. Exodus chapter 20. And it's just there at the bottom of the page. If you're using the Pew Bible. Exodus chapter 20, verse 16. For the Lord says to His people, You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Now, as many of you know, and for those who are visiting this morning, we've been going through the Ten Commandments. And in our study, we've referred to the Ten Commandments as house rules. And they're house rules, not because they teach us and tell us how to have good morals and be a good person and have good values for life.
- [1 : 1 5] They're house rules because they remind us that we're all sinners. We're all sinners and we're all in need of a Savior. But as we've seen in our study, these house rules, they address us as a church family. They address us as the children of God. We're our Heavenly Father. He speaks to us as children. Because as His children, as we all know, children need family rules. They need house rules. Because without rules, there's recklessness. Without laws, there's lawlessness. Without commandments, there's chaos. And our Heavenly Father, He has given us these Ten House Rules. And they're house rules, not to spoil our fun. But they're house rules, just like a father would. They're there to parent us. They're there to protect us from hurt or from harm. They're given to us out of love. And they're given to look after us. And like any good parent who says no to their children, eight out of ten of these house rules from our Heavenly Father, as you can see, they are no's.
- [2 : 1 8] They begin with that familiar phrase, thou shalt not, or you shall not. But as we said, these concluding house rules, they're the concluding ones where it says, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, and today's one, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. These concluding house rules, we've said that they're 3D. They're three-dimensional. And they're three-dimensional because they address our heart, our head, and our hands. They're three-dimensional because they address our heart, our head, and our hands. And we see that again here in verse 16 with house rule number 9. This is, as you know, the second last house rule. House rule number 9, it addresses our heart, our head, and our hands. House rule number 9 addresses our heart, our head, and our hands. So first of all, house rule number 9, it addresses our heart. It addresses our heart. The Lord says, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Now, I'm sure that many of us are familiar with the 1980s song by Fleetwood Mac called Little Lies.

[3 : 37] Little Lies, especially because it contains those well-known lyrics. Tell me lies, tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies. I'm sure you've heard the song before.

Maybe you've sung the song before. Tell me lies, tell me lies, tell me sweet little lies. But you know, when are lies ever sweet little lies?

I'm sure we're also familiar with the Walt Disney classic, Pinocchio. It's about the Italian carpenter called Geppetto, who carves this wooden puppet in the hope that he might become a real boy.

And we all know the story. I'm sure we told the story to our children or to our grandchildren or to someone. We heard it ourselves. Where Pinocchio, he's brought to life. He's promised that he'll become a real boy if he proves to be brave and truthful and also unselfish.

And Pinocchio, you'll remember, he has his little friend, Jiminy Cricket, who acts like his conscience. But as you know, Pinocchio, he's remembered for his nose. His nose that would always grow longer every time he told a lie.

[4 : 48] I remember being told as a child that my nose would grow longer every time I was told, every time I told a lie. But of course, that too was a lie. But you know, whether people, or we often say politicians, they often try to get away with lying.

We often try to get away with lying. We describe and we disguise lies as little white lies, rather than big black lies.

And I'm sure we've all will. Actually, most of you confessed this morning already in front of the children that we tell a little white lie or a fib now and again, because we think that lying would be better than telling the truth.

And I suppose those little white lies would maybe include telling them about Santa or telling them about the tooth fairy or things like that, or even telling people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear, because we don't want to hurt their feelings.

But you know, even though we describe and disguise lies as little white lies, I'm not sure our holy and heavenly Father would describe lies as little white lies.

[6 : 06] Nor do I believe that our holy and heavenly Father would differentiate and distinguish between little white lies and big black lies. Because according to the Bible, a lie is a lie.

According to the Bible, a lie is a lie. And God takes lying seriously, because sin caused chaos and corruption in our world through a lie.

God takes lying seriously, because sin caused chaos and corruption in our world through a lie. In fact, the first lie that took place, it took place in the paradise of Eden, as we read there in Genesis chapter 3.

The first lie was committed and confessed by the father of lies. The devil, as you know, he's described in our Bible as not only the father of lies, but also a liar from the beginning.

From Genesis chapter 3, he's a liar from the beginning, because there's no truth in him. But, you know, the thing is, if we were to distinguish and differentiate between whether the devil's lie in the Garden of Eden was a little white lie or a big black lie, we'd all go for the big black lie and say, the devil's lie was a big black lie.

[7 : 27] Because, well, he deceived Eve, and it ended in death. And yet, as we read there in Genesis chapter 3, you know, the cunningness of the devil, and the craftiness and the deception of the devil, was that he didn't actually tell a lie.

He didn't actually tell a lie as such, because he didn't make something up that wasn't true. He didn't say, he didn't make something up that wasn't true to Eve. All he asked was, did God really say?

Did God really say, you shall not eat of every tree in the garden? Which actually highlights that a lie isn't just about making something up. A lie is also about being deceitful.

A lie is about being deceptive. And as the father of lies, the devil was certainly crafty. He was certainly cunning. He was very deceitful. He was very deceptive.

But the devil's lie wasn't that he undermined the competence of Eve. The devil's lie was that he undermined the character of God. The devil didn't undermine the competence of Eve.

[8 : 42] He undermined the character of God. Did God really say? Did God really say? And you know, our catechism, it teaches us the question, what is God?

What is God? And we're taught in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, God is a spirit. He's infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being. And then we're told about God's character. God's character is a character of wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

My friend, God's character is a character of truth. In fact, God is truth. God is truth. That's why Jesus is described to us in the gospel as one who is full of grace and full of truth.

That's why Jesus declared throughout His ministry those words that are often repeated in the gospels, verily, verily, or truly, truly, most assuredly, I tell you the truth.

truth. That's also why Jesus disclosed to His disciples in the upper room. He said to them, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man, no man comes to the Father except through me.

[9 : 55] But you know, my friend, the first lie was the devil's lie. Because in it, he undermined the character of God. That's what all false teachers, that's what all false religions do.

They undermine the character of God. Because God is truth. And because God is truth, He is therefore trustworthy and true.

Because God is truth, He is therefore trustworthy and true. In fact, our Bible emphasizes and explains to us, it says that there is one thing God cannot do.

There's one thing God cannot do. God, as you know, He's the creator of the universe. He's the sustainer of the cosmos. He's the savior of the world. God can do almost all things.

God can forgive you and cleanse you from your sin this morning. God can reconcile you and restore you and redeem you to Himself. God can show you grace, and mercy, and peace, and love.

[10 : 54] God can do almost all things. But there's one thing God cannot do. He cannot lie. God cannot lie. Hebrews 6, verse 18 tells us that it is impossible.

Impossible for God to lie. And that's because God's character is a character of truth. God's character is a character of truth. Therefore, He is trustworthy and true.

Therefore, His word, which has been given to us in the Bible, is trustworthy and true. Therefore, His promises, which are contained in the Bible, are trustworthy and true.

Therefore, therefore, therefore we must cling to the promises of God. Therefore, Therefore, we must claim the promises of God that are contained in His Word.

Therefore, we must confess the promises of God that are contained in His Word. Because as His Word says, every promise in this book, every one of them, they are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. My friend, you go to any promise in this book, and it's a personal promise for you this morning. The Bible says if you confess your sin, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

[12 : 20] He promises, I will never leave you. I'll never forsake you. I'll be with you always, even to the end of the world. Every promise of God's Word is trustworthy and true, which means that whether your experience today is one of sin or salvation or sickness or suffering or sorrow, you can trust in this great God, and you can trust in Him with all your heart.

That's why Solomon tells us in those well-known verses, Proverbs 3, verse 5 and 6, trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path. God's promises are trustworthy and true, because God's character is a character of truth. And so we see that house rule number nine, it addresses our heart. But secondly, it also addresses our head, our heart, and then our head.

The Lord says, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Now, throughout His ministry, Jesus often made clear, He often said to us that our heart affects our head. Our heart affects our head, because Jesus said, from out of the heart, the mouth speaks. From out of your heart, your mouth will speak. And Jesus said this in order to emphasize and to explain to us that there is an example to follow. Because if God's character is a character of truth, and if God is trustworthy and true, and if Jesus is full of grace and full of truth, if Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and if the Holy Spirit is known to us as the Spirit of truth, then as the children of God, as followers of Jesus, our Christian character, conduct, and conversation is to be one that seeks and strives and speaks the truth. Our Christian character, conduct, and conversation is to be one of the truth. We're to be one of the things that we're to be one of the things that we're to be known as people of honesty and integrity. And you know, when the Apostle Paul addressed Christians in the early church, when you read through all of his New Testament letters, you see all these statements and sayings that emphasize the need to have a character of truth. Paul says to the church, he says, know the truth, believe the truth, rejoice in the truth, listen to the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, share the truth, stand firm in the truth, walk in truth, obey the truth, preserve the truth, he says, protect the truth. As children of God, as followers of Jesus, our Christian character, conduct, and conversation is to be one that seeks and strives and speaks the truth.

We're to be trustworthy and true. We're to be people of integrity and honesty. Therefore, said Jesus, if our heart affects our head, and from out of our heart our mouth speaks, then we are not to be using our mouth to spread the gangrene of gossip. Neither are we to use our mouth to carelessly and callously criticize other people. But you know, what often lets the Lord's people down is when they lie and when they're lying. You know, the disappointment of a disciple is that when they're discovered to be a deceiver. The disappointment of a disciple is when they're discovered to be a deceiver. And you know, there was no one more disappointing than King David.

King David is known to us in the Bible as not only the man who penned most of the Psalms that we sing, but also he's known to us in the Bible as a man after God's own heart. And yet, in David's heart, there was lust. That lust produced lies. And it all ended, as we know, it ended in an adulterous affair and a messy murder. And for many, David was a disappointing disciple when he was discovered to be a deceiver. Thankfully, we know that the Lord was gracious. The Lord was merciful with David.

[17:20] My favorite Psalm, Psalm 51, David's prayer is answered where he pleads, create a clean heart. Lord, renew a right spirit, me within. But David's experience, David's example, it's a reminder to us that a disappointing disciple is very disappointing when they're discovered to be a deceiver. But you know, sadly, David's experience and David's example isn't an isolated incident in the Bible. We read also there in Acts chapter 5. Acts chapter 5, it's one of those solemn and sobering chapters. You could probably say it was one of the most solemn and sobering church services that there ever was. Two people died in church that day. Two people died in church. As you know, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the early church, they began meeting regularly for worship every Lord's Day, and they gathered. And when they gathered, they would gather and then give their gift, their tithe to the Lord as much as they could afford. And as we read, this man Barnabas, the son of encouragement, he sold his field and he donated all the proceeds of the sale to the work of the gospel. And then we go into chapter 5 and we meet this married couple, Ananias and Sapphira. And they're said to have done the same. Except Ananias and Sapphira, they were jealous of the generosity of Barnabas.

Because when he sold his land, he gave all his money. And so they claimed and confessed to the church that they too had donated all the proceeds of their sale to the work of the gospel. But in fact, as we read, they'd only given a portion of the proceeds to the church. They kept the rest for themselves. But you know, the issue with Ananias and Sapphira wasn't how much they gave.

It wasn't anything to do with the gift that they gave to the church. Their freewill offering, that wasn't a barrier to the church. In fact, it was a great blessing to the church. What was misleading was their motive. What was misleading was their motive because Ananias and Sapphira, they wanted attention. They wanted appreciation. They wanted admiration. They wanted approval for their gift, for giving their gift to the church. They wanted to be seen. They wanted to be celebrated for their great contribution to the church of Jesus Christ, which is why they claimed and confessed that they had given and gifted all of the proceeds of the sale to the work of the gospel.

But as we read, they hadn't. They lied about it. They became disappointing disciples when they were found out or discovered to be deceivers.

That's what we read in Acts chapter 5. Peter said, Ananias, And great fear came upon all those who heard of it. The young men rose, wrapped him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

[20 : 50] And then we went on to read that three hours later, Sapphira came home, or she came into the church, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.

And she said, Yes, for so much. But Peter said to her, But Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.

Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in, they found her dead. They carried her out and buried her beside her dead husband.

And then we read, And the whole experience was for that one verse. Great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things.

Great fear came upon the whole church. Everyone was afraid. They all stepped back in shock when they heard what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

[21 : 55] And they stepped back in shock because it reminded them that God knows what's in our heart. And God knows what's in our head. And it reaffirms to everyone, including us, what God really thinks about lying.

What does our holy and heavenly Father think about lying? That lies are not sweet little lies, or little white lies, but lies are full of deceit, full of deception, that will end in death.

Lies are full of deceit, full of deception, that will end in death. Quite a solemn and sobering church service to be at, is it not?

To have been reminded through Ananias and Sapphira, that lies are full of deceit, full of deception, and they will end in death. But as we said, house rule number nine is three-dimensional.

It's 3D. It addresses our heart, our head, and our hands. Our heart, our head, and our hands. That's what we see lastly. Our hands. Verse 16, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

[23 : 15] You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. I don't know about you, but I find it interesting that this house rule says that. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Instead of simply saying, as the other ones were quite short, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, why not just say, you shall not lie? But instead, the Lord uses the language of the courtroom.

He brings us into the courtroom, and He gives us the commandment. And it's interesting because when someone is called into a courtroom, I don't know if any of you have ever been into court. Maybe you've had to stand in the dock.

I don't know. But when somebody is called into a courtroom to give evidence as a witness, they have to make a confession. They have to make a confession of commitment that they will tell the truth, or else be guilty of perjury.

And they have to give a sworn testimony. They have to give a sworn testimony using their heart, their head, and their hand. They have to put their hand, as you know, onto the Bible.

[24 : 20] Onto the Bible and take an oath. And as it is in Scottish law, they have to use the words, I swear by Almighty God that I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

It's a solemn oath before God. But, you know, in many ways we do exactly the same thing when we make oaths and vows before God, whether marriage vows or membership vows or becoming elders or deacons or ministers or baptizing our children.

We make vows. They're all vows that we have promised to keep, and we've promised to keep them in the presence of God. We've promised to tell the truth, to live out the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

And so it's legal language that the Lord uses here. But, you know, when it comes to bearing false witness against your neighbor, there was someone who did that against her whole city.

We read that in Joshua chapter 2. And Rahab is often remembered and looked upon as this liar. She was a prostitute, and yet many people remember her more for being a liar.

[25 : 42] And yet, remarkably, Rahab, she's not this disappointing disciple because she's remembered in Hebrews 11 for her act of faith. But the question which hangs over Rahab was, was Rahab right in what she did?

Was Rahab right to lie in order to preserve life and to protect the Lord's people? Was Rahab right to say to the king's guards, true, yes, these men came to me, but I did not know where they came from.

I think they went out of the city. Go and find them. Was Rahab right to say that? Maybe like the Christians in the early church, like we were saying to the children, maybe Rahab crossed her fingers and then said it to the king of Jericho's guards.

Was Rahab right? I'll leave you to decide that one. But you know, for Betsy, I want to leave you with Betsy this morning.

She was Corrie ten Boom's older sister. She decided that she would do the opposite to Rahab if she was ever put into that situation. And with this, I'll conclude.

[26 : 52] I'm sure you've heard of Corrie ten Boom. Maybe you've heard of the book, The Hiding Place. If you've never heard of it, find it, read it, enjoy it. Corrie ten Boom, she was part of a Christian family.

She belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church in Amsterdam. But it was during the Second World War and the Nazi occupation of the Germans in the Netherlands that there was this family, the ten Boom family.

They risked their lives in order to shelter Jewish refugees in their home. And we're told of this one occasion when some of the German soldiers, they came unexpectedly to the door and banging on the door to open it in search of Jews, Jews that were hiding.

And a German soldier just asked the family as they were sitting at the kitchen table, are there any Jews hidden in this house? And Betsy, who had decided that if she was ever questioned about Jews hiding, the opposite to Rahab, she wouldn't lie.

She would tell the truth. And so Betsy, when she was asked the question, are there any Jews hidden in this house? Betsy said to the soldiers, yes, they're hiding under the kitchen table.

[28 : 07] Which wasn't a lie. There was a Jewish family in the basement under the kitchen. The trap door to the basement was under the kitchen table.

So when she said, yes, they're hiding under the kitchen table, she was telling the truth. But the soldiers thought that she was being sarcastic. So they just turned around and walked out the door.

They ignored her statement. And you know, it was remarkable. The Lord honored Betsy's honesty. The Lord honored Betsy's honesty as she sought to uphold house rule number nine in her life.

And you know, it ought to remind and reaffirm to us this morning that as children of God, as a church family, as followers of Jesus, as those who love the Lord, our Christian character, our conduct, our conversation is to be one that seeks and strives and speaks the truth.

We're to be trustworthy. We're to be true. We're to be known as people of honesty and integrity. We're not to lie. Because the truth is to be in us.

[29 : 29] And that truth is to impact us. That truth of God's word is to influence our heart, our head, and our hands.

The truth, says Jesus, is what will set you free. The truth is to impact us and influence our lives.

So house rule number nine, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. But may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. And let us pray.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks for reminding us this morning that the Lord, a God of truth, a God who speaks truth, a God who shows us the truth in his word.

And Lord, we pray that we would all stand upon that truth and realize that it is a firm foundation, that we might be able to confess and say that my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

[30 : 35] I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. For all other ground is but sinking sand.

Lord, help us, we pray, to stand upon the word of Jesus, to know that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no man, no woman, no boy, no girl can come to the Father except through him.

Help us to come in his name. Help us to approach the throne of grace, knowing that thou hast given to us, Jesus, one who is full of grace and full of truth.

Bless us then, we pray. Bless thy word to us, we ask. And that thou wouldst go before us into this day, the Lord's day, that we would enjoy it, as we have been created to do, to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Go before us, we ask, and do us good. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning.

[31 : 43] We're going to sing the words of Psalm 4. Psalm 4, it's in the Sing Psalms version, so it's on page 3 of the Blue Psalm book. Psalm 4.

Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4. Psalm 4.

Psalm 4. We're singing from the beginning down to the verse 6. O hear my cry, my righteous God.

Relieve me, I'm distressed. Display your mercy to me now, and answer my request. The glory of my name, O men, how long will you despise? How long will you delude yourselves, still searching after lies?

Know that the Lord has set apart that God is not the Godly as his own. The Lord will hear me when I call and my request make known. So we'll sing Psalm 4, the Sing Psalms version.

[32 : 44] We're singing from the beginning down to the verse 6. And we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. O hear my cry, my righteous God.

Relieve me, I'm distressed. Display your mercy to me now, and answer my request.

The glory of my name, O man, how long will you despise?

How long will you delude yourselves, still searching after lies?

Know that the Lord has set apart the godly as his own.

[34 : 24] The Lord will hear me when I call, and my requests make known.

In anger do not break God's law, consider and be still.

Resent our righteous sacrifice, and wait upon his will.

O who can show us any good?

I hear so many say, O Lord, shine on us with your light, show us your face, I pray.

[36 : 01] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.