

“What Will Keep You True to Your Word?”

Matthew 5:33-37

³³ “Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' ³⁴ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

³⁷ But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil.”

1. Why are truthfulness and dependability vital for the flourishing of any society? What would happen to a society if these values were abandoned?

Read Matthew 5:33-37

2. The Old Testament Law gave instructions for the use of oaths and vows, but the Jewish teachers had added many complicated rules to the Law.
 - a. Read Deuteronomy 6:13 and Numbers 30:1-2.
 - What would it mean to “swear by” the name of the LORD? How would this distinguish Israel from all of the nations around them?
 - What were the purposes of taking an oath or making a vow according to Numbers?
 - Is there anything inherently wrong with taking an oath or making a vow (cf. Gen. 22:16; Heb. 6:13)?
 - b. Re-read Matthew 5:34-36.
 - Based on what Jesus says, what were the people using as “objects” of their oaths or vows? How might this compare to what Jesus says in 23:16-22?
 - What are “objects” of our own oaths (e.g. “I swear on my mother’s grave...”)?
 - Note what adjective Jesus uses to describe their vows in verse 33. What does this tell you about their intentions in their oath taking? How were they using oaths to accomplish this?
 - How do people do these same things in our own culture?
 - Where does Jesus say these kinds of false vows and oaths come from (cf. v 37)?
 - How might a desire for self-**gratification** or just plain selfishness drive a person to speak falsely or not follow through on a commitment?
 - How might a desire for self-**preservation** drive these things?

3. Jesus taught that oaths and vows are not necessary for truthful people and that kingdom citizens should be people of their word.
 - a. Re-read Matthew 5:34-37.
 - How does Jesus demonstrate that any oath made by a person, no matter what the object, falls under the sovereign judgment of God? Cf. James 5:12.
 - What is God's expectation regardless of whether an oath is sworn or a vow is taken? Cf. Psalm 51:6.
 - How do truthfulness and faithfulness demonstrate the character of Christ in us? Cf. Psalm 89 or 1 Thessalonians 5:24.
 - How does truthfulness demonstrate love for others?
 - Why does dependability (following through on your word) demonstrate a love and respect for others?
 - Are you a person of your word?
 - What keeps you from keeping your word to others?
4. Meditating upon the person and work of Jesus will lead you to become a more faithful person of your word.
 - How is your love for Christ connected to truthfulness and dependability? Cf. John 14:23-24.
 - Why will a greater love for Christ lead you to a greater love for people?
 - How will these things affect your thinking and attitudes toward your words and/or commitments?

Take time this week to meditate upon one or two aspects of Jesus' person or work and then find someone with whom to share how this has helped you to grow in your love for Him.