

Exodus 20:16 Court in the act!



The Ninth Commandment: do not lie. Or is that too big an over-simplification? The scenario (the word “witness” should be a clue!) is a courtroom, where one is called to *answer* (the usual translation of the word we have here as “bear”) concerning someone else. There are a number of ways that our testimony could be false: as well as providing actual falsehood, we could simply decline to provide truth as regards our “neighbour”.

➤ What doesn't it ban?

the “lesser evil” (Exodus 1:19-21)
social conventions (Luke 24:28)
acting / game play
stories – *parables!* (e.g. Luke 16:19ff)
silence – “full disclosure” is not always called for

➤ Don't be limited by the literal

(Although the literal is stringent! - Deuteronomy 19:18-21)
putting down – belittling (Proverbs 12:18)
putting up – flattery (Proverbs 26:23-28)
speaking up – gossip (Proverbs 26:22, 2 Corinthians 12:20)
shutting up – silence (Leviticus 5:1)
(though remember, too, Ecclesiastes 3:7)
what about speaking of Jesus (Luke 19:40)?
and confessing our own sin (2 Samuel 12:13)?

➤ Flip it over

Do not bear *truthful* witness against a neighbour!

Are your words ...

truthful?

necessary?

kind? - as gentle as possible

benevolent? - intended for good (not in anger)

timely? - you can miss the moment

Speak truth *graciously* (Ephesians 4:15,29)

Remember the example of gracious truth, Jesus himself:

“the faithful and true witness” (Revelation 3:14)