

## Marketing Communication: Do not bear false witness.

A core marketing function is to inform people about your product, show them how it can be useful, and encourage them to buy. This is referred to as Marcom, which stands for Marketing Communication. Marketers reach potential customers through a variety of means. They use public media such as the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, magazines, and billboards. They also use mail and the telephone which is known as direct marketing. In addition, they may rely on personal messages through field salespeople calling on customers, personnel at the point of sale, and representatives on the other end of the telephone. These options are like a tool kit. The optimal communications mix depends on several factors, primarily the way people buy and where they are in the buying process.

A recent Reuters poll ranked marketers second only to car salesmen as the profession with the lowest integrity. Why is this? Is this an unfair stereotype or a well-deserved place of dishonor? Do marketers sometimes overstate the benefit of their product or service and understate the cost? Do they sometimes hide information critical to the purchase decision ... hide it in the small print ... bury it in the terms and conditions ... say it so fast you can't understand a word ... or outright mislead about it? Do marketers sometimes appeal inappropriately to our weaknesses in the flesh by appealing to our impulses, greed, coveting, lusts and pride?

While the Bible is silent regarding the optimal communications mix, it is not silent about the marketing message. God cares about what and how we communicate, and the impact it has on people. God is always concerned about people over money or things. As Christians, we should care about what God cares about and this must carry over to how we do business. This must carry over to our Marcom.

### Genesis 2: 15-17; 3:1-5

2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

3: 1 Now the serpent was more

The first recorded sin in the Bible and the last recorded sin in the Bible is the sin of lying. We are going to do a brisk survey of what the Bible teaches about lying, beginning with these two bookends.

*Leader: First explain the context and then read Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-5 and have the group note and mark the serpent's three tactics.*

### OBSERVE

In verse 1, what is the serpent questioning?

In verse 4, what is the serpent denying?

crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;

3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.' "

4 And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die!

5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

### **Revelation 22:12-15**

2 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward [is] with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

15 Outside are the dogs and the

In verse 5, what is the serpent impugning?

### **DISCUSS**

*Leader: Ask someone in the group to look up and read Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-15; John 8:44; 1 Thessalonians 3:5.*

Who is the serpent (Hebrew word translated "serpent" means "shining one") and why is he called this?

Summarize his three-pronged tactical plan.

Has he changed his tactics since then? Give some examples.

Read 2 Peter 2:1-22 and relate to Satan and his tactics.

sorcerers and the immoral persons  
and the murderers and the idolaters,  
and everyone who loves and practices  
lying.

### Exodus 20:16

16 "You shall not bear false witness  
against your neighbor.

*Leader: Explain the context and read aloud Revelation 22:12-15  
and mark what it says about lying.*

### OBSERVE/DISCUSS

To whom are those who love and practice lying compared to?

What is their eternal destiny?

Is lying a big deal or a little deal? Why?

*Leader: Explain the context and ask someone to read from their  
Bible Exodus 20:1-17.*

Some teach that this 9<sup>th</sup> commandment in verse 16 should be narrowly interpreted to legal testimony given against someone you know. Let's look closely at this verse and interpret it using Scripture to interpret Scripture because we do not want to add to the Word of God, and we do not want to take away from the word of God.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament says the following regarding the Hebrew word translated **false**: A noun meaning a lie, vanity, without cause. The word translated **witness** means testimony, evidence. Read aloud these verses from your Bible and list below what you learn about **false witness**.

This word is used of a lying witness (Deut 19:18); of false prophets (Jer 5:31; 20:6; 29:9); of telling lies (Lev 19:12; Jer 37:14); and of a liar (Prov 17:4).

Read aloud these verses from your Bible Luke 10:25-37. What is Jesus' definition of **neighbor**?

Based on these verses, do you think the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment only applies to false testimony under oath against someone close to you?

God's revelation to us in the Bible is progressive. Jesus Christ is the best example of this. He is hinted at in the very first verse of the Bible (plural form of Elohim translated God presents the triune nature of God – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). His mission, incarnation, suffering and victory are presented in Genesis 3:15 (the Seed of the woman ... He shall bruise the head of Satan and be bruised on the heel Himself).

The rest of the Old Testament testifies about Him through the Law, the sacrificial system, the various types and symbols, culminating with very specific descriptions and prophecies regarding both His first and second coming (Luke 24:27). Then the gospels give us detailed biographical information about Jesus and His ministry.

The epistles that follow give us more information about His life, gospel, and how we are to respond and live. Finally, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, unveils Him completely as the King of kings and Lord of lords who is coming again soon to rule and to reign.

So you see, **one must study the whole counsel of God's Word** to get a complete understanding of Jesus and the gospel, and so it is with other truths as well.

### **Leviticus 19:11-12**

11 You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.

12 And you shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord.

So let's look at the book of Leviticus which followed the presentation of the ten commandments and teaches what God expects from His people, from those He has saved.

*Leader: Read Leviticus 19:11-12 and have the group mark the four things they were not to do.*

The particular Hebrew words used here all convey a certain duplicity, a certain under-handedness, a certain slyness. **Steal** means to get by stealth, to secretly deceive for gain, **deal falsely** means to be untrue, undependable in word and deed, **lie** means literally to paint a falsehood, and **swear falsely** means to give your word that you will faithfully perform a promised deed without any intention of keeping that promise.

This verse reminds me of the Cadet Honor Code at West Point: A cadet will not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do. The Naval Academy expresses it this way – “Tell the truth and make the whole truth known.” A cadet was subject to immediate dismissal if he violated this code, or even tolerated its violation by another. We were taught that any attempt to deceive was an honor violation, even if “technically” truthful. We called this “quibbling” and it included deliberately withholding information – deceit by omission. We actually wrestled with the ethics of telling a thoughtful hostess that dinner was excellent if in fact it was not.

Does this verse add anything to your interpretation of the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment? Read Psalm 15.

### OBSERVE/DISCUSS

The next stop on our progressive journey through the Bible on this subject of lying is the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings that teach us how to live according to God’s design which is the definition of wisdom.

*Leader: Read Proverbs 6:16-19 and number the seven things that God hates, marking **lying** and **lies**.*

What is the “theme” of what God hates? What is so repulsive?

Notice that **lying** is mentioned twice. Does God make a distinction between “lying under oath” and a “lying tongue?” Should we?

Our journey through the Scriptures continues into the gospels.

Jesus elaborated on the 10 commandments in His Sermon on the Mount. He shocked the people when He said “For I say to you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:20) for these religious people meticulously kept the law externally, but Jesus taught that the law must be kept perfectly, including even the thoughts of our hearts, in order to satisfy a Holy God. He shocked them further by saying that even angry thoughts toward a brother breaks the commandment “You shall not commit

### Proverbs 6:16-19

16 There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,

19 A false witness [who] utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

**Matthew 5:20, 33-37, 48**

20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.'

34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' [or] 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil.

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

murder," and even private lustful thoughts toward a woman not your wife breaks the commandment "You shall not commit adultery."

Jesus' point, of course, is that this is impossible for man with his sin nature. Thus, man's only hope is to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ available only through grace by faith in Jesus. However, when we allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in our lives, the principles in the Sermon on the Mount that before seemed ludicrous now seem like the only sensible and happy thing to do.

Over the years Jewish scholars had added an extensive list of regulations and interpretations to the Mosaic Law, and Jewish teachers taught these instead of teaching God's Word. Remember how amazed the people were at Jesus' teaching in the synagogue? (Mark 1:22) They were amazed because He taught them as one having authority – He spoke God's Word to them – not as the scribes who merely taught what other men had written.

[By the way, the same thing happens in many churches today. Many teach denominational traditions over the Word of God; they teach on what other men have written and said over what God has said. Precious few are committed to expositional teaching, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book through the entire Bible. It is the power of God's Word made alive by the Holy Spirit that changes lives, not the wisdom of man. Okay, back to the lesson!☺]

Let's observe carefully what Jesus taught about the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

*Leader: Read these verses in Matthew chapter 5 and note the contrast between the traditional teaching (you have heard what the ancients were told) and Jesus' teaching (But I say ...) by marking the word **but** and the key repeated words **vows** and **oaths**.*

In verse 33, what were the people being taught regarding speaking the truth? The Greek word translated **false vows** means to perjure oneself, to lie under oath. The word translated **vows** means the thing promised with an oath.

This sounds right doesn't it? The people were taught not to make vows to the Lord that they do not intend to keep, but rather they must fulfill all vows made to the Lord.

*Leader: Ask someone read from their Bible Numbers 30:2 and Ecclesiastes 5:4-5.*

Is making a vow to the Lord serious business? Why?

Okay, so what is Jesus concerned about with this teaching? With the previous teachings on murder and adultery, **He broadened the application of the Law to the heart** – beyond outward appearances.

Look carefully at verses 34, 35 and 36. List what He teaches them not to do.

Making an oath in this context was the practice of backing up your word with an oath to the Lord; sort of like saying “I cross my heart and hope to die if I do not do what I promise to do.” Why does Jesus instruct them not to do this?

Apparently, the traditional teaching on the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment focused on whether an oath or a vow to the Lord was given, not on whether a statement was true or false. In other words, if an oath or vow was involved, then one was bound to tell the truth or face the consequences of breaking one’s vow to the Lord. But, apparently it was not a problem to lie if you did not make an oath or vow to the Lord.

Looking at the third **but** you marked in verse 37, what does Jesus say we are to do instead of making oaths to back up our word?

[Things are really not that different today. This is also what takes place when people are required to place their hand on the Bible in a courtroom and vow to “tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God.” Our legal system has determined that it is “okay” to lie generally, just not okay to lie under oath. Perjury is still a crime, but lying in general is not. This is why we need laws to require and enforce truth in advertising, disclosure of full costs, etc, why we need legally binding contracts to back up a handshake business agreement. So you see, we’re not so different from the people the Lord was rebuking are we? Okay, back to the lesson! ☺]

There was something else going on here as well. Read Mark 7:1-16 from your Bible. Regarding this business of making vows to the Lord, apparently it had become a financial planning tool for wealthy men to make a vow dedicating their wealth to the Lord upon their death. We might call that a charitable trust today. That sounds okay, even noble, doesn’t it? Well, Jesus nails them on this because they were using their vow to the Lord – referred to as a Corban – as a means to keep the wealth for their own use and security instead of meeting the financial needs of their parents. Read 1 Timothy 5:8. They were misusing a vow to the Lord to selfishly not fulfill a biblical obligation to care for their family. And of course they loved the attention when this was announced – they probably got their name on a plaque somewhere!

What does Jesus think of these practices and this traditional teaching?

[Okay, so what is wrong with a charitable trust like this? Maybe nothing at all as long as one isn’t using the trust to avoid meeting biblical obligations. The money question always comes down to this - whose money is it and what is the motive of the heart? The apostle Paul commended the needy Macedonian church for giving to the starving church in Jerusalem out of their *need*, and rebuked the wealthy church in Corinth for their reluctance to give even out of their *abundance*. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. How do you think the Lord feels about the man unwilling to meet a financial *need* out of his *abundance* because he has all of the assets God blessed him with “tied up” in tax-deferred and other “long term” investments – a sort of Corban to himself. “Gee, I’d really like to help but I can’t get at the money in my 401k ....” Sorry about the tangent, back to the lesson! ☺]



Based on all that we have learned, what is Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount about lying?

Let's continue our journey through the Bible on this topic of lying.

*Leader: Read Acts 5:1-11 from your Bible.*

How does this event relate to our study?

### 1 Timothy 1:8-11

8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,

9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

*Leader: Read the context and 1 Timothy 1:8-11 and have the group say aloud and mark **liars** and **perjurers**.*

#### CONTEXT

The context of this passage is Paul's introduction to his pastoral epistle to Timothy. A major concern to Paul is that certain influential men were teaching "strange doctrines" (1:3) and it was Timothy's job to correct this false teaching regarding the Law. The Law is not the path to righteousness; it is a tutor to lead one to the righteousness of Christ. (Galatians 3:24)

What do we learn about liars and perjurers from this passage?

### Colossians 3:1-10

- 1 If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
- 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.
- 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.
- 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come,
- 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.
- 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, [and] abusive speech from your mouth
- 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its [evil] practices,
- 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.

Does anyone still think God is only concerned about false testimony under oath?

*Leader: Read Colossians 3:1-10 and have the group say aloud and mark **lie**.*

Why aren't we to lie to one another based on this passage?

Ask someone to read from their Bible John 8:44. Jesus is referring to those Jews who did not believe in Him and were challenging Him publicly. Notice what Jesus says about **lies** and relate this to Colossians 3:9-10.

---

Okay, we could certainly go on but we've taken a fairly comprehensive look at the whole counsel of God's Word on the subject of lying. Review the list of principles discovered at the end of the study.

How does this teaching apply to our Marcom in our businesses?

Does the Lord require us to be truthful in all of our Marcom?

Does the Lord approve of half truths, intentional omissions, exaggerations, fine print disclaimers – any manner of quibbling – in our Marcom?

Take a couple of minutes and write in your own words a core value statement for your business based on these principles from God's Word.

What are some examples of Marcom **lying** in the marketplace, specifically in your marketplace? What does godly Marcom look like instead?

Lying Marcom	Godly Marcom

Take a couple of minutes now and invite the Lord to examine your heart and reveal if there is anything you need to change in your Marcom. There is no need to share this with the group, but write it down for your own record of what the Lord has said.

**Proverbs 19:22**

22 What is desirable in a man is his kindness, And [it is] better to be a poor man than a liar

Some of you may be thinking, I could lose a lot of money if I made these changes. Read Proverbs 19:22.

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES DISCOVERED

- **Lying is sin. Any false statement or attempt to deceive by adding, twisting, quibbling or omitting is lying.**
- **Lying under oath is perjury, lying without an oath is still lying, and both are an abomination to the Lord.**
  - There is no such thing as secular vows that are not binding.
  - It is foolish to add to our statements an oath to the Lord because we cannot bind the Lord to our statements, nor can we control the future.
  - Our reputation for character and integrity should be such that no man would think it necessary to put us under oath to ensure the truth.
  - God is calling us to a higher plane of living. We are to be people of the Word and people of our word. Say what you mean and mean what you say, anything beyond that is evil.
- **Lying is part of our sin nature, the “old self,” which is to be put away and replaced with the “new self” controlled by the Holy Spirit. Habitual lying is evidence that a person has not yet been ‘born again.’**
- **Better to be a poor man than a liar.**

## BUSINESS APPLICATION

1. There are no exceptions recorded in God’s Word for lying in business. Lying in any form – adding, twisting or omitting the truth in our Marcom (marketing communication) is just as much an abomination to the Lord as perjury in a court of law or breaking a vow to the Lord.
2. Evaluate your Marcom messages and the motive of your heart when you created these messages, in the light of these biblical principles.
3. Here are some questions to ponder:
  - a. Do I communicate everything a customer needs to know to make a wise, informed decision regarding my product or service, or do I only disclose the minimum information required by law?
  - b. Do I intentionally mislead my customers by:
    1. Exaggerating the benefit of my product and understating the cost or risks?
    2. Boldly proclaiming a wonderful promotion, but only very softly disclosing the restrictions?
    3. Advertising one thing with the intention to sell them something else (bait and switch)?

- c. Do I build into my contracts “legal outs and gotchas” that I hope the customer does not notice?
  - d. Do my financial statements accurately reflect the profitability of my company or division? Is my standard of reporting (1) push the envelope and see what I can get away with, (2) follow the letter of the law – no more and no less, (3) follow the spirit, the intention, of the law?
  - e. Do I rationalize the “gray areas” by saying I am at least more truthful than my competition?
4. If I cannot succeed without marketing in a deceptive way, should I even be in this business? If my product or service is not useful enough to be marketed on its true merits, is this a business I should be in as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,  
Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995  
by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission."