

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 17 MAY 2021 – 23 MAY 2021



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

This week, we are looking at Question and Answer 112, which is based on the ninth commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” (Exodus 20:16)

We all know our words are powerful. For better or worse, we as a society have come to realise the old children’s rhyme, Sticks and Stones¹, is not entirely true. We know words can harm. We felt words hurting us. Nowadays, I can’t help but think that this has been taken too far in some areas, especially when it mutes freedom of speech. However, the power of our words should still be acknowledged, if only to make us realise our false speech is wrong and destructive.

As a slight side note, I quote Kevin DeYoung’s comment on a phrase within the answer 112, “Nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without a just cause.” Kevin DeYoung writes:

There is something very biblical about the principle of innocent until proven guilty. Awhile back I was summoned for jury duty. As I heard the general outline of the case, I found myself immediately thinking, “Well, obviously this guy did *something* wrong.” Maybe he did. But to assume so from the outset is to condemn someone without a hearing. It can be hard not to assume that accused athletes are guilty of steroid use or accused politicians are guilty of infidelity. But we should not rush to judgment on anyone.²

In our day and age, news of allegations travel far and very fast. We often hear an allegation on the news even before it has even entered the court. And usually we do not hear the findings in the court. It is tempting to judge someone guilty in our minds merely based on the allegations and initial reports on the news. In some cases, even our legal system is stretched in a way that seem to treat someone guilty even before a fair trial. Christians are to be different. We must care deeply for the victims of course. We should listen well and trust the witnesses, considering them to be telling us the truth until and unless something else tells us otherwise. Yet, this assumption of innocence until proven guilty should also be extended to those who are being accused. And not only in the court cases or high-profile cases on the news. In our everyday conversations, we ought to think good of others, and do not lay our judgments upon them rashly or unfairly. In the way we speak, in the way we think of others, we must refrain from “bearing false witness against” them.

I hope this week’s devotional aid will help us grow in truthfulness, honesty, and integrity.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

<https://www.upperhunterpc.com>

¹ Sticks and stones may break my bones; But words shall never hurt me.

² Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot*, p204.

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM³

Lord's Day 43

Q112) What is God's will for you in the Ninth Commandment?

A) God's will is that I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone without a hearing or without a just cause. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call down on me God's intense anger. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbour's good name.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:6

[Love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.

We sometimes feel the tension between truth and love. We feel as though loving someone means we should not tell the truth if it hurts, but only say what they want to hear or something that the other person will not feel pain. The famous "love" chapter in the Bible (1 Cor 13) tells us that is not the case. Love rejoices with the truth, not with lies. Ephesians 4:15 also tells us to "speak the truth in love". This doesn't mean we package the harsh truth with loving words as to dampen the shock, although we shouldn't be rude in speaking the truth! It means that we speak truth out of love for one another. The false speech, lies and deceptive words are all coming from one's self-interest and not love for the other. We lie when we want to take advantage of someone. We lie when we want to gain trust and acceptance from someone who may reject us if they really knew us. In the end, when we withhold truth from someone, it can never be truly loving.

Prayer

Father in heaven, you are the source of all truth. Thank you for revealing truth about yourself, and truths about me. Please forgive me from hiding the truth or hiding from the truth. Please make me more truthful in my thinking, speaking, and acting. And please help me to love you and others enough to speak truth even when it's costly for me. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

JOHN 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

In this passage, Jesus was debating with some Jews who would not believe that Jesus came from God the Father. They claimed that they belonged to God because their ancestry is from Abraham. However, Jesus spoke these strong words against them to say their real father was the devil because they did not believe the truth that Jesus was speaking to them. Christians are those who believe Jesus's own claim about Himself, that is, that Jesus is the Son of God who saved us by dying in our place. When we believe Jesus in this way, we are adopted as God's children and we call God our Father (Rom 8:15). Yet, whenever we lie or reject any truth, we act as if the devil is our own father. How dishonouring to our true heavenly Father?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to save me from all lies and falsehood. Thank you for the forgiveness available in Christ for all those times when I believed or spoke lies. Please change me so I may know the truth more deeply and speak truth boldly. May I be like Jesus who knew and spoke truth in love. In His name I pray, Amen.

³ The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.