

# Witness!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, I want to encourage you to go to FCCGreensburg.com or the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

You can learn more about the church there. But hey, thank you for tuning in today. I'm so thankful you did. We're going to get into the Word, but most of all, we're going to let this Word get into these hearts and transform us more and more into the image of our Savior Jesus.

Now, I'll never forget trying to minister to a lady who had some deep baggage from her childhood. And honestly, it manifests itself very destructively in her life as an adult.

Her behavior was marked by extreme highs, even more extreme lows. Sadly, depression kept her from even being able to work or function in a lot of ways. She'd love you and praise you up and down one moment.

And then in the next, you were suddenly the enemy when you didn't know why. It really was sad because she just needed Jesus to come into that pain and bring healing. Well, as her pastor, I experienced her great praise, which was always over the top, very uncomfortable.

[ 1 : 09 ] But I also received her strongest rebuke. And there was one time when I was on the bad list. I don't even know what I did. She was at a wedding reception, and she just so happened to sit with a pastor friend of mine.

And I have no clue how I got brought up. I wasn't even there. But she's going off, calling me all kinds of things. And he just stops her and says, hey, I know Ray.

I know his heart. And while he's a sinner saved by grace like the rest of us, what you're saying doesn't sound true. If you have a problem with him, just go talk to him. But I need you to stop because this is not the man that I and others in the community know.

And it would be so easy just to make an example out of this anonymous lady because I'm probably not the only one listening who's been on the wrong side of someone's unfair criticisms.

But the reason I don't come here to attack is because I've sat in her seat as well where I thought someone maybe wronged me. And what happens when that goes down?

[ 2 : 09 ] The pride flares up, right? The gloves come off and I find myself taking what they did and making all kinds of assumptions into motives and intentions.

Quickly, I've made them into this wicked villain that's sneaking around trying to destroy everyone's lives. I'm even convinced that in that moment that I got to warn others against such a dangerous person.

And in the meantime, I exaggerated, added, and assumed way too much into the story. I've broken Exodus 20:16. Maybe you have too. See, commandment number nine says you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

Or, as it's often translated, do not bear false witness. Or we just say don't lie. Now, for those of us who've been in this series called 10 for 10 weeks now, it's been an eye-opener.

I thought I understood each of these commandments. And yet, as I've gone deeper, man, I didn't understand a lot about them. I've learned so much. And what I've discovered is I've broken every single one of these commandments many times over.

[ 3 : 16 ] Because the point of the Ten Commandments is not to show you how to, quote-unquote, be a good person. Or just to give a nice set of rules by which to govern society.

The main point is to reveal that none of us are good enough to earn our way to heaven. To expose just how far we've all fallen and that we are in need of a Savior.

And once these commands take us to the cross where we discover the amazing grace of Jesus, then, covered by grace, they lead us back to the Ten Commandments to help us walk in

righteousness and holiness before our God.

In other words, because he is so good, I want to live in obedience to him. Now, let's wrestle with this commandment to not bear false witness, to not lie. And we need to start with a little bit of context. These commandments were originally given to the Israelites after they came out of Egyptian bondage. They started on their journey to the Promised Land. There were about two to three million of them.

[ 4 : 17 ] And while there were some wonderful people in that group, we all know there's inevitably going to be some rough characters and some crime that happens. Even from people who just make a mistake.

At this point in history, there's no police force. There's no cameras. No lie detector test. I mean, it's like 1400s BC. So, eyewitness testimony was vital as people were brought before judges.

And those who saw the crime were expected to tell the whole truth, nothing but the truth. So, help them God. And as Chip Ingram has said, everything about justice and social order really hinged on people obeying the Ninth Command.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. Now, a couple passages here where this commandment is talked about even further. You can look at Exodus chapter 23, 1-7, or Deuteronomy 19, 15-21.

But if you read these passages, there's a strong warning given against lying and perverting justice. Or going against someone because of their social status like being poor and we lie to pin it on them.

[ 5 : 28 ] There's even boundaries that are put in place. It says there must be two or three witnesses. And they basically are cross-examined by judges to make sure they're speaking truth.

Can you see where we've adopted a lot of our judicial system? And if these people chose to bear false witness to lie, according to Deuteronomy 19, they'd receive the same punishment that the crime would have gotten.

So, if they said someone stole from a tent and they didn't, they were lying, they'd get the punishment like they were the ones who stole. Pretty good way to keep people honest, isn't it? It's amazing what consequences do.

And yet, have you noticed we work pretty hard in our society right now to remove consequences? And boy, are we suffering the consequences for it? See, it's kind of like last week when we talked about the commandment, do not steal.

This commandment is also about integrity. In fact, the Apostle Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4.25. He says, Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

[ 6 : 35 ] I even like how Randy Alcorn put this. He said, When we speak truth, we speak Christ's language. When we speak lies, we speak Satan's language. So, let's talk about that here for a few minutes.

In John chapter 8, we see the Pharisees, which was a group of religious leaders during Jesus' day. Most of them hated him because he challenged their hierarchy of power, greed, and self-righteousness.

And here they are trying to trap him in his words. They're actively pursuing to murder him behind the scenes. They become so clouded in hypocrisy that they don't even care anymore about doing the right thing.

The very thing that they're supposed to be the greatest examples of as the religious leaders. Even something as awful as murder. And they're claiming to Jesus that God the Father is their true father. And yet, here's what Jesus says to them in John 8.44. He says, You belong to your father, the devil. And you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.

[ 7 : 39 ] When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But then we see this account for Jesus in John 1.14.

Kind of the opposite, or completely the opposite. The word became flesh, that's Jesus, and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Father, listen to this, full of grace and truth.

Jesus even says in John 14.6, I am the way, the truth, and the life. So we see these lines drawn where those who belong to Jesus are truth speakers, even truth receivers.

And yet, we are most like Satan when deception is coming out of our mouths because he's the father of lies. I don't know about you, but that's convicting stuff to me. Because my heart desire is to be a person of godly integrity who always speaks the truth in love.

And yet, we all fall short, right? It's easy to stretch things. It's easy to share little white lies. It's easy to fib to get ourselves out of a pinch. To even exaggerate for my own benefit.

[ 8 : 50 ] We've all done it. And yet, we as Christ followers are called to a level of integrity that this world doesn't understand. And I'm not saying you can't joke and have fun and exaggerate when you're playing around.

God understands that. But here's why this is so important. One, because I want to honor my God who has delivered me by the blood of Christ from my sin.

And one way I do that, like God's word teaches, is by striving to live a life worthy of the calling that I've received in him. Will we do it perfectly? No. Will his grace be enough for Christians when we fall?

Absolutely. But may we grow in such a way that we have victory over that sin. And then second, I want to be that godly witness that he's called me to be to my neighbor.

Did you realize that people, if you are a follower of Jesus, they're watching your lives. Whether you realize it or not, they are paying very close attention to what you do and to what you say.

[ 9 : 50 ] So, this is the convicting question of the day. When people hear my words, do they see a witness for Christ? Do they see Jesus in me? Does it draw them to the hope that only he can bring?

And if there's room for growth here, that's all of us, keep listening because we're going to identify what this may look like to bear false witness. So, here's the first thing. Be on guard against false testimony.

Against false testimony. There's a hilarious clip from Judge Judy where this young woman is suing these two young men who stole money from her. And I don't remember the exact details of how much it was.

But they're making very strong allegations back that they didn't do it, that she is lying. And there's a part of the story where she says, and I don't remember the exact numbers, so I'm just going to throw some numbers in here.

Not trying to lie, but just trying to give you a picture here. So, they took \$500 out of my purse. She says something like that. And one of these guys caught up in the moment says, nah, there was only \$300 there.

[ 10 : 53 ] And Judge Judy starts laughing and says, judgment to the plaintiff in the amount of da-da-da. Listen, we may enjoy a clip like that, but it's hard when someone comes against us with false allegations.

Just straight up lies about you. Proverbs 25.18 says, like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is one who gives false testimony against a neighbor.

Because what? It hurts. It hurts. It hurts really bad when someone gives false testimony. It's like a sharp arrow in the heart. And there are some of us listening today who've had false allegations come against us.

We see this in the political realm all the time. And sadly, it even happens in the body of Christ when some people don't get their way. But here's the thing. Whenever those allegations come, whenever you're tempted to get defensive and fight hard to save your good name, and I've done that a whole lot, God has tried to teach me, no, you've got to stop.

You've got to look in the mirror. You've got to see if there's any truth at all to what's being said there. If so, repent, humble yourself, apologize. I had a situation one time where I was approached over some things.

[ 12 : 07 ] And after talking it through a few minutes, at first I didn't see it, but after talking it through, I saw the error of my ways. And it broke my heart that I had hurt them. So I apologized. But the problem was, there were a few things I didn't do that were alleged.

And I just had to say, and they didn't like it, but I just had to say, I'm sorry. That part's just not true. I've tried to explain myself. And in humility, respect, and love, you've just got to trust that God will take it from there.

You know, I'll never forget the story of a little guy who was in a boat when a terrible storm hit. The boat sank a couple miles offshore. In the process of being thrown into the ocean, this boy was miraculously swept on the top of a giant rock that jettied out of the water.

And when the safety crews found him several hours later in the morning, they asked him if he had trembled through the night. And that's when he said, yes, sir, I trembled all night long, but the rock didn't.

You know, there are going to be storms that try to take you under. There are going to be false allegations that are made at you at some point in your life. And yet God is faithful. We walk in integrity and we trust that he has us under control because we know that Proverbs 17, 15 is true. [13:25] Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent, the Lord detests them both. And he will be that rock to take care of us when we walk in integrity before him.

But then there's the reality that, you know what? I got to be on guard against making my own false allegations against others, which usually comes out of some kind of hurt, right?

So I got to make sure I don't do this either. And then second, be on guard against gossip and slander. The story is told of a prosecuting attorney in a small town courthouse who called his first witness to the stand.

It was an elderly lady. He approached her and said, Mrs. Jones, do you know me? Why, yes, I do know you, Mr. Williams. I've known you since you were a young boy. And frankly, you've been a big disappointment to me.

You lie, cheat, manipulate, and talk about people behind their backs. You think that you're this rising big shot, but you haven't got the brains to realize that you'll never amount to anything more than a two-bit paper pusher.

[14:26] Yes, I know you, she said. Well, that wasn't the way that he envisioned this conversation going. And not knowing what else to do, he pointed across the room and said, Mrs. Jones, do you know the defense attorney?

Why, of course I do. I've known Mr. Bradley since he was a youngster too. I used to babysit him. And he too has been a real disappointment to me. He's lazy, he's bigoted, and he has a drinking problem.

This man can't build a normal relationship with anyone, and his law practice is one of the shoddiest in the entire state. Yes, I know him too. Well, at this point, the judge slams his gavel down, calling the courtroom to silence, and he demands both lawyers come to the bench.

And in a quiet but very stern voice, he says, If either of you ask her if she knows me, I'll hold you both in contempt of court. You know, this may be one that you and I struggle with probably the most, and it fits commandment number nine.

It's also one that we just often let slide. I've seen this among the body of Christ too often. We'll talk about the big hot-button sins, and we'll snarl at the audacity of such people.

[15:31] And listen, sin is sin. We're not going to call anything, okay, that God says isn't. And yet, we'll ignore, so we'll look at the sins we see as the really bad ones in our eyes, and we'll ignore things like gossip and slander, even though it matters to God.

So let's define these words, okay? So according to Merriam-Webster.com, a gossip is a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others.

However, if you think about it this way, slander usually takes it to a whole new level. Slander, according to Merriam-Webster.com, is the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation.

Proverbs 16.28 says this, A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends. 1 Peter 2.1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

In other words, gossip and slander are unacceptable for children of the king. Now, is it something that you and I may struggle with? And it may be a real, real struggle for us? Absolutely.

[16:44] But there's victory in Christ when we lay it down at the cross. You know, my wife teaches our three kids this little acronym that help us know whether the words that we're getting ready to say should come out of our mouths.

And it's the acronym THINK. So you take the T, and it's, Is it true? H, is it helpful? I, is it inspiring? N, is it necessary?

And K, is it kind? And if it doesn't fall well into these categories, then we need to just zip the lip, right? That's what we need to do.

See, that sounds a lot like Ephesians 4.29. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit

those who listen.

Because what's at stake? Our witness for the Lord. And the redeemed are called to be people of integrity. Here's the third thing. Be on guard against not keeping your promises.

[17:47] Tell me if this sounds familiar. Your boss comes up and says, Hey, we really got to get this done by Friday. Can I count on you to do that? Or your spouse says, Can you clean out the gutters or the garage this week?

Or a friend asks that they can borrow your trailer soon. It could be anything. And with good intentions, we say, No problem, boss. I'll have that to you by the end of Thursday. Or I'll get those gutters. I'll get that garage cleaned out over the weekend.

Or sure, I'll bring the trailer over next week. And if you're like me, sometimes my yes doesn't mean yes. And my no doesn't mean no. And while this may not come with any evil motives attached, it still goes against God's heart to get rid of falsehoods in our life so that we can be the witness for Christ that we're called to be.

See, Ecclesiastes 5.5 says, It's better to not make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. I have to tell you, as someone who's often leading many moving parts within the church, this is one of my biggest pet peeves.

And I'm sure my very driven and structured personality probably adds to my frustration when I'm promised something and it's just not delivered. But this week, the Lord brought one of these situations to my mind where I promised someone something and didn't deliver.

[19:01] Now, it wasn't anything earth-shattering, but you know what? My word should mean something. And that's the point. I need to look different from the world and how things are often done.

And one reason we promise a lot and we don't deliver is because of this desire to people please. We just can't say no. And after studying this out a little bit, I had an opportunity to put this into practice this week.

I had a gentleman call me and ask if I could pray at a meeting. I do this three or four times a year. I'm really happy to help in this way. And it's always been in the mornings.

I'm already in town. It's just, you know, not real hard to do. But this time it was going to be in the evening. And I'm not afraid to sacrifice a little bit, but I just had to say to this guy, hey, I'm sorry. That just doesn't fit my schedule any longer. And while there was a side of me that wanted to people please and be helpful and not say no, I had to stop and just kind of reevaluate everything and say, okay, I am away from my family probably 60, 70 hours a week.

[20:05] All day and a few evenings a week. I need to protect my Monday evening family time. So keep those promises even when you may have to say no and disappoint people.

And then fourth, be on guard against twisting the truth. You know, we often call these little white lies. It's where we tell something but kind of put our own little spin on it.

Maybe we emphasize what the other person did wrong but conveniently leave out what I did that ticked them off. And honestly, that's what Satan does constantly. He twists the truth.

Even in Genesis chapter three, he convinces Eve to eat the fruit that God told them not to eat. And he just starts twisting on the truth. And before long, Adam and Eve are deceived.

And this is easy to do, isn't it? So we have to make sure that we go the extra mile to tell the truth. That we know the truth. That we don't buy into Satan's lies.

[21:05] Not even those little fibs or white lies that can help me to get what I want. I've seen this so many times. Even in the church. See, Proverbs 12.22 says, The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.

So let me end kind of on a light note here. I know we've kind of talked about kind of a serious topic a little bit. But let me end on a light note. At a dinner for officers and their wives, the commanding general of a base was delivering a long, long speech.

A young lieutenant, tired of listening to him, grumbled to the woman sitting beside him and said, What a pompous and unbearable old windbag. Well, the woman turned to him.

Her face was red with rage. And she said, Excuse me, lieutenant. Do you have any idea who I am? No, ma'am. Well, I am the wife of the man you just called an unbearable old windbag.

Oh, said the lieutenant. Well, ma'am, do you have any idea who I am? Well, no. Well, good, said the lieutenant as he took off towards the door. Luke 6.45 says it like this.

[ 22 : 13 ] A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart. And an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Maybe you learned it this way. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. So here's the point of commandment number nine. As a child of God, I want to ooze integrity. I want my heart to be right before my gracious God.

I want my words to flow from that heart that beats for Christ. And I pray that our words can encourage, build up, speak truth and love, and ultimately share the greatest news of all that Jesus is the hope that this world needs.

So let me challenge you with this. Every word that you and I speak this week, and I already know this is going to be hard for me, but every word we speak this week, think about, does it bring glory to God?

Am I a good witness for Jesus right now with these words? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for just these words of hope and life that you have spoken over us today.

[ 23 : 26 ] Thank you for just calling us to integrity, calling us to a life that honors you, a life that can shine brightly so that those around us can know the hope of Jesus Christ.

So Father, we just give you permission right now. Will you have your way in our hearts? Because we know that's where the words are going to start at. So have your way in purifying these hearts so that the words that come out of our mouths will build others up and share the amazing love of Jesus.

Thank you for speaking this truth over us today. We give you glory and we pray all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to share this invitation with you this morning.

I don't know where you're at in your walk with Jesus. Maybe you have some faith questions that you'd like to ask us. Maybe you just want to talk about what is the gospel and how do I give my life to Jesus?

Well, listen, it's this simple. Every one of us have sinned against God and that happens pretty quickly and it's happened a whole lot. Every one of us.

[ 24 : 37 ] The Bible tells us for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And so that sin separates us from a perfect holy God who cannot stand before sin.

And so that's why Jesus in His amazing grace came to this earth in the most unexpected of ways. He lived a perfect sinless life. He taught us all about what the kingdom of God is truly all about. And then because He didn't fit the religious agenda and because it was God's plan to save us, He was mistreated, maligned, He was spit on, He was beaten severely, and He was forced to carry His cross to Golgotha.

And there at Golgotha, they nailed Him to the cross, they hoisted Him up, and He suffered greatly as He took your sins and as He took my sins upon His shoulders.

He loved you that much that the perfect sinless Son of God would give His life to save you and to save me.

[ 25 : 44 ] And then He took His last breath and He died on that cross for us. But listen, the story doesn't end there because there are a lot of people who died on a cross and you could say that He was just another one claiming to be the Messiah, but here's what separates Jesus from all the others.

Three days later, the grave could hold Him no longer. Death is strong, but life is stronger. He rose from the grave, conquered death, and He is alive at the right hand of the Father still.

And so, in that resurrection power, because of the cross, He wants to forgive you and He wants to transform your life and He wants to use you in this world to share His love with people who don't know it.

And so, this morning, if you'd like to have a conversation about giving your life to Jesus, here's a couple ways you can reach out. You can email me at [rayatfccgreensburg.com](mailto:rayatfccgreensburg.com) or you can call the church office.

We're open Monday through Thursday from 8 to 4.30. You can call us at 812-663-8488. Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today.

[ 27 : 01 ] We pray that you have a great week.