

PASTOR SCOTT'S

MONTHLY MESSAGE



We Are a People of the Truth

We are a people of the truth. In the Gospels, Jesus opens 83 statements with "I tell you the truth, ..." Christ tells us, "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6a) And he states, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

God enjoins us to stay with the truth by commanding that we do not lie - the Ninth Commandment, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." (Exodus 20:16 & Deut. 5:20) But, this commandment is saying a lot more than simply it is a sin to lie. Just look in the Book of Confessions.

The Book of Confessions along with the Bible and the Book of Order form the constitution of the PC (USA). In the Book of Confession is the Larger Catechism (catechism = a summary of the principles of the Christian faith via a series of questions and answers). And question 144 of the Larger Catechism asks "What are the duties required in the Ninth Commandment?" The answer isn't two words, "Don't lie." That's a far too narrow understanding of the commandment.

The answer is: The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report. (Note: 24 Biblical references are cited in this answer)

David French (conservative columnist) writes about these duties of the Ninth Commandment, "If a person understands those obligations—if he truly comprehends his duty to his neighbor—will he be a sponge for the worst and most paranoid accusations? Absolutely not. He'll be inoculated against them. That's where the church addresses conspiracy theories. That's a key place where the church addresses enmity and anger between left and right."

We are in a society that so readily accepts, or at least excuses, lies from our business leaders, political leaders, and even friends, without holding them accountable for violating the Ninth Commandment. We are prone to passing on such non-truths and thus crossing the line of this commandment ourselves. And, as David French points out, we are so willing to accept the worst (often untrue) that is said about another - particularly another that is an advisory or someone we disagree with.

As agents of the Good News of Jesus Christ, let us live into the Larger Catechism's answer about what is expected of disciples of this Good News. Let us stand for the truth, "discouraging talebearers", closing down conspiracy theories, and displaying an "unwillingness to admit of an evil report." Again, David French, "It doesn't mean being gullible. It doesn't mean rejecting the idea that our opponents can do grievous, scandalous things. It means addressing claims of wrongdoing with charitable skepticism—and the wilder the claim, the greater the skepticism. Our moral posture should deter slander."

As "the church" we should be teaching, internally - and externally by how we live and act, "the way, the truth, and the life," our Creator's path to life abundant. This answer to question 144 is as good as place to start as any. And once we have this down, we can visit some of the other 196 answers.

Peace,
Pastor Scott