

## Part 8: Why Teaching the Ten Commandments in Public Schools is So important, (the 9th Commandment; “Thou shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor.”)

**Pastor Bruce:** [Howard](#), we have introduced you to our audience before, but for those who do not yet know you, Howard is the author of the Amazon Best Selling book, The Spiritual Meaning of Scripture. He has advanced degrees in psychology and business management, has over 25 years of teaching experience as a California Community College instructor and as a senior adjunct graduate faculty member at California Lutheran University. He is also a very accomplished [business owner](#), providing custom-made vehicles to many of the world’s most important and best-known people.

Now Howard, let’s explore why you think teaching concepts based upon the Ten Commandments in Public Schools is so Important.

**Howard B. Becker:** My great pleasure, and honor [Pastor Bruce](#).

During our prior podcasts we’ve discussed how teaching the Ten Commandments in public schools offers our students a unique opportunity to explore [Principles](#) that greatly affect their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We also discussed how these timeless concepts affect the wellbeing of our entire secular society.

We reviewed an article titled; “Pious Pupils in America Perform Better” published in the August 25<sup>th</sup> 2024 issue of The Economist magazine. This article describes the advantages that a religious background provides public school students in America. And although this article voices several points of view about teaching religion in public schools, it reports:

“Amid the arguments, one thing that tends to be overlooked is the evidence of religion’s impact on performance. Research shows that religious pupils do better in schools. Pious pupils have higher grades, better attendance level and complete more years of college.”

So, Pastor Bruce, I think almost everyone can agree that higher grades, better class attendance and more years of college generally result in

improved standards of living and stronger communities. These accomplishments provide many benefits to the secular world around us.

For those unfamiliar with The Economist, it's a British magazine. It has been published since 1843, and according to Wikipedia it has a weekly subscription of over 1.5 million readers. It is very much based on discussing secular issues of national and international importance.

Their article on Pious Pupils in America goes on to report:

“Studies find that the more religious children drink and use drugs less and have fewer sexual partners than their peers.”

I also think most of us would agree that reducing drug and alcohol abuse and sexual promiscuity among our students will offer important benefits to our society, acting to build a healthier, less risky, and more stable nation.

So, the cumulative results of teaching concepts based upon the Ten Commandments are aimed at providing positive and lasting benefits among our public-school students... while greatly benefiting our American secular society. Developing this curriculum in a manner that will not violate the First Amendment of our Constitution is a move in the right direction.

What are your thoughts here Pastor Bruce?

**Pastor Bruce:** 1. So, Howard, you're not suggesting that we attempt to establish a particular religion in public schools, but rather develop a curriculum that explores concepts based upon the Ten Commandments as they relate to what best serves our students' individual and collective wellbeing.

**Howard B. Becker:** That's right Pastor Bruce. I'm suggesting that we develop a public-school curriculum that promotes the individual and societal benefits that teaching concepts based upon the Ten Commandments offers our students. This approach will keep us within the bounds of the First Amendment of our Constitution, which begins “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or

prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech.” It also will keep us within the Supreme Court ruling that require all laws to have a “secular legislative purpose.”

It would be a great shame to lose our right to teach these timeless Principles in public schools by being over-zealous in our support for any, one, particular, religion.

We must keep in mind that people fleeing religious persecution formed the basis for the First Amendment of our Constitution in the first place. Freedom of religious belief and freedom of speech are fundamental to our American Dream.

Rather, by using the Ten Commandments we are employing ancient and timeless concepts that are fundamental to religions of all faiths, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike. These concepts have also formed the foundations of all ethical and moral civilizations.

Therefore, the Ten Commandments are perfectly appropriate for teaching our students concepts that serve their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. They embody Principles that are invaluable for serving the wellbeing of our entire secular society.

**Pastor Bruce: 2.** Howard this makes a lot of sense to me. And although, as a Christian Pastor I would love nothing better than to teach the tenants of Christianity in public schools, I respect our Constitution.

As an American I understand why we need to stay within the bounds of the First Amendment.

I’ve said before, I’ve also got feelings that teaching the Ten Commandments in public schools will plant seeds in the minds and hearts of our students, and as they mature those seeds may very well serve for the good of their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. That’s a very worthy cause. And this curriculum may also inspire students to seek more information about the Bible, and I can only image where that might lead them!

**Howard B. Becker:** Agreed Pastor Bruce.

And as we've stated throughout this series, this is our mission here. Let's plant those seeds, let's nourish them, and let's help them grow in the minds and hearts of our public-school students. This approach will give them the tools they need as they navigate through this complex and confusing world of ours. Our society will be much better off than if we choose not to address these invaluable concepts at all!

*And*, I wouldn't be surprised for a moment if these seeds grow into something much more substantial, opening inquisitive minds and hearts to cultivate these concepts further, and of their own accord.

What might come into fruition from this curriculum may one day become something we will all call, truly Marvelous in our eyes.

**Pastor Bruce: 3.** Amen, brother Howard

**Howard B. Becker:** I'll second that Pastor Bruce!

So now we have now arrived at the 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Thy Neighbor."

Here, I'd like to suggest that teachers begin this discussion by defining degrees of lies, ranging from "little white lies" to deceptively cruel lies.

For instance, the fable of Santa Claus may be a little white lie, albeit an innocent one with no harm intended. (Although one day it might invoke tears from kids when they find out the truth! ... no Santa, *really* Mom and Dad!!)

Nevertheless, beyond little white lies, why do people lie?

Do people lie out of embarrassment?

Do they lie to bolster their self-image?

Do they lie from belief in their own delusions?

Do they lie to take material advantage of others?

Do lies made solely for self-advantage violate the trust existing between and among people?

Can those violations hurt others, mentally, emotionally and spiritually?

Can that hurt ruin relationships, cause resentment, animosity and worse?

Can those lies injure the Goodness existing within and among people?

Do those injuries disfigure the wellbeing of the secular world around us?

What is the mental, emotional and spiritual difference between a beautiful world and an ugly one?

What are your thoughts about these questions Pastor Bruce

**Pastor Bruce:** 4. Lies, whether small or great, erode trust—the foundation of all relationships. Even so-called "harmless" lies can sow seeds of doubt and confusion. The 9th Commandment calls us to truthfulness because deception distorts reality and damages the soul. When we live truthfully, we reflect God's character and create a world of integrity, not illusion. A beautiful world is one where honesty builds trust, while an ugly one is shaped by deception and broken relationships.

**Howard B. Becker:** Agreed Pastor Bruce!

And so here I'd like to suggest that teachers discuss the distortions that false witnesses have caused throughout the history of the world.

A teacher might ask their students:

Do those distortions include lies that were used to justify the slave trade?

Do those distortions include the lies that were used to justify the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany?

Do those distortions include lies that have been used to justify religious persecutions throughout history?

Do those distortions include lies that have been used to mislead people into wars, where nations fight against nations and have destroyed millions of lives?

Reflecting on the distortions that false witnesses have propagated like these, teachers might ask their students to reflect upon the tremendous harm they have caused, and continue to cause to the secular world around us.

Here is an appropriate Old Testament Bible verses from Proverbs 14:5–6 that a teacher may wish to share here with their students:

“A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

“A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.”

Considering our need to find mutual understanding and Goodness among humanity, a teacher might then ask their students to reflect upon the meaning and purpose of this 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment, “Thou Shalt Not Commit False Witness Against Thy Neighbor.”

At this point I would suggest that teachers ask their students this next set of questions:

What do you think goes on within a person’s thoughts and feelings when they lie to another person?

What is meaning of the term “dignity?”

Does having a sense of dignity strengthen a person’s internal character?

Do liars disfigure the dignity of their own internal character?

Does that disfigurement cause them to lose their ability to recognize the harm they are causing to others, and to themselves when they lie?

Do liars tend to propagate more of the same?

If you could see a liar's lack of dignity in the light of Day, what image and what likeness would you expect to see?

Here is another Old Testament Bible passage from Jeremiah 23:25–26 that teachers may wish to share with their students:

“How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies?

“Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.”

Pastor Bruce, I realize that a discussion like this is not necessarily pleasant. It may be uncomfortable; however, it serves a purpose, encouraging students to evaluate what best serves their own mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, and the wellbeing of those around them.

What do you think about this approach Pastor Bruce?

**Pastor Bruce: 5.** Lies have a way of spreading, creating a cycle of deception that corrupts entire societies. Every falsehood paves the way for more, making the world darker and more divided. But truth has the power to restore what was lost. A person who values truth strengthens their soul and becomes a light in the darkness. It is through truth that nations heal, relationships mend, and dignity is restored.

Howard, a Scripture comes to my mind and I would like to share it with our listeners, Proverbs 11:3 says: *“The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.”*

**Howard B. Becker:** That's a beautiful Bible verse Pastor Bruce, thank you for sharing it!

Now, let's conclude this classroom discussion about the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment on a Higher note:

At this point I would suggest that teachers ask their students the following questions:

Is strengthening your sense of dignity by being truthful, worth it?

What are the mental, emotional and spiritual benefits of having a clear and honorable conscience?

Will having and maintaining a clear conscience aid you in making good decisions in life?

Will those decisions help you in developing trusting and meaningful relationships in life?

Will those relationships serve for your Good and for the Good of the secular world around you?

If you could see a world full of dignity, what would you expect it to look like?

Who then is your “neighbor?”

Could your true neighbor include your own mind, heart and soul, and the minds, hearts, and souls of all those around you?

What do you think Pastor Bruce?

**Pastor Bruce:** 6. A truthful life is a life of freedom. A clear conscience brings mental peace, emotional stability, and spiritual strength. It helps us make wise decisions and build relationships based on trust. A world full of dignity is a world where honesty prevails, people are treated with respect, and love is genuine. Our “neighbor” is not just those around us—it includes our own soul, which we must care for by walking in truth.

**Howard B. Becker:** Wonderfully said Pastor Bruce!

My great hope is that students will carry these concepts with them as seeds as they mature into adults, growing in understanding about just how



important these concepts are to their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing, and to the well-being of our entire secular society.

Now, let's work together to plant these seeds of understanding about the meaning and implications of the Ten Commandments among our public-school students. For many of them, it may be a welcome reinforcement of what they have been taught since childhood. For many others it may be the only place where they will be able to discuss these ancient and timeless concepts in a setting that will allow them to honestly and sincerely express their thoughts and feelings.

This curriculum presents an invaluable opportunity for students to learn about concepts that greatly affect their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We should never treat that Opportunity lightly for it affects the wellbeing of our entire secular society.

Pastor Bruce, I think we can all agree that public school teachers are some of the most passionate and compassionate people in our country. When it comes to promoting their students' well-being, they are deeply committed to bringing out the very best in them.

Allowing our public-school teachers to use their passion and compassion to reach the minds and hearts of our public-school students through discussion based upon the Ten Commandments fits perfectly with their heartfelt mission. Allowing them to do so without violating the First Amendment of our Constitution is crucial for maintaining this invaluable curriculum.

Don't you think so Pastor Bruce?

**Pastor Bruce:** 7. Public school teachers have an incredible responsibility—not just to educate minds but to shape character. Discussions on the Ten Commandments provide students with principles that foster self-respect, personal responsibility, and compassion for others. These truths transcend religious boundaries and serve the common good. When approached with

wisdom and care, such discussions can take place without violating Constitutional principles, benefiting both individuals and society.

**Howard B. Becker:** Well said sir!

And so Pastor Bruce, once again, as a parting thought on why I think this mission is so important to our entire secular society, I'd like to offer a passage *from Luke 8:15*:

*“But that on the Good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth much fruit with patience.”*

**Pastor Bruce: 8.** Thank you, Howard, for sharing your thoughts with us today. It's clear that teaching the meaning and implications of the Ten Commandments in public schools has much to offer to our students, and to our society at large.

Your approach acts to plant seeds, while staying within the bounds of the First Amendment of our Constitution. Therefore, teaching these timeless concepts in the manner you've suggested should help all concerned, while offending none.

For those who want to move deeper into these ideas, Howard's book, [The Spiritual Meaning of Scripture](#), offers a great place to start. You can find it on Amazon, Barnes and Noble or at your favorite bookstore.

His website, [TheSpiritualMeaningofSpriture.com](http://TheSpiritualMeaningofSpriture.com) offers innumerable background details, contains revealing blogs, and additional podcast interviews about the incomparable benefits of teaching the Ten Commandments in public schools. It also provides a free download of the first two chapters of his book. You will find a wealth of valuable information there.

I'm excited about continuing this conversation on teaching the Ten Commandments in public schools!

*Dear audience, you do not want to miss listening to this entire series!*

**Howard B. Becker:** *Pastor Bruce, I'd like to mention one last thing before we end today's podcast;*

*For those who don't yet know him, Dr. Bruce Oliver is the founder and director of Bruce Oliver Ministries. He is the popular host of Talks For Christ - formerly Abundant Living Podcasts. Bruce has pastored churches from Texas to Georgia, his experience is vast, and his ministry is truly inspiring. Pastor Bruce, thank you for all you do!*