Positioned in Love 3

This week we will conclude our sermons on being positioned in love. I encourage you to listen to the previous 2 if you have not done so as I build upon that foundation.

Jesus said:

*Joh 15:9-10 (NKJV) "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; **abide in My love**. [10] If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.*

Joh 14:21 (NKJV) He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Knowing and applying God's commandments and laws then are key to being positioned in ad abiding in love.

We will be studying the last 5 of the ten commandments today and exploring their application to our everyday lives.

I have drawn heavily from Dr Kevin Smith's book entitled A Practical Guide to Biblical Ethics.

6. Biblical Values regarding Life

You shall not murder (Exod. 20:13).

The sixth commandment is about the value of life. The sin named, murder, must be understood as the head of its family of sins, the family of violent sins. The Lord Jesus Christ made it clear in his commentary on the Law that the purpose of this command includes anger and hatred.

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother,

'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell (Matt. 5:21–22).

The Pharisees were legalistic in their way of interpreting the scriptures, focussing on the letter of the law and so they limited this commandment to the specific crime of murder. Jesus showed us the Lord's broader intent in terms of the family of sins covered with this commandment.

Basically, any aggressive act that harms innocent human life, or any angry attitude that wishes such harm is evil.

Two point to remember:

i. Murder refers to all forms of **unjust violence**, not to justified violence such as self-defence or capital punishment.
ii. Although the command is stated in a negative form, you shall not, it also requires positive action. So we must we not take life or incite violence, but we must protect life and promote peace. To do nothing to save life when it is within your power to do so is not righteous.

Under the covering of the sixth commandment, God's instructions regarding various acts that involve violence or death are covered. The ones I will cover today include murder, hatred, abortion and euthanasia. I will omit suicide, war, and capital punishment for the sake of brevity.

i. Murder

The Hebrew word translated murder refers to a deliberate act of taking a human life. The two popular uses of the word were for premeditated murder and revenge for a murdered relative. Later laws describe it as taking a life 'with malice aforethought'. Three conditions must apply for killing to be classed as murder:

a. malice: the intent to kill
b. planning: the intent to kill
c. injustice: taking a life God has not given us the right to take.

Two interesting points:

a. Some translations read ‘you shall not kill’, which leads some people to wrongly conclude God forbids the taking of any life for any cause. Certain pacifists argue that taking a human life under any circumstances, whether in war, capital punishment, or even self-defence. Scripture must interpret scripture and so when we us the Bible to interpret itself, this theory does not hold up because after he gave this command, God later commanded both war and execution (he gave judges the right to decide for the death penalty).
b. Some vegetarians claim that killing an animal for food violates the 6th commandment. However, God also gave detailed instructions about how to perform animal sacrifices, most of which were also eaten afterwards. As well as this, we see in Genesis (v3) that God specifically tells dam that He has given him every moving thing (animal) as food. Of course the ethics of how we treat animals is important. But we can indeed eat meat.

ii. Hatred

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expounded and explained the far-reaching nature of the law against murder. He did not limit it to murderous acts, but extended it to include murderous thoughts. A heart full of hatred, bitterness, malice, rage, or venom towards another person is guilty of the same sin, just to a lesser extent.

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell (Matt. 5:21–22).

If you curse your brother (‘Raca’ is a kind of swear word usually directed at foreigners; it means imbecile) or degrade him (the word translated ‘fool’ is moron in Greek), you are giving vent to a murderous heart and are in danger of judgement.

You can have a murderous heart even if there is no blood on your hands. God is always more interested in the condition of your heart than in mere outward

obedience. The word Jesus used for anger describes a deep-rooted resentment, perhaps with the suggestion of scheming how to get even.

Now notice how Jesus takes it even further, teaching that not only must we not be angry, we must take the initiative to restore bad relationships and promote peace and harmony **even when we are not the guilt party in the breakdown of a friendship**. Not only must we not harbour hatred, we must become peacemakers.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matt. 5:23–24).

Racism is one specific kind of hatred that is forbidden by the commandment. Racism is hatred, often escalating into violence and even murder, of a group of people because of their race. Here too we have a duty to be peacemakers, breaking down walls of hostility and living in peace and harmony with all people.

iii. Abortion

God regards an embryo or foetus as a person. Therefore, abortion is murder.

If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise (Exod. 21:22– 25).

The case envisions two men fighting and accidentally hurting a pregnant woman. If the woman gives birth prematurely but no serious damage is done, a fine is imposed for endangering the unborn child's life. However, if there is serious injury to the mother or her unborn child, due penalty is required. If the child is lost, the penalty is 'life for life'. Rushdoony points out that this law refers to accidental abortion and yet still requires the death penalty; the culprit is criminally negligent and costs a life, so he must pay with his life. If accidental abortion is a capital crime, how much more deliberate abortion!

A professor in a world-acclaimed medical school once posed this case study—a medical and ethical problem—to his students: ‘Here's the family history: The father has syphilis. The mother has TB. They have already had four children. The first is blind. The second has died. The third is deaf. The fourth has TB. Now the mother is pregnant again. The parents come to you for advice. They are willing to have an abortion, if you decide they should. What do you say?’ The students gave various individual opinions, and then the professor asked them to break into small groups for ‘consultation’. All of the groups came back to report that they would recommend abortion. ‘Congratulations,’ the professor said, ‘You just took the life of Beethoven!’

There is one situation in which abortion is right—if it is essential to save the mother’s life. If there is no way to save the mother and the child, it is not wrong to abort. However, abortion on demand based on a woman’s right to choose whether or not she wants the child is murder.

iv. Euthanasia

Euthanasia (from the Greek words for ‘good’ and ‘death’) refers to mercy killing, that is, ending a person’s life to end their suffering. The sixth commandment condemns taking ‘innocent human life’. Killing a person deliberately violates God’s law, even if it is their will to die, therefore euthanasia violates this commandment. Only God has the right to end their life.

Advances in modern medicine have changed the nature of the problem somewhat challenging, causing the need to **distinguish between active and passive euthanasia**. Actively promoting someone’s death is always murder, but what about withdrawing treatment that may postpone death? In many cases, modern medicine has the ability to postpone death, often at the cost of financial ruin to the family and either great suffering or vegetable- like existence to the patient. It is not wrong to withhold treatment in such extreme situations.

7. Biblical Values regarding Sexuality

God’s laws governing sexuality, are designed for our highest good. When we follow God’s pattern for sex, we enjoy it in the richest sense. When we violate God’s

pattern, we break down the foundations of a fulfilled family life and reap destruction in ourselves and our relationships.

You shall not commit adultery (Exod. 20:14).

This commandment is the core of God's sexual law. Adultery was chosen to represent the whole area of sexual sin.

i. Sexual Enjoyment

For centuries the church (especially the Roman Catholic Church) has stood by the notion that sex if for procreation alone. That is, that the sole purpose of sex is to have children. This view seems to have stemmed from Augustine, arguably the greatest mind in the first 1000 years of church history. Augustine himself had been a terrible womaniser before he came to Christ. After his conversion, he went the complete opposite extreme, becoming an affirmed ascetic (an ascetic is someone who believes all natural pleasures are sinful). His writings would set the pattern for a thousand years of church history—**sex is for procreation only, not for pleasure**. To this day this remains the official position of the Roman Catholic Church.

Does the Bible teach that sexual pleasure is sinful and sex is only for having children? Not at all! In fact, the Bible teaches quite the opposite. God created us as sexual beings. In and of itself, our sexuality is good, holy, and pure. if practised within the boundaries God sets for it. Our sinful nature, not our sexual nature, is what perverts God's pure purpose. Before the fall, God created humans as sexual beings, and attached no shame to their sexuality.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame (Gen. 2:24–25).

God intends sex to fulfil three functions in a godly marriage:

1. **Procreation.**

One purpose of sex is to have children. God commanded human beings to have children, to fill the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground' (Gen. 1:27–28).

Malachi 2:15a says, 'Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.'

The Lord makes a married couple one because he wants them to raise godly children. This raises an interesting dilemma. In our day, many couples are choosing not to have children, mostly for career and financial reasons. Is it God's will for a Christian couple to choose not to have children? No, generally it is not. He generally wants godly people to raise godly children.

2. Glue

Sexual intimacy is the glue of unity that seals a marriage covenant and binds the partners together. When two people are sexually intimate, there is a mystical spiritual bond that binds them together. We might refer to it as a soul tie. This is why God intended that the sexual act consummates a marriage covenant. Once the couple has made a covenant commitment to each other, their intimacy binds them together as 'one flesh'.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

The way in which sex binds two people together both physically and psychologically has two important implications. First, it is one of the reasons that we should not treat sex lightly by sleeping around. There is no such thing as 'friends with benefits'. We deceive ourselves if we think we can have sex with someone with no emotional strings attached. Scripture warns,

'*Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh"' (1 Cor. 6:16)*.

Second, intimacy binds a married couple together both at the beginning of their marriage and throughout their marriage. Each time they are intimate, they reapply God's glue to their relationship. This is one of the reasons the word of God instructs couples,

'Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together' (1 Cor. 7:5).

3. **Pleasure.**

God intended for us to enjoy sex; that is why he made it pleasurable. Sex is meant to bring pleasure and fulfilment to both partners. Listen to the way that Solomon teaches about the joys of marital intimacy:

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love (Prov. 5:18–19).

There is nothing dirty or degrading about intimacy between two married people who love each other. They are free to enjoy their marriage bed, as it is pure and undefiled (Heb. 13:4).

These three purposes are true for intimacy within marriage. God never intended sex for casual pleasure. Therefore, the Bible denounces all other expression of sexuality.

ii. Sexual Expression

The word of God has a simple view of what is acceptable sexual expression: it condones one form of sexual expression and condemns all others.

Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4, NKJV).

The sexual relationship between **husband and wife** is pure; every other sexual relationship is perverse! The reason is simple. In the context of lifelong covenant commitment, sex is an expression of love and enhances the relationship. However, without that commitment, sex is an expression of lust.

The word of God names a wide variety of specific sexual sins that violate the general rule. These include the following:

1. **Adultery is sin.**

Adultery lies second only to idolatry in the Old Testament list of sins God condemns. By definition, adultery is when a married person sleeps with someone other than their spouse. It is considered an act of high treason. When you commit adultery, you betray God, your partner, and your family. In the Old Testament, the punishment for adultery was death because adultery destroys marriage and family and, therefore, it damages a godly society.

2. **Fornication is sin.**

Fornication (porneia) is the term that refers to any unmarried person who enters into a sexual relationship. Most modern translations prefer to call it sexual immorality. The term itself is broad enough to include all forms of sexual sin; sometimes it includes adultery, homosexuality, or prostitution. However, it also includes any act of heterosexual intercourse by an unmarried person. In this sense, it prohibits casual sex and living together (cohabitation). Hebrews 13:4 makes it clear that all forms of intercourse outside of marriage are against God's will and subject to his judgement.

Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge (Heb. 13:4, NKJV).

Together, fornication and adultery are the sins that the New Testament addresses most often.

3. **Homosexuality is sin.**

The Old Testament, Jesus, and Paul are unanimous in teaching that heterosexual marriage is the only appropriate context for sexual relations. The Bible denounces gay and lesbian sexual relations as against the will of God and 'against nature'.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion (Rom. 1:26–27).

Homosexuality is not a legitimate alternative lifestyle. God says it is a sin. Under Old Testament law it was punishable by death (Lev. 18:22). In the New Testament, it is a sin that disqualifies the individual from inheriting the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). **(Please note that these same texts say the same about adulterers and fornicators. All are equally against the will of God.)**

Just as God requires a man who desires a woman (not his wife) to control his sexual desire, so he requires a man who desires another man (homosexual tendencies) to control his desire. We cannot say for certain what causes some people to experience homosexual temptations, but we can say that **to act on those desires is sinful in the eyes of God**.

4. **Prostitution is sin.**

All forms of prostitution are strictly forbidden in scripture.

5. **Incest is sin.**

The law of Moses lays down strict regulations regarding which relatives one may or may not marry. The full list is found in Leviticus 18:6–20.

No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD (Lev. 18:6).

6. **Bestiality is sin.**

Bestiality refers to sexual intercourse with animals. This too is condemned in the law of Moses (Lev. 20:15– 16).

iii. Sexual Enticement

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus Christ raised the bar on sexual standards. He taught that it is not only the outward act that constitutes sexual sin, but also inward lust.

You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5:27–28).

Not only the deed, but also the desire is sinful. What then constitutes lust? **Any thought sinful to act out is sinful to entertain**. By 'entertain' I am not referring to a fleeting thought that we take captive and refuse to dwell on it. I am talking about a thought that we entertain and dwell upon. Temptation becomes sin when we dwell on it; if we dismiss it quickly, it is not sin.

Lust is the starting point of illicit sexual relations. We can define lust as a sexual desire for someone you may not enjoy sexually; if the act is forbidden, imagining it is sin. Therefore, **lust involves desiring and/or imagining sexual experiences with someone who is not presently your spouse**. Lust is the initial stage of adultery or fornication, the same in kind, but not in degree.

In his teaching about lust and adultery (Matt. 5:27–30), Jesus indicated two chief sources of temptation: **eyes and hands**, **sight and touch**. The images we see with our eyes and the sensations we feel when our bodies are touched are the two things that arouse sensual lusts.

*If your right **eye** causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right **hand** causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Matt. 5:29–30).*

Jesus instructs us to avoid those things that lead first to lust and then to sin.

1. **Eyes and sight**

What you allow in through your eye gates, and what you mediate on and use in your imaginations is important. If it fuels lust, then it is sin.

The extreme end of the spectrum in terms of eyes and sight is the act of indulging in **pornography.** Pornography is sin itself because it is an expression of lust. To indulge in pornography is to desire sexually someone who is not your spouse, someone you may not have.

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes. ... Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? (Prov. 6:25, 27–28).

The English word 'pornography' comes from the Greek word for sexual immorality (porneia). The reason is clear: pornography leads to sexual immorality.

2. **Hands and touch**

If pornography appeals to sight, petting appeals to touch. Petting: physical intimacy involving touch that is sexually arousing. Petting can range from holding hands, through kissing and fondling, all the way to oral sex.

God designed petting to arouse, not to satisfy. Therefore, petting follows the law of diminishing returns. It leaves you with a desire to go further and further, being satisfied only with sex itself. Like it or not, petting is a sexual stimulant, not a satisfier. Once you start, you spiral downwards. Heavy petting therefore is incompatible with a biblical portrait of sexuality.

It is interesting to note that Jesus himself instructed us that the sin of adultery can land our soul in hell?

If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Matt. 5:29–30).

That is why he is adamant that we must deal ruthlessly with the root causes of lust—the end result of the fulfilment of the list is eternal death.

8. Biblical Values regarding Property

The eighth commandment raises the issues of property and ownership.

You shall not steal (Exod. 20:15).

In forbidding theft, God affirmed our right to own property. (Important to apply these types of ideas into the way a country is governed. Hence a communistic worldview is unbiblical. How can we be generous if we don't own what we have. We can't give that which doesn't belong to us).

We have a right to ownership. Within our ownership, we need to remember that we are in actual facts stewards.

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it (Ps. 24:1).

The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to man (Ps. 115:16).

You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today (Deut. 8:17–18).

Jas 1:17 (NIV) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

i. Forms of Stealing

Stealing is by no means limited to physically taking items or cash that do not belong to us. We can steal somebody's money, goods, time, ideas, name, future, or freedom. Some of the worst kinds of stealing are subtle.

Let us consider some of the most common forms of theft:

a. **Substance.**

The most obvious form of stealing is taking money or goods that do not belong to you.

b. **Salaries**

To exploit employees in any way is to steal from them. If we make them work extra hours without pay or we withhold their salary on the due date, we are taking what is rightfully theirs. Similarly, employees who fail to give their employer a full day's work are stealing from him.

Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty (James 5:4).

The verse just quoted is part of a section in which James rebukes wealthy employers for taking advantage of the poor, and cautions that God will repay them for stealing from the poor.

c. **Slavery**

We can steal another person's freedom. The worst form is forced slavery, but blackmail, coercion, and emotional manipulation are ways of taking away people's personal freedom.

d. **Slander**

Slander is casting a slur on people's character by spreading false stories about them. Slander starts with thinking evil of your neighbours and ends with speaking evil of them. Slander is theft because it steals a person's reputation, their good name.

A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold (Prov. 22:1).

Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is the man who gives false testimony against his neighbour (Prov. 25:18).

e. Suggestions

We can steal another person's ideas. When we take an idea, an invention, or a song from another person and pass it off as our own, we are stealing. At the very least, we are stealing their credit, but we may also be stealing their income.

f. State

We steal when we attempt to cheat the state out of what we rightfully owe. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to 'give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25). A particularly common form of this is shading the truth when we fill in our income tax returns. If we 'err' in our own favour instead of giving the government what belongs to the government, we are stealing.

g. Swindling

The worst of all forms of stealing, and the most subtle, is when one person uses his power or position to deceive others so as to cheat them out of what is rightfully theirs. This always involves some kind of deception, is often legal even though it is evil, and is usually practised by 'respectable members of society', those we trust because of their position or expertise. When a lawyer tricks an illiterate person to sign away their legal right to a piece of land for pittance, when a financial broker knowingly gives unsound advice because it is in his best interest, or when preacher manipulates his congregation to give money they would not and should not give, we should rightly label it stealing.

Stealing takes many forms and faces. The six we have just listed are by no means the only ways that people steal, but they are common methods of stealing. It is possible that we are guilty of breaking the biblical command not to steal without recognising that we are thieves. You may be stealing by doing one of the following, and yet not think of it as stealing:

- failing to pay your employees a fair living wage

- refusing to pay what you owe timeously
- spending work time on personal things (e.g. Facebook)
- spreading damaging rumours about others
- copying from the Internet in your assignments without giving cr4edit to the source
- buying products produced by enslaved child-labourers
- advising clients to invest their money in a way that benefits you more than it does them.
- using the work phone to make personal calls

9. Biblical values regarding truth

You shall not give false testimony against your neigh- bour (Exod. 20:16).

The ninth commandment, 'you shall not give false testimony', commends truth and condemns falsehood. As with the other commandments, the black sheep of the family is chosen to represent the whole family. Giving false testimony in a court of law is the worst kind of lying, because very often it is a deliberate, malicious attempt to destroy another person's life.

Although not to the same extent, other forms of lying also destroy lives and relationships. The way the Bible develops this command shows that the core value is truth and the main vice is lying.

The LORD detests lying lips, but delights in men who are truthful (Prov. 12:22).

i. Explanation of Lying

Defining lying as 'speaking untrue words' is not an accurate definition, because it is possible to lie without speaking any words at all; it is also possible to tell the truth by speaking untrue words.

A woman's warm smile, intended to convince her friend that they are on good terms, is a lie if she is inwardly angry and bitter towards her friend; she has lied without saying a word. Conversely, a pastor might say, 'We have 100 members in our

church' when in fact his church has 108 members. Strictly speaking his words are untrue, but we would hardly say that he 'lied'.

The critical idea of **deliberate deception** lies at the root of a biblical definition of lying. **Any time we set out to lead others astray so that they will believe something to be true which we know to be false, we have 'lied' and are guilty of sinning against the truth.** Therefore**, a lie is any act of deliberate deception**.

To lie, we must be guilty of doing three things:

- **We must communicate an untruth.**
- **We must know it to be untrue.**
- **We must intend to deceive.**

We can communicate an untruth **verbally or non-verbally**. An action intended to mislead others is a lie, even though it is non-verbal communication. Obviously, if we share something in good faith, believing it to be true when in fact it is untrue, we have deceived others about the truth, but we have not lied. **We may be guilty of ignorance, but not of deception**. **We lie when we say something is true, knowing full well that it is not.** This leads naturally to the third point—to qualify as lying, our words or actions must be **designed to deceive**.

ii. Exceptions to Lying

- Is there ever a time when it is right to deceive another person?
- Are there any exceptions to the biblical commands against lying, or are they absolute?

The philosopher and theologian RJ Rushdoony in his work on Biblical Law rightly protests against the widespread tendency to interpret the ninth commandment to mean '**you shall at all times and under all circumstances tell the truth to all men who may ask anything of you**.'

- There **are situations in which God does not require us to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the tru**th.

- There are even some situations in which God allows—and even requires—us to deceive. In these situations, a lie or a deception may be the only righteous action.
- These exceptions are not man-made loopholes; **they are exceptions that are permitted by God in the Bible**. We cannot add to them as we see fit.

What exceptions does the Bible make? There seem to be four biblical exceptions: incomplete truth, social conventions, strategic warfare, and opposing crime.

a. Incomplete truth

When witnesses testify in a court case, they vow '**to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'**. They promise to disclose fully all relevant information. This oath is necessary because **it is possible to deceive by silence**. If the witness knows important information but conceals it from the court, he has deliberately deceived the court. We can deceive others by telling them the truth, but leaving out crucial information that would change the way they interpret the situation.

However, '**the command to tell the truth does not mean that a person must tell all he knows in every situation**.' We are entitled to withhold information from anyone who does not have a need or a right to it. Not everyone has a right to know everything about our private lives. If a work colleague asks about your financial status, you do not have to give her a full disclosure, because she does not have a right to know such details as your salary and savings. The Lord himself does not tell us everything; he tells us what we need to know. God told Samuel to tell only part of the reason for his visit to Jesse's house when he went to anoint David as king (1 Sam. 16:1–5). On one occasion God told the Israelites to go into battle, but omitted to tell them that they would lose the battle (Judg. 20:17–48).

When must we tell 'the whole truth'? In **two** situations:

- First, when the person to whom we are speaking has a legal right to know the whole truth, such as in a court of law or in a judicial inquiry.
- Whenever leaving out a crucial piece of information would completely mislead the other person, thus being equivalent to a total lie. If a mother searching for

her lost child stops a passer-by and asks him which way the child went and he replies, ‘She went west’, but leaves out ‘until the next street and then turned north’, his omission of crucial information makes the first statement a lie.

In summary, **we may leave out any non-essential information without being guilty of lying**. Whether something is essential depends on whether the other person needs to know it and whether or not its omission changes the meaning of the information provided.

b. Social conventions

In many trivial social situations, strict and literal adherence to the truth is not necessary. When playing games such as chess or tennis, we try to outwit our opponent; we are playing, not lying. When telling jokes, we try to lead people astray so as to set them up for the punch line; again we are joking, not lying. When exchanging casual greetings, we do not expect a full and complete disclosure of the truth. When we ask, ‘How are you?’ in a casual greeting, we are not requesting a medical report.

Requiring strict and complete truth-telling in every casual context would put an unbearable burden on everyday relationships. The purpose of God’s commands against lying is to protect our fellowman and our relationships from the damaging effects of dishonesty. Rushdoony says, ‘To impose on humour, games, or casual social greetings the requirements of the ninth commandment is not to serve the cause of truth; actually it trivialises the weighty demands of biblical integrity.’

c. Strategic warfare

War is waged by all available means. Deception is one of the weapons of war. The use of decoys and distractions, spies and lies, ambushes and cover-ups are familiar and acceptable war tactics. **In a state of war, there is no obligation to tell an enemy the truth; he has no right or expectation to it.**

The Bible even approves of deception in war. The supreme example is the way the prostitute Rahab concealed the Israelites spies and lied to her own king and soldiers about their whereabouts. The New Testament praises her as a hero of faith

for her actions in helping the people of God (Heb. 11:31; Jas 2:25– 26); God himself rewarded her for her actions. She was not condemned for lying because her lies were an act of war. Ehud used a lie to kill the king of Moab, who was oppressing Israel (Judg. 3:12–30).

God himself sometimes commanded or personally engaged in deception as 'an act of war'.

- He told the Israelites to send spies to spy out the promised land.
- He commanded Joshua to set an ambush (Josh. 8:2)
- He himself set an ambush (2 Chr. 20:22).
- He caused the Assyrian army to flee by causing them to hear the sound of an approaching army, even though there was no army.

c. Opposing crime.

- If a woman is abducted by a would-be rapist or murderer, she is free to use any form of deception to escape. She is opposing evil, not committing it.
- If a rapist, thief, or murderer asks for information with the apparent intent of using it to commit a crime, we are morally obliged to withhold the truth.

A biblical example of this kind of deception is recorded in Exodus 1. The king of Egypt commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill every boy they delivered, but they did not obey him because they feared God. In anger the king summoned them to meet with him and asked why they had allowed the Hebrew boys to live. In response they 'lied' to Pharaoh saying,

'*Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive*' (Exod. 1:19).

God's approval of their actions is clearly stated:

'*So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own' (Exod. 1:20–21)*.

The Bible does not condemn them for lying; it commends them for doing the right thing because they feared God. He rewarded them for their faith and obedience. Rushdoony rightly concludes, 'It was clearly lying; it was clearly justified. And it was clearly blessed by God.'

The crucial thing to understand about all these examples is that they are not an invitation to lie for any 'good' cause. They do not teach that we may lie so that good may result. These are **specific biblical exceptions to the command to tell the whole truth in all circumstances**. What is more, **they are the only biblical exceptions** to that command.

iii. Expressions of Lying

We have examined situations to which the ninth commandment does not apply. Now we turn our attention to the most important situations in which it does apply. We are going to consider five important expressions of lying that do violate the ninth commandment:

1. perjury
2. predictions
3. promises
4. pretence
5. poetic licence

a. Perjury

The ninth commandment, 'you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour', applies **most directly to giving true testimony in a court of law**. Perjury is the most serious form of lying. The entire system of law and order in a nation depends on honest witnesses. Perjury **thwarts justice and promotes lawlessness**. In America before the 20th century, an unbeliever (a man who did not fear God) was not allowed to testify in court, because there was no reason to believe he would tell the truth.

Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the Lord detests them both (Prov. 17:15).

Although perjury is taken quite lightly today, seldom being severely punished, in biblical law and in most past societies perjurers received the same punishment they tried to have inflicted on the defendant by their lies. In many cases, the punishment for perjury was death, because perjury was considered as attempted murder, trying to have another human being executed for a crime they did not commit.

b. Predictions

Bearing false witness 'for God' violates the ninth commandment. When false prophets make untrue predictions in God's name, they tell lies and make God a liar. We should presume to speak for God unless God has clearly spoken to us. God treats prophets and their words sternly (Jer. 23:9–40).

But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death (Deut. 18:20).

c. Promises

To make a promise, however well-intentioned, and not keep it, is to lie. We should be '*slow to speak'* (Jas 1:19). In particular, we should be cautious in making promises. Promises are voluntary. We are under no obligation to promise anyone anything. However, if we freely choose to make a promise, we are bound to obey it.

Lord who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? ... [He] who keeps his oath even when it hurts (Ps. 15:1, 4).

When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfil it. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin (Eccl. 5:4–6a).

We find the same idea affirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:33–37) and in the epistle of James (Jas 5:12).

d. Pretence.

There is something worse than telling a lie—living a lie! If we pretend to be something that we are not, we are deliberately deceptive. Jesus calls such people ‘hypocrites’. Hypocrites can pretend to be more sanctified, more spiritual, or more skilful than they actually are. They talk the talk but do not walk the walk. Jesus found them the most offensive of all people (Matt. 23:1–36). The word ‘hypocrite’ occurs 21 times in the New Testament; 20 of these are from Jesus’s own lips.

e. Poetic licence

What is commonly referred to as poetic licence, God would call lying. Poetic licence is the freedom given (and taken) to embellish and even to distort the facts for the sake of dramatic effect. Whether a preacher who exaggerates a story to enhance its effect, a business man who presents statistics ‘creatively’ to secure a contract, or journalist who edits an interview to make it say what she wants it to say, deception is lying.

10. Biblical values regarding contentment

Exo 20:17 (NKJV) "You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour’s."

Luk 12:15 (AMP) And He said to them, Guard yourselves and keep free from all covetousness (the immoderate desire for wealth, the greedy longing to have more); for a man's life does not consist in and is not derived from possessing overflowing abundance or that which is over and above his needs.

Col 3:5 (AMP) So kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God).

We in the Charismatic church need to be very careful when it comes to seeking prosperity, e.g. the prosperity Gospel. Our priorities need to be ordered aright. This is how Jesus prioritises things:

Mat 6:31-33 (NKJV) "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

i. Covetousness versus Contentment

If covetousness is the sin, the opposite good is contentment. Our relationship with material things and people can be measured on a continuum that starts with covetousness (bad side) and ends with contentment (good side).

a. The vice of covetousness

Covetousness is an insatiable hunger for more and more things; envy (wanting what your neighbour has) is its chief expression. This is not harmless. It is a dangerous sin. Only idolatry, murder, and adultery are treated more seriously in God's word.

What makes covetousness such a dangerous sin?

- Covetousness causes idolatry.

Over and over again **the word of God links covetousness with idolatry**. The Lord Jesus Christ taught that money is God's greatest rival for our affections (Matt. 6:24). Prosperity tends to cause us to forget the Lord our God (Deut. 8:11–18).

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5).

When we become consumed with the desire to increase in wealth and spend our lives in pursuit of possessions, we displace God from the first place that he deserves and demands in our lives. **Covetousness leads to idolatry because we serve and worship money and other things.**

- Covetousness causes violence

Rather surprisingly, covetousness holds a prominent place in every New Testament list of serious sins. It stands side-by-side with murder, idolatry, and sexual immorality. The reason for this is probably that covetousness is a root sin; it is 'a root of all kinds of evil'. Greed is perhaps the chief cause of war, murder, and idolatry.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Tim. 6:10).

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight (Jas 4:1–2).

- Covetousness causes deception.

Greed causes every form of manipulation, fraud, lying, swindling, and scheming. The worst form of it occurs in Christian ministry when people 'peddle the Word of God for profit' (2 Cor. 2:17). In fact, it is one of the three main ministry sins: sex (girls), money (gold), and pride (glory). **One of the tests the Bible uses to identify false teachers and false prophets is the love of money**. **A false minister uses people to gain wealth; a true one uses wealth to serve people.**

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. ... By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words (2 Pet. 3:1, 3).

Throughout his ministry, Paul constantly took great pains to ensure that his motive for ministry and his management of money matters bore no appearance of evil. He took pains to avoid any appearance of greed and often appealed to the fact that his conduct in this respect was blameless (Acts 20:33; 2 Cor. 2:17; 8:19–21; 1 Thess. 2:5).

Covetousness can be masked by both saving and spending. Hoarding excessive wealth for ourselves rather than using it for the Lord is an expression of the sin of greed. We should be wise in providing for our retirement, but we must also be generous toward the Lord and those in need (Luke 12:13–21). The root of this sin is lack of faith in God's future provision.

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty (Prov. 11:24).

Excessive spending can also be an expression of covetousness. Gathering lots of stuff that we do not need and we will not use is also a form of greed. The scripture commands us to be content with what we have (Heb. 13:5). We are not to covet anything that belongs to another person (Exod. 20:17).

Covetousness can hide in the heart of rich and poor alike. The rich can be obsessed with a desire for more and more wealth. But a person may have nothing and still harbour greed in their heart, hating those who have more than they have and constantly scheming to get rich. Just because we do not have money does not mean we do not love money! And is not limited to money. We can covet things, people, relationships, spiritual gifts—almost anything we can imagine.

b. The virtue of contentment

The opposite of covetousness is contentment.

"The secret to a happy life is not to have what we want (we shall always want something more afterwards), but to want what we have." Dr Kevin Smith

If we are not content with what we have, we shall not be content with what we want. That thing we set our heart on and tell ourselves that if only we could have it we would be happy will not satisfy us once we get it. The New Testament teaches us to be content with what we have.

We should be content with our living. Soldiers were poorly paid in Jesus's day, so it was common for them to abuse their power to extort extra money, much like what often happens with modern police officers. John the Baptist told the soldiers what God required of them: be content with your salary!

Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?' He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay' (Luke 3:14).

We should be content with our lifestyle. Paul the apostle knew the secret to joy—be content in every situation. He was in prison when he wrote Philippians, yet he was overflowing with joy. His secret was in his attitude; he had learned to be content with a lot or with a little. This is the real meaning of the famous passage in Philippians 4.

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Phil. 4:11–13).

We should be content without luxuries. The Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul both taught their disciples to be content with their needs, and not to lust after luxuries. Here is the outstanding scripture on contentment and the love of money.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Tim. 6:6–10).

How much is enough? Paul says we should be content with food and clothing, that is, our basic needs instead of our lavish wants. Happy is the person who is content with food and clothing. Jesus taught the exact same thing (Matt. 6:25–34).

We should be content with the Lord. How can we be content with so little and not stress about our financial needs? We know the Lord as our Provider. God's presence and provision is our security. The book of Hebrews teaches that for the biblical Christian contentment is rooted in the assurance of God's presence.

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you' (Heb. 13:5).

In summary, then, the antidote to the sin of covetousness is a heart of contentment. Contentment is rooted in our relationship with the Lord, knowing that he loves us and

he promises to look after our needs. If we have hearts content in Christ, we shall be happy to have a lot or a little. We shall be content with our salary and our lifestyle, and we shall not lust for more and more luxuries.

Conclusion

The word of God teaches those who love God how to live in ways that please him. In doing this we abide in His love and remain positioned in His love. The law of God contains his instruction for right living, so that those who seek to walk in his ways may know what he requires. Contrary to popular belief, there is no conflict between the law of God and the love of God. The law of God defines and expresses divine love. For the believer who loves God wholeheartedly and seeks to love his neighbour as he loves himself, the law is a lamp to his feet and a light for his path (Ps. 119:105). The instruction of the Lord tells us what love looks like in practice especially in more complex situations.

There is also no contradiction between the two testaments when it comes to their portrayal of God’s holy nature and his ethical requirements of his people. When correctly interpreted, the two testaments present a unified message regarding love and holiness. Jesus’s two greatest commandments sum up the Ten Commandments, which contain the kernel of the entire Bible’s moral code. The rest of the Bible explains and applies the kernel to numerous situations.

This provides a fairly comprehensive blueprint for everyday living. Scripture does not speak directly to all the ethical problems we face today, but there is enough to ensure that God’s blueprint for his people in biblical times remains an excellent and fairly comprehensive moral compass for his people today.