

KEEPING YOUR WORD

Jesus preached a powerful sermon on a mountain side that many refer to as “The Sermon on the Mount.” The themes of His sermon could be seen as pictures of a kingdom lifestyle. Just about everything that He says is upside down in comparison to the way the world operates. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus calls His disciples to keep a standard of integrity between what we say and what we do. There are many things that challenge, and even hinder, our ability to keep our word. There are pressures of pleasing others, fear of rejection, or even personal gain that threaten our integrity in promises we make. But in the power of Christ and by His grace, we can strive to simply say what we mean and mean what we say.

Read Matthew 5:33-37.

Discuss: What are some reasons why people feel compelled to “swear on” something for their promises to be believable?

You have heard...don't swear falsely, but perform to the Lord what you have sworn

Many people feel that for someone to believe that they will make good on a verbal promise, they must make an oath on something of value. (Matt. 5:33)

One of the major reasons for this is because the sinful nature of the human heart makes people prone to lie, change their mind, and break promises. This causes distrust and a low expectation for people to keep their word. (Matt. 15:18-20)

Because of this, our culture tends to treat breaking an oath as a greater offense than “simply” not keeping your word with integrity.

Discuss: In what ways have you broken promises or gone back on your word? Would you say your life is characterized by broken promises?

Why or why not?

But I say to you do not take an oath at all

Jesus tells us that we should not feel the need to give an oath or swear on something of value when we make a promise. We should strive to live with such integrity that our promises don't need to be strengthened by swearing on something valuable. (Matt. 5:34-36)

Discuss: How do we reconcile this teaching from Jesus with things like contracts and legal documents in business?

Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'

Jesus says that we should simply be able to tell someone we are going to do something and do it. If we aren't able to do what we say or what is asked of us, then we should feel the freedom to say no. (Matt. 5:37)

Instead of making oaths, we should depend on the grace of God, striving to always keep our word.

The gospel of Jesus makes us put off lying and put on speaking the truth to others. (Eph. 4:25)

We are to be imitators of God who cannot lie. (Eph. 5:1, Titus 1:2)

In Jesus, we are free from the pressure of doing everything for everyone. (2 Cor. 4:5)

Personal Application

How is God showing you a need to practice more integrity in keeping your word?

Is there a current situation that you need to repent of? Spend some time confessing and asking mercy from God.

How can you begin being a person who can simply let what you say be yes or no?