

# Proverbs 24:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause; and deceive not with thy lips.

## Analysis

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This proverb warns against false testimony. 'Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause' (אַל־תְּהִי עֵד־חִנָּם בְּרֵעֶךָ/al-tehi ed-chinnam bere'ekha, do not be a witness without reason against your neighbor) forbids groundless accusations. The ninth commandment: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour' (Exodus 20:16). 'And deceive not with thy lips' (וְהִפְתִּיתָ בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ/vahafittita visefateykha, and do not deceive with your lips) adds the prohibition against using testimony to mislead. False witness destroys lives—reputation, livelihood, freedom, potentially life itself. The law prescribed harsh penalties: 'then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother' (Deuteronomy 19:19). Yet false accusation persisted throughout Scripture: Potiphar's wife against Joseph (Genesis 39:14-18), Jezebel's witnesses against Naboth (1 Kings 21:10-13), accusers against Jesus (Matthew 26:59-61). Christians must maintain absolute honesty, especially in testimony affecting others.

## Historical Context

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Ancient judicial systems relied heavily on witness testimony. Without modern forensics, cases often depended on verbal accounts. The law required multiple witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15) and prescribed death for false witnesses in capital cases (Deuteronomy 19:16-21). Despite these safeguards, false testimony occurred. Susanna faced execution based on false accusation (Daniel 13, in the Apocrypha). Jesus warned disciples would face false accusers (Matthew 10:17-18). Stephen was condemned through false witnesses (Acts 6:11-14). Paul faced

repeated false accusations (Acts 24:5-9). Throughout church history, Christians suffered persecution based on false charges—feeding babies to lions, incest, atheism (for not worshiping Roman gods). The Reformation saw Catholics and Protestants accusing each other falsely. Modern false witness continues in defamation, perjury, and malicious prosecution. Christians must maintain truth-telling even when lying might benefit them.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. Have you ever given testimony—in court, at work, in social settings—that was misleading or false?
2. How do you respond when asked to testify against someone, especially when you lack full knowledge?
3. What safeguards can you establish to ensure your words about others are truthful and necessary?

## Interlinear Text

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|      |        |                         |                      |                              |                    |
|------|--------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| אֵל  | תְּהִי | יָעֵד                   | חֵץ                  | בְּרֵעֲךָ                    | וְהִפְתָּ יָדְךָ   |
| H408 | H1961  | <b>Be not a witness</b> | <b>without cause</b> | <b>against thy neighbour</b> | <b>and deceive</b> |
|      |        | H5707                   | H2600                | H7453                        | H6601              |

  

|                          |
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| בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ:           |
| <b>not with thy lips</b> |
| H8193                    |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ephesians 4:25** (Parallel theme): Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

**Proverbs 25:18** (Witness): A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

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